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Religious and cultural encounters: sexual and reproductive health and rights among the Korekore women in Zimbabwe

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Religious and Cultural Encounters: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights among the Korekore women in Zimbabwe.

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. C. Wijmenga
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on Thursday 11 February 2021

At 12.45 hours

by

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Aids	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CMA	Catholic Men's Association
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FGDs	Focus-group discussions
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population Development
IUD	Intra-uterine devices
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
LO	Life Orientation
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
MOHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care
NFP	Natural Family Planning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
PoA	Program of Action
RWP	Rural Woman Participant
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TBAs	Traditional Birth Attendants
U.S	United States
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations

UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
UWP	Urban Woman Participant
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WHO	World Health Organization
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZNASP	Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan
ZWRCN	Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network

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Abstract

This project investigates the strategies that the Korekore women in Mt Darwin district in Zimbabwe use to navigate the pressure exerted on their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) by the Catholic teachings on sexuality and African, especially Korekore spiritual beliefs and practices. I interrogate the position of African religion and culture, and that of the Catholic Church regarding SRHR, assess the factors that influence women's SRHR in Zimbabwe, and examine the Korekore women's lived sexual experiences in the context of African culture and Catholic teachings and the extent to which the strategies they use to navigate their SRHR are transformative and sustainable. To this end I take a qualitative and ethnographic approach, which includes semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, participant observations, focus group discussions and workshops. This approach provides a thick description of the social world of my research participants especially their everyday lived experiences and the meanings they generate. Deploying social constructivism and governmentality theories, this study shows that most of the taken-as-given conceptions of women's sexuality among the Korekore are constructions which compromise and violate their SRHR. This thesis argues that against the several pressures that are put on their SRHR, they always have agency, thus engage with several strategies of navigation such as resistance, resilience, reworking, quiescence, docility, rebellion, inter alia. However, these strategies are just coping mechanisms which do not change anything in light of the structures that are behind the violation of their SRHR. I, thus, deploy the transformative theory which in this study intimates how conceptions of the Korekore women's sexuality can be formed and transformed towards empowering the women to navigate their SRHR in a more transformative and sustainable way.

Dutch Abstract

Onderwerp: Religieuze en Culturele Ontmoetingen: Seksuele en Reproductieve Gezondheid en Rechten onder de Korekore-vrouwen in Zimbabwe.

In dit project worden de strategieën onderzocht die de Korekore-vrouwen in het Mt Darwin district in Zimbabwe gebruiken om de druk op hun Seksuele en Reproductieve Gezondheid en Rechten (SRGR) te navigeren – druk uitgeoefend door de katholieke leer over seksualiteit en Afrikaanse, vooral Korekore spirituele geloven en praktijken. Ik ondervraag de positie van Afrikaanse religie en cultuur en van de katholieke kerk ten aanzien van SRGR, beoordeel de factoren die van invloed zijn op de SRGR van vrouwen in Zimbabwe en onderzoek de geleefde seksuele ervaringen van Korekore-vrouwen in de context van de Afrikaanse cultuur en de katholieke leer, evenals de mate waarin de strategieën, die deze vrouwen gebruiken om hun SRGR te navigeren, transformerend en houdbaar zijn. Om dit te bereiken gebruik ik een kwalitatieve en etnografische benadering, bestaande uit semigestructureerde interviews, informele conversaties, deelnemende observaties, focusgroepdiscussies en workshops. Deze benadering biedt een *thick description* van de sociale wereld van mijn onderzoeksdeelnemers, in het bijzonder hun dagelijkse, geleefde ervaringen en de betekenissen die zij creëren. Door gebruik te maken van sociaal constructivisme en gouvernementaliteitstheorieën toont dit onderzoek aan dat de meeste onder de Korekore als gegeven beschouwde concepties over de seksualiteit van vrouwen constructies zijn die hun SRGR compromitteren en schenden. In deze thesis wordt beargumenteerd dat de vrouwen altijd een vorm van macht (*agency*) bezitten tegen de verscheidene manieren waarop hun SRGR onder druk komt te staan, en daarbij meerdere navigatiestrategieën toepassen zoals onder andere weerstand, veerkracht, bewerking, rust, dociliteit en rebellie. Echter, deze strategieën zijn slechts copingmechanismes die niets veranderen aan de structuren die ten grondslag liggen aan de schending van hun SRGR. Daarom gebruik ik de transformatieve theorie die in dit onderzoek aangeeft hoe concepties van seksualiteit onder Korekore vrouwen gevormd en getransformeerd kunnen worden, en dan op een manier die de vrouwen in staat stelt hun SRGR op een meer transformerende en duurzame manier te navigeren.

Chapter One: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Religion and Culture in Zimbabwe

It was an evening in the summer of 2005, while I was driving back from the villages where I would usually go to work with the women's empowerment programs in Zimbabwe. It was about to rain, and so there was some lightning here and there and a bit of wind. Because of the threat of the storm, I was driving slowly. As I was about to turn into the country road that leads to the mission station, I was surprised to see a woman in her early fifties lying helpless in a pool of blood. I stopped to see who it could be and what could have happened. I immediately realized that it was one of the Catholic women I worked with, someone I knew pretty well, called Tendai (a pseudonym). She was bruised all over her face and was bleeding profusely. It took her some time before she could tell me exactly what had happened, struggling to talk. Before she could tell me, she said '*Nyangwe ndikakuudzai hapana zvamunombondibatsira nazvo, regai hangu ndifire pano*' ('Even if I tell you, you have no means of helping me; let me die here'). Later she told me that she had been brutally beaten up by her husband for refusing to have sex. She had just been trying to seek refuge with her mother (also a Catholic), who unfortunately had ordered her to go back to her husband. Since we knew each other very well and she was always open with me, in trying to understand the situation I enquired why she had refused to have sex. Having grown up knowing that when a woman is married she is not allowed to refuse to have sex, I felt my desire to understand her refusal was justified. She indicated that she had very bad backache and that the pain gets worse when it is about to rain. The relationship between rain and backache has been attributed to barometric pressure, a theory of why people with joint pain can predict when it is going to rain. If the pressure drops, which happens when a cold front move in, the balloon in one's joints expands, causing painful inflammation (Cannone, 2015). As she struggled to explain her situation, I could feel the pain with her. I kept pondering this in my mind and trying to work out solutions to women's problems, but could not immediately find one.

As if that was not enough, on another Tuesday in the same year, as I was again carrying out my usual visits around the parish in the middle of the morning, what I witnessed led me to conclude that women's sexuality is indeed a complex phenomenon that should not be dealt with like a mathematical puzzle. This incident concerned Grace (a pseudonym), a staunch Catholic woman in her early thirties and a teacher by profession, which means that by Zimbabwean standards she counted as an educated and self-sufficient woman. Grace was

trying to climb on to the roof of her house using a ladder with a plastic bag in her hands. This made me wonder what she could have been up to. Seeing me, she said, '*regai ndimboita nyaya dzemadzimai idzi, ndinouya ndokuonai manje manje*' ('Let me do these women's issues, I will be with you in a moment'). With this woman I did not need to ask anything, I just smiled at her as she returned the ladder to the garage, and she smiled back and said '*zvenyu makazvipedza nekuita masisita*' ('Lucky you, you became a nun'). She told me that she was drying family-planning tablets in the sun to destroy their effectiveness. I was surprised at this, but she was quick to rescue me from my shock by explaining why she was doing it. Her husband had told her in a very strict manner that he preferred to have one child, while she wanted four. I did not ask why she wanted to have more children. Among the lessons I had learned from my biology classes was the fact that giving birth is a painful process, and so for somebody to choose to experience pain four times was beyond my comprehension. Grace, seeing me thinking very deeply about this, smiled again and said, '*toagocha nezuva mapiritsi aya, haambofi akashanda, totomwa kuseni kwegwa kwegwa achiona, kana nhumbu yauya unongoti ahh mapiritsi amazuva ano ndofunga haasisinawo simba*' ('We roast these tablets in the sun so they will never work, then we take them in his presence, but when I become pregnant I'll just say that maybe nowadays these tablets are less powerful'). This was why she was roasting these tablets in the sun to make them ineffective. Her husband would see her take the tablets every day, never thinking that they might be ineffective. At this juncture, Grace did not tell me why she wanted to have more children. In trying to find the meaning of Grace's actions, I thought this was just the tip of the iceberg: there should be more than this to the dynamics of women's sexuality and reproduction. Even though Grace did not tell me why she wanted more children, I related this to the influence of African culture, which largely emphasizes the importance of children for reasons I shall elaborate on in the coming chapters. It reflected the fact that certain pressures are exerted on women in this culture. However, this is not meant simplistically but needs to be analyzed critically to avoid misrepresenting African culture. On the other hand, the fact that Tendai's mother had forced Tendai to go back to her husband indicates the importance of marriage generally among Zimbabweans. While the Catholic Church's teaching emphasizes that couples should resort to natural family-planning methods, Grace did not hide the fact that her husband wanted her to use artificial tablets. Could this mean that her decision to roast the tablets was also associated with her wanting to obey the teachings of the Catholic Church on family planning?

It was Grace's and Tendai's stories that gave birth to my research. Moved by these experiences and many more that this study cannot go into, I investigate *how women in Zimbabwe navigate*

their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) against the backdrop of the demands of African culture and religion as well as Christianity, specifically Catholicism. My concern is to understand the strategies that women use when their SRHR seem to be violated by Catholic teaching on sexuality or African religious and cultural practices. As well as aiming at a scientific understanding of the strategies that women use on the practical level, I also seek to assess the extent to which these strategies are transformative and sustainable.

1.1 Introduction to SRHR, Religion and Culture

SRHR is a four-fold discourse, which basically refers to rights connected with sexuality and reproduction (ICPD, 1994). In essence, it comprises sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health and reproductive rights. The sum of these four aspects has been taken to denote sexuality, the central aspect of being human throughout life. Broadly speaking, sexuality encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction (Reynolds, 2006; Shaw, 2006; Pascale et al., 2006; Chitando and Njoroge, 2016). Put simply, it means that every human being is entitled to these rights regardless of age, sex, gender, sexual identity, race, color, religion, etc. Moreover, access to SRHR means that everybody has the right to information with respect to their sexuality and reproduction, and that everybody is allowed to make choices without suffering coercion or violence. It is also important to realize that SRHR are central to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Aggleton and Parker, 2010), being directly linked to SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 5 (gender equality). I am aware that SRHR includes rights to abortion and the rights of LGBTQ people, but in this study I do not discuss these issues since they were not found to be pertinent among the Korekore women of Mt Darwin, Zimbabwe, with whom I worked. I am not arguing that they do not exist in Zimbabwe, I am simply saying that among the women I interviewed they did not arise, even though I provided a platform for them to speak about these issues if they so wished. The context within which the women who participated in this study - that is, African religion and Catholicism, which for the most part do not discuss issues in line with LGBTQ openly – might account for the absence of this topic from my research participants. I interrogate SRHR against the background of African religion (spiritual beliefs and practices that are shared by African peoples, specifically the Korekore) and Christianity, especially Catholicism (beliefs and practices shared by members of the Roman Catholic Church). The entire discussion arises because, as I will discuss below, African religion and Catholicism place pressure on women's exercise of their SRHR. I use the term 'African

religion’ instead of the usual ‘African traditional religion’, to avoid giving the impression that we are dealing with something impervious to the upheavals of history. African religion is dynamic as any other religion. In this context African religion refers to indigenous African values, symbols and meanings, especially the Korekore people in Zimbabwe. While by now Catholicism in African can be called an African religion, in this study I treat the two separately. Catholicism will refer to the version of Catholicism received from Catholic missionaries (Hastings, 1989). The understanding and practice of sexuality by the participants in this research are influenced by African religion and culture and the teachings of the Catholic Church, hence the decision to discuss their SRHR against the background of these two moral and religious orders. The phrase ‘moral and religious orders’ refers to the interpersonally and institutionally shared structure of moral beliefs, desires, feelings and boundaries that are derived from larger narratives and rituals (Wuthnow, 1989). They provide people with moral, emotional and cognitive meanings (Campbell, 1971), thus determining who they are, why they and the world exist, and how they believe they should act (Taylor, 1989 and Smith, 2003).

This thesis is therefore interested in how the Korekore women who subscribe to African religion and culture as well as Catholicism in the Mt Darwin district of Zimbabwe navigate their SRHR when they are violated or threatened, actions that I understand as violence in this thesis. The term ‘navigation’ has multiple interpretations. The *Collins Dictionary* defines navigation as the movement of ships. However, in this study it refers to the several ways in which women negotiate the violence that is allegedly perpetrated on their SRHR by Catholic teaching on sexuality and African cultural practices. It therefore refers to the survival mechanisms of a weak group. The patriarchal nature of the Korekore moral order associates male and female respectively with the categories of the dominant and the subordinate, thus rendering women categorically powerless. In this manner, navigation becomes the power used by the weaker group (Janeway, 1980). Scott refers in this context to ‘weapons of the weak’ and ‘everyday forms of resistance’ (Scott, 1985). He identifies three broad categories of strategies of the weak, namely resistance, resilience and reworking, which those with less power resort to (Scott, 1985: 57). Resistance is defined as the refusal to accept or comply with something. Resilience, on the other hand, is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, while reworking entails the process of changing something in order to improve it (Scott, 1985). These are normally pursued in very open ways and for the most part with the aim of making those with power realize the

fact. This research dwells on these strategies because Korekore women engage in them in subtle ways. While political scientists often focus on organized and collective rebellions as successful modes of resistance, this involves overlooking the less visible, everyday acts that the less powerful engage in, such as rumors, disguises, gestures, linguistic tricks and metaphors, among others. Yet these accord some form of agency to the less powerful, like the women in my study. In patriarchal contexts, resistance is seen as an important factor in opposing male domination. This resistance may happen in several ways: foot-dragging, silence, inactivity and gossiping, among others. However, to restrict understanding of the violation of women's SRHR to violence and to stop there is tantamount to robbing the women of any dynamism and agency. Thus, this thesis seeks to understand how agentic, but also transformative, the strategies women use are. Transformation, which will be explained later, denotes an approach and a methodology for individual, organizational and social change that creates breakthroughs in the way people think, feel and behave while simultaneously working to shift the structural conditions in which they live (Lederach, 2015). In my case the focus is on some of the ways in which Korekore women try to engage in strategies to navigate their SRHR in a manner that seeks to change their undesirable situations.

The study focuses on the specific case of Korekore women in a district of Zimbabwe called Mt Darwin, to the north of the capital, Harare. The Korekore are a branch of the Shona, who constitute about 80% of Zimbabweans. The Shona can be divided into five ethnic groups, namely Karanga, Korekore, Manyika, Ndau and Zezuru (Mawere and Mubaya, 2014: 11; Ndlovu, 2009: 48). The treatment of women that is ascribed to the Shona in general can in most cases apply to Korekore women as well. The advent of Christianity in Africa influenced the socio-economic and political life of indigenous people in Zimbabwe, adding another layer of complexity to the conception and perception of sexuality, in particular women's sexuality. Women among the Korekore are regarded as the cornerstone of social development, yet their ability to fulfil their potential is stifled by numerous factors, including the pressure that is brought to bear on them by the encounter between religious traditions such as Christianity and African religion, which are of interest to this project. Chief of the ways in which religion limits women's potential is how it interferes with their SRHR.

While scholars (Salzman and Lawler, 2008; Kalbian, 2014) have tended to restrict their examination of the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality to the question of artificial contraception, we need to understand that contraception does not exhaust the content of this

teaching. Instead, it also includes a range of aspects such as marriage (Pope Paul VI; Salzman and Lawler, 2008), family (Pope Francis, address to meeting with families in Manilla, January 16, 2016; Bartel and Grabowski), children (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 178-79; Code Of Canon Law, 1084), pornography (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2354), masturbation (CCC 2352), abortion (CCC 2270) and family planning (CCC 2370, 2399). However, this study deals with the teachings of the Church on marriage, family planning and children, the issues that are pertinent to Korekore Catholic women.

As already mentioned, this study deals with how Korekore women navigate their SRHR against the backdrop of indigenous African religion, which I refer here as their practices, thus, African cultural practices and Catholic teaching on sexuality. Here I should briefly explain what is meant by culture. There are as many definitions of culture as the many authors who have written about it. However, this study regards culture as a patterned way of life that is shared by a group of people with the same origin. This way of life includes, among others, social norms, taboos, rites of passage from birth to death, traditional occupations, and religious and philosophical beliefs. Culture is also studied as the symbolic system in terms of which believers interpret the world and live their lives (Geertz, 1966). This definition specifies that culture includes people's religious beliefs, an issue that applies more in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe included where it is very difficult to separate religion and culture.

Generally, investing in women's SRHR reduces poverty and enhances sustainable development, yet in a patriarchal society such as that of the Korekore, if adulterated or abused, culture and religion can become stumbling blocks to the rights of women to make choices and decisions regarding their sexuality. This project, with its focus on Korekore women, seeks to interrogate how these women navigate their SRHR in Zimbabwe. The study also seeks to analyze whether these women's strategies are transformative and sustainable. As highlighted above, being transformative means that the strategies they engage in should allow them to exert agency to change the situations that challenged them for the better and for future generations. Furthermore, the project is of applied relevance, as it seeks to suggest practical measures with respect to those religious and cultural traditions that undermine women's SRHR. This entails providing scientifically grounded guidelines for how to promote women's SRHR. These guidelines will help policy-makers, governments, non-governmental organizations and religious orders to equip women with tools to navigate SRHR that are more transformative and sustainable than at present.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Violation of SRHR results in high maternal mortality rates, neonatal mortality and high rates of HIV/AIDS, among other things. By 2009, Africa had recorded more than 50% of girls and women being infected by HIV/AIDS, including Zimbabwe (UNAIDS, 2010). Moreover, in 2015 Zimbabwe's maternal mortality rate stood at 443 per 100 000 live births, its neonatal mortality rate was 23.8 deaths per 100 live births, and its under-five mortality rate was 59.9 deaths per 1000 live births (WHO, 2015). In responding to these challenges, universal access to SRHR is key, yet in Zimbabwe there are stumbling blocks to its achievement. Being patriarchal, Korekore society expects women to be subordinate to men. This translates into men's control over women, suggesting a lack of rights, including sexual rights. Religious and cultural arguments are generated and mobilized to legitimize the domination of men over women. Practices such as paying a bride wealth are manipulated to legitimize male control over female productive and reproductive capabilities (Bourdillon, 1991, ZWRCN, 1998). Catholic teaching on sexuality stresses five values, namely procreation, children's education, life, personality and love (Kalbian, 2014: 12; Noonan, 1965; *Amoris Laetitia*, 156). In line with the stress on family planning and children, at the center of the Church's teaching is the insistence that marriage and family are central because they help to weaken extreme individualism. To this end, marriage should be open to the production of children, hence the use of artificial family planning is prohibited (*Familiaris Consortio*, 6). The Church states that, if there are serious reasons for spacing out children that arise from physical or psychological conditions, the couple should take advantage of natural rhythms that do not offend these moral principles (Pope Paul VI, 1968). This project asks whether women think this teaching violates their SRHR, and if so, how do they as women navigate these challenges? Also, what space is there to navigate in patriarchal structures which the Church is part of and reinforces? Pressure on women comes from all sides in this context, and it leaves them with small room to operate; and yet, they find a way to maintain their agency.

According to Harskamp (2004), enabling women to make decisions about their sexuality contributes to women's development process as they empower themselves. In development discourse, the instrumentalist view that developing women means developing the nation (Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2011) seems to hold water because, for example, women's literacy reduces child mortality because it will give them the knowledge and resources to seek medical care for

both their children and themselves. They will also have the adequate balanced diets that their bodies need during pregnancy, which helps them to bring up healthy babies. Likewise, women's participation in local government achieves better policies for helping the vulnerable (Williams 2017; Sen 1999; Goetz ,2009). Against this background, this project asks the question: What are women's lived sexual and health experiences? This project argues that sexual and reproductive health and rights are not only a matter of women's well-being because accessing these rights is of transference value, as it increases women's confidence and competence to participate fully in their own development and that of the nation. The focus of this research is therefore to investigate how Korekore women in Mt Darwin navigate their sexual and reproductive health and rights when faced with the dilemmas caused by the moral challenges and demands of Catholicism and Korekore culture.

When two elephants fight, it is said, it is the grass that suffers. For the purposes of this project, this saying can be translated to mean that the Catholic Church has its dogmas, that is, its axiomatic teachings that outlaw numerous African cultural and religious practices by deeming them mythical and superstitious. The pressure on women's SRHR is thus multi-scalar. African religion and Catholic teaching, taken separately, allegedly pressure women's SRHR. Moreover, the conflicts between African religion and Catholic teaching adds another level of pressure, women being the site of its exercise. Although the teaching of the Catholic Church does not explicitly rule out the use of indigenous medicines, for, example, there have been missionaries who have completely condemned it. A case in point is a Jesuit priest, Fr. Richartz, who beat the local herbalist and broke his medicine containers (McLaughlin, 1996: 238). This attitude reflects those of Western societies for which Africa was the 'dark continent', its people primitive and their religion merely paganism and superstition (Nkomazana, 2016; Mbiti, 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1986). Some priests perceived indigenous medicines not simply as herbs, but as linked to African religion, which some missionaries considered evil. For the Korekore, these medicines have a mythical and religious meaning. For instance, pregnant women among the Korekore use a medicine called *mushonga wemasuwo* ('medicine the women drink to widen the birth canal') as an indigenous oxytocin which is meant to quicken childbirth contractions. Society expects these women to use them, not merely for practical reasons, but also for religious ones. In a personal discussion with one of the women, I learned that these herbs are administered only by the woman's grandmother or aunt or by the traditional midwife, all of whom act as religious functionaries in connection with women's reproductive processes, meaning that *mushonga wemasuwo* is religious in nature. As indicated previously,

some priests consider these medicines devilish. This puts women in a dilemma, as they must straddle two conflicting traditions or moral orders in an effort to be loyal to both the Church and the indigenous religion. It is these circumstances and many more that this research investigates by asking how Korekore women in Zimbabwe deal with the complexities regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights. I am not arguing for or against the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality, but rather seeking to understand the strategies women use to navigate their SRHR. This work limits its discussion to these strategies.

1.3 Assumptions

This research assumes that Korekore culture, the social form of the Korekore family, the economic situation and Catholic teaching determine and influence women's SRHR. This resonates with Max Weber's assertion that religious beliefs affect the conduct and organization of a people; hence to understand people's actions, one must consider their beliefs and ideas. As Hughes, Sharrock and Martin (2003) put it, for Weber individuals 'undoubtedly act on the basis of their beliefs and ideas, and the ways in which they conduct themselves follow from the religious and political conceptions to which they subscribe. Korekore culture and religion have their own tenets and traditional values, which outline how women should behave sexually. Note that these tenets are neither fixed dogma nor doctrine nor stored in a church, but manifest themselves as flexible and fluid elements of a cultural tool kit that is used to make sense of life (Farrel, 2015). For instance, Korekore women are not in charge of their own sexuality. The paying of a bride wealth (*roora* in the Shona language) by the man to the woman's family is often perceived as buying and owning the woman, who, by virtue of this transaction, loses her rights, including sexual rights. More practices will be discursively discussed in this project. The Korekore's economic and political constellation treats the man as the family breadwinner, who therefore works, while the woman stays at home waiting to receive what the man brings home. His bringing home family provisions legitimizes his authority over the woman, who is socialized to perceive being provided for by a man as a privilege. This therefore translates into the man exerting control over the woman, including her body. Because of this arrangement, the woman is presented as being at the service of the man, as is her whole being. The man is thus the protector of the woman's existence, the source of her security. Moreover, the fear of losing the security the man provides makes the woman vulnerable, resulting in her giving up her rights, as well as giving in to social demands and expectations (Bornstein, 2003). It must be noted that the idea is not to treat all traditional practices as denying women agency and sexual and

reproductive health and rights. In this study, a critical analysis of the discourse of sexual and reproductive health will be undertaken that is not ahistorical or out of context. This will guard against simplistic condemnations of African cultural practices and critique conceptual misnomers used in discourses regarding women in Africa. Qualitative ethnographic research and discourse analysis will therefore be useful in uncovering women's real and imagined experiences and perceptions of these practices.

On another note, Catholic teaching on sexuality specifies three key elements that I assume challenge women's SRHR:

- a. On marriage: 'each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life' (Pope Paul VI, 1968; Salzmann and Lawler, 2008).
- b. On children: 'Children are the supreme gift of marriage, and those who commit themselves to marriage should know that their mission is the transmission of life and the education of those children' (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 2015, 178-79; Code of Canon Law, 1084).
- c. On family planning: 'Couples may use natural family planning methods if there are serious reasons to space children arising from the physical or psychological condition of either the husband or the wife or from external circumstances' (CCC 2370, 2399).
- d. Under these circumstances, I assume that Korekore women experience multiple pressures. Hence the task of this research to understand how they navigate this intersectionality.

1.4 Justification for the Study

While literature is available on SRHR, most of it is on young people's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health (SRH) (Landa, 2018; Remez et al., 2016). This focuses mostly on catering for adolescents' and young people's decision-making in relation to their sexuality and in reducing early marriages and unintended pregnancies. Apart from the fact that this literature excludes the women, it is entirely based on the epidemiological aspect of sexuality and reproduction, ignoring the 'rights' aspect that is the key to women's problems. Moreover,

there is a dearth of literature on either Zimbabwean women in general or the Korekore in particular with regard to SRHR. Researching Korekore women's sexuality, Catholic teachings on sexuality and Korekore cultural practices therefore stands to provide a new academic body of knowledge on SRHR. Most African scholars on religion and culture have resorted to studying these institutions not as discourses and using confessional lenses; hence using social constructionism and governmentality theories in analyzing Catholic teachings on sexuality and Korekore culture is so far unique. Social constructivism assumes that all reality and meaning is subjective, being created through dynamic interactions with other individuals and groups (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1995). Governmentality, on the other hand, refers to the art of government, including a wide range of control techniques that also apply to a wide variety of objects and is not only limited to state politics (Foucault, 1975; Dean, 2010). This theoretical framework develops new concepts and theories that push the scientific boundaries of SRHR. Governmentality has mostly been used to analyze how the state governs people (Foucault, 1991). Using the definition of governmentality as 'conduct of conduct' or 'the power to act on the actions of others', as emphasized by Dean (2010), this thesis provides new knowledge and understanding to the insight that governing is not merely a feature of the state but of other institutions in society such as the Church, prisons, hospitals and so on. This thesis demonstrates that, like any other institution, Korekore culture and the Catholic Church can also be analyzed through the lens of governmentality. Existing literature on Korekore women emerges from the historical field but has not engaged with critical analysis of Korekore women's sexuality, especially how it came to be. Hence, by using social constructivism, this thesis takes women's sexuality as a discourse. Generally, discourse has to do with how people construct the world using language and some of form of communication to create the world (Gee, 1999). However, in social sciences discourse is not only limited to language but it also involves acting, interacting, thinking and valuing in the so-called "appropriate way" (Foucault, 1985). In this thesis I look at discourse as conversations, constructions and discussions by the Korekore people and the Catholic Church about women's sexuality. I therefore seek to make sense of how socially accepted ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the "right way" form, shape and normalize the Korekore women's SRHR as well as how they affect how the women navigate the constraints imposed on their SRHR. I also look at how the Church and the Korekore culture discursively produce women as identities and how that affects women's engagement in transformative and sustainable strategies in their SRHR.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Women's SRHR is central to achieving a sustainable society. The findings of this study have both scientific and applied relevance. As indicated earlier, the thesis seeks to push the scientific boundaries of SRHR by developing new concepts and theories based on the situation of Korekore women in Zimbabwe. It also contributes to creating solutions for good health, well-being and gender equality (Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5). Enabling women to take decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights also has transference value, as it increases their confidence and competence to participate in their development and that of their nation. This research may help the Zimbabwean government and policy-makers to develop policies and programs that promote women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as facilitate their implementation. This investigation will push the frontiers of the scientific conception of religion and its applied consequences within the discourse and practice of SRHR. It will also help religious institutions, especially the Catholic Church, to identify and develop interventions to overcome the religious and cultural pressures that are placed on women, thereby compromising their health and rights. The research will therefore contribute to empowering women, health-workers and communities to actively participate in promoting their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

1.6 Research Question and Objectives

The major aim of this thesis is to investigate the challenges that Korekore women in Zimbabwe face regarding their SRHR and the strategies they use to navigate these challenges against the backdrop of Catholic teachings on sexuality and African cultural practices and religion. To this end, the study addresses the following objectives:

- a. To interrogate the position of African religion and culture, and that of the Catholic Church regarding SRHR.
- b. To assess the factors that influence women's SRHR in Zimbabwe.
- c. To examine Korekore women's lived sexual experiences in the context of African culture and Catholic teachings.
- d. To examine the extent to which the strategies the women use to navigate their SRHR are transformative and sustainable.

The key research question for this study is: *How do women in Zimbabwe navigate their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) against the backdrop of the demands of African culture and religion and Christianity, specifically Catholicism, and to what extent are their strategies transformative?*

The following sub-questions will be deployed to answer the main question:

- a. What is African religion and culture, and what are the Catholic Church's views regarding SRHR?
- b. What factors influence women's SRHR in Zimbabwe?
- c. How have Korekore women lived their sexuality in the context of African culture and Catholic teaching, and how have they navigated the resulting violations of their SRHR?
- d. To what extent are the strategies women use to navigate their SRHR transformative and sustainable?

1.7 Scope and Limitation of Study

This study is located at the intersection of sexuality, culture and religion in Zimbabwe. In the interests of allowing my readers to imagine the context, it is important that I transport them to Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa which is known for its dramatic landscapes and diverse wildlife in parks, reserves and safari sites. Its geographical landscape can be divided into three regions, namely the Inland plateau (which is about 1200m high and takes up the majority of the country), the Highveld and the escarpment. The central statistics estimate the population at 16.53 million, 51.32% being women (ZIMSTAT, 2017). This is very important information, as it also makes women's SRHR a crucial topic to deal with, given that it affects the majority of the country's population.

To talk of sexuality in any given context without paying attention to the history of the people concerned is to miss the point that it is the people's historical background, among other things, that shapes their conception of every social phenomenon, including sexuality. This project takes religion as a social and cultural phenomenon with a history and a context (Geertz, 1966, Asad, 1993, Fitzgerald, 2016). Thus, it makes no theological assertions but brings into the discussion the concepts of sexuality, religion, development, culture and human rights discourse. Bringing together religious, cultural and sociological and development studies, it is therefore interdisciplinary. Sexuality in this context is treated as a central aspect of being human

throughout life, encompassing sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction (Reynolds, 2006).

Studying religion is an ambiguous task, as there are uncertainties as to what it really constitutes (Braun, 2000: 4; Schilderman, 2014: 176). The study thus takes both an interpretivist and a social constructivist approach to the study of religion. The former approach takes religion as it is understood by its practitioners. What is said to be sacred, such as sites or religious leaders such as the Pope, priests, traditional leaders, spirit mediums and pastors, is taken as being imbued with the divine and as thus offering access to the divine and sacralizing it by virtue of it being vested with the divine. This helps us to understand why believers – Korekore women in this context – follow what is given to them by their religious leaders. The latter approach, conversely, focuses on the sacred as constructed. It is interested in how beliefs develop and spread through societies, shaping their identities. These approaches are contrasting but not contradictory. Bringing them together helps us arrive at an understanding that is as sensitive to the weight of religious ideas as to the processes through which such ideas are constructed and redefined, as well as their material underpinnings and political ramifications (Hassner, 2009: 7-9). Even though it would be an insurmountable task to settle the definitional debate over the meaning of the word ‘religion’, this study approaches religion as a lived phenomenon (Ammerman, 2016; McGuire, 2008), with a focus on African religion and culture and Catholicism. The debate over the definition of religion will be dealt with later. African or indigenous religion refers in this study to the culture of the Korekore. I should emphasize from the outset that in most African societies it is very difficult to separate religion and culture, as they always exist in close relation. As has been argued by Rosalind Hackett, because religion and anthropology share in many social and cultural theories, it is difficult to determine the boundary between religion and culture (Hackett, 2005: 144).

For reasons of greater specificity, this empirical study is limited to Korekore women in Mt Darwin district, which is within the catchment area of St Albert’s Catholic Mission Hospital, in Zimbabwe. The Korekore ethnic group is a branch of the Shona people, the largest tribal grouping in Zimbabwe, about 80% of Zimbabweans who speak the Shona language. They live in the northern part of Zimbabwe and spill over the high plateau into the Zambezi valley. I understand ethnicity as a highly complex, elusive, contested and loaded term. Some scholars have argued that ethnicity is a socially constructed group identity which is constantly being defined and redefined (Mawere and Mubaya, 2014: 2; Fought, 2006: 4). Similarly, Barker

(2012: 256) too has argued that ethnicity is a cultural concept centered on the sharing of norms, values, beliefs, symbols and practices. Although the concept of ethnicity is fluid, the Korekore as an ethnic group are not being studied here in order to make any value judgement about them, but because they are arguably the original inhabitants of the Mt. Darwin area. Moreover, I chose this area specifically because I formerly lived and worked there, which made it easier for me to carry out ethnographic research. Above all, carrying out research in this area may provide an opportunity to study a people with a culture that is arguably undiluted.

Although my research focuses on two religions, namely Catholicism and African religion, it is also important to understand the religious landscape of the whole country so as to acquire a general appreciation of the background context. Zimbabwe is predominantly a Christian country, with about 84 percent of its population classed as Christian, divided as follows: 33 percent Catholic; 42 percent Evangelical or Pentecostal; 17 percent Anglican, Methodist, or Presbyterian; and 8 percent Apostolic. There are also a significant number of independent Pentecostal and syncretic African churches. On another note, the majority of the population also adheres to indigenous religions to varying degrees. Approximately 3 percent of the population is Muslim, primarily immigrants of Mozambican and Malawian descent. The Muslim population is concentrated in rural areas and in some high-density suburbs. Small numbers of Greek Orthodox Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and Bahais make up less than 1 percent of the population. Political elites tend to be members of established Christian mainstream or Pentecostal churches (US Department of State, 2012; see also Tarusarira, 2016).

1.8 Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach that enabled analysis of data elimination, and the comparison and contrasting of meaningful patterns and themes which could not be provided quantitatively. Qualitative research methodology is characterized by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspects of social life and its methods, which generate words rather than numbers as data for analysis (Brick, 2007). This research methodology was useful in providing an in-depth and interpretative understanding of the social world of the women by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories. So that the women would be able to express themselves freely, I used ethnographic approaches which allowed them the maximum freedom to express themselves. I devoted some time to living with them and participated in their daily activities so as to be able to understand their lived

experiences. They gave expression to the dynamics of their lived sexual experiences while talking during events such as making bride wealth payments, kitchen parties, baby showers, congresses and funerals. The research adopted the case-study method (Spradley, 1980; Searle, 1999) in order to profile the beliefs and practices of Korekore women in Mt. Darwin district. The case-study method was preferred as a strategy because it allowed me to investigate Korekore women's strategies in far more detail than would have been the case had I been dealing with a large number of research participants. However, I am aware that the case-study method has its shortcomings: for example, the findings from the study of the Korekore women may not be representative of any particular population. Given this scenario, replication may not be possible. To counter the drawbacks of the case-study method, such as its lack of generalizability, I resorted to other methods as well.

Thus, I carried out semi-structured interviews with the women, Catholic priests, traditional leaders and medical staff from both the district hospital and some Catholic hospitals. The interview questions were open-ended but defined the areas I wanted to cover. To be able to fully understand the complexities of the women's sexuality in many situations, I made use of informal conversations and observations with both the women and the men. Just listening to their interactions made me understand more about the relevant dynamics, as they would talk in a more relaxed fashion. Informal conversations can be an ideal way of understanding more about a setting, as one can observe the reality of lived experiences *in situ*. Moreover, I also held workshops with groups of women as a way of acquiring more data in a more relaxed manner and of empowering the women in their SRHR to begin to think about their own situations and to develop creative, self-reliant and transformative strategies. These workshops followed my first round of interviews, therefore being built on the findings from my previous visit. Workshops are events whereby a group of people learn, acquire knowledge and engage in problem-solving. The method is normally used in conjunction with participation (Cornwell and Jewkes, 1995). In my case, I used workshops both for practice and as a research method. This means that I aimed at producing reliable and valid data first before fulfilling participants' expectations of being empowered regarding their SRHR.

In all these processes, I observed high ethical standards, given that discussing issues of sexuality among the Korekore is almost taboo. Thus great care was taken not to present those who agreed to partake in the research as promiscuous, which risked their becoming outcasts from society. Apart from that, there are several reasons to do with ethical issues in ethnography,

such as anonymity and confidentiality, harm avoidance, voluntary participation, beneficence and so on. All these were taken into consideration, as I will elaborate in my description of my fieldwork below. Ethnography can be defined as the ‘systematic process of observing, detailing, describing, documenting and analyzing the life ways or particular patterns of a culture in order to grasp the life ways or patterns of the people in their familiar environment’ (Leininger, 1985: 35). Being a Catholic and belonging to a religious order, I am conscious that my own religious identity could have influenced my collection and interpretation of data. The women might have mistaken me for a Church representative and become uncomfortable discussing the data in the context of Catholic teaching on sexuality. The other extreme is that they could treat me as a pastoral sister and ask to be helped with their pastoral problems (which is normally the work of pastoral sisters). I could also be biased towards my own cultural and religious background. To guard against this, I invoked reflexivity throughout the entire process. I do not claim that this was easy, but I tried very hard to enter into a continual process of watching my beliefs, biases, personal preferences, social position and emotional responses, among other things, so as to ensure they did not impact on my role of producing knowledge. When I finished transcribing my data, I double-checked my transcripts with a third of my research participants to confirm whether I had correctly captured the data. I did this to avoid these potential dangers.

1.8.1 Participant recruitment

I conducted my fieldwork in both rural and urban areas of Mt. Darwin district, about 79 percent of the time being focused on the rural areas. This was because there were few Korekore in urban Mt. Darwin due to the migration of people from other areas for economic reasons. As I have indicated already, the main aim of my research was to understand the challenges that women face regarding their SRHR and the strategies they use in navigating these challenges. This is the backdrop to the Catholic Church’s teachings and Korekore cultural practices. In my fieldwork, I needed Korekore women participants with experience of marriage as my key informants. I settled for about a third of the men to be my key informants in order to acquire men’s insights into women’s SRHR as a way of enriching my analysis and discussion. I also needed to talk to governmental and non-governmental organizations who work on SRHR so that I could understand the landscape of the discourse of SRHR in Zimbabwe. It was also important for me to grasp the role of the Ministry of Health in women’s sexual and reproductive health, so for that reason I resorted to the Ministry and its so-called traditional birth attendants

(TBAs). TBAs are ordinary women who have acquired midwifery skills by assisting other TBAs for years before being allowed to practice independently. Since this is a study of the teachings of the Catholic Church, I also needed to approach the Church's leadership, specifically its nuns, priests and bishops, to acquire its perspectives on women's SRHR. Since I had quite a variety of research participants, I used an equivalent number of participant recruitment strategies. My aim was to offset the shortcomings of any one method through a practice of complementarity (Hennink, 2011: 91; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). I used gatekeepers to recruit both women and men, namely religious group leaders from the main urban parish stations and six rural sub-parishes. The categories 'urban' and 'rural' depended on the density of human-created structures and of residents in a particular area. Urban areas can include towns and cities, while rural areas include villages (Rath, 1996). My study population belonged to a network of Catholic religious groups, so having been given permission by their leaders, I attended their regular meetings to recruit participants. Building rapport with the community and leaders was very easy because of my own status as a Catholic nun and as someone who had previously worked with the community. Among the Korekore, religious figures are esteemed. Most of them felt privileged to have me back in the community and wanted to learn more about my new experiences from abroad. However, I need to make it very clear that I took steps to guard against the creation of asymmetrical power relations.

Gatekeepers are people with administrative positions and in-depth information about a particular setting (Wannat, 2008; Rugkasa and Canvin, 2011). Hennink et al. (2011: 93) argue that they have knowledge of the business of community members and have a prominent and recognized role in the community. Gatekeepers were very important, since it was very difficult to know who belonged to the Korekore sub-ethnic group. From the first interviews, I identified other participants whom I did not plan to interview in the beginning; these were identified inductively from the data I was acquiring. I also used gatekeepers to approach the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (the country's health-delivery system), sampling two hospitals, including the Mt. Darwin district hospital, whose catchment area is Mt. Darwin district, to understand the factors that affect Korekore women's SRH. I also singled out one Catholic hospital within the Korekore area, namely St Albert's Mission Hospital. The aim of this was to understand the role of the Catholic Church in SRHR as reflected by Catholic health institutions. The gatekeepers for these two hospitals were the doctors in charge, who gave me permission to enter the hospitals. Five nurses working as midwives were selected randomly depending on who was off duty. Knowing that gatekeepers can misdirect researchers, to guard against this

possibility I used different starting points. To recruit TBA, I had to rely entirely on snowballing because the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare had banned the practice of traditional birth attendance. The ban was a response to an initiative by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other agencies of the United Nations (UN), which argued that there was a lack of evidence to verify the training of these TBAs (Choguya, 2014; WHO, 2014). Snowballing is a method used to sample hard-to-find research participants that involves asking one research participant to direct you to others (Hennink, 2011: 100). Nevertheless, my attempts at snowballing proved that very few are practicing or else that they were not willing to be identified, and so to that end I ended up interviewing only three, all of whom had practiced it before, but were no longer practicing it at the time of the interviews. However, it would be wrong to over-simplify the ban on TBAs practicing and its impact on Korekore women's SRHR: this issue will be discussed later. I used a research-based recruitment strategy to get to one non-governmental organization (NGO) known as Population Services in Zimbabwe, which works on sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Six Catholic nuns who work with the Catholic Church on health matters were also interviewed.

1.8.2 Description of Fieldwork Process

The impetus of this study was to understand the strategies that Korekore women use in navigating their SRHR, which are arguably violated in the name of Catholic teachings on sexuality and African cultural practices. This section discusses the context of the study, the study design, participant recruitment, methods of data collection and the researcher's identity.

The area known as Mt. Darwin was named after Charles Darwin by Fredrick Cortney Selous, a hunter and explorer (Bourdillon, 1978: 236). This piece of information is important, as it leads the reader to understand that civilization, colonization and evangelization happened simultaneously under the indirect but concerted efforts of missionaries, hunters, explorers and colonizers. The main source of income in this district is agriculture, with crop production and livestock farming as major economic activities. Despite their reliance on agricultural activities, farmers have very high temperatures, ranging above 25 degrees Celsius, and low rainfall below 500 mm per year to contend with (Hoko et al., 2009). This means that most of the inhabitants of Mt. Darwin belong to the middle or lower classes. This information is important, as it helps us to understand the economic background of my research participants. According to the

archives of the Jesuits in Zimbabwe on the history of the Zambesi missions, Mt. Darwin was one of the sites of European missionary work in southern Africa conducted by the Portuguese Jesuit Gonzalo da Silveira in around the 1560s (Jesuit archives, 1875-1932). This historical background is very important, as it will be used to understand how the encounter between Catholicism and Korekore culture and religion might have affected women in respect of their SRHR.

The inhabitants of this district are predominantly the Korekore, a sub-ethnic group of the Shona. As already mentioned, the Shona are the main ethnic group in Zimbabwe, constituting about 80% of the total population (Ndlovu, 2009: 48; Pikirayi, 2002). Among the inhabitants of Mt. Darwin are several ethnic groups which have migrated for economic, political and even religious reasons, namely the Karanga, Manyika, Ndauro and Zezuru (Mawere and Mubaya 2014: 9). The amalgamation of these ethnic groups caused some challenges in sampling research participants, described later. I selected the Korekore people of Mt. Darwin because they are presumably the original inhabitants whose culture might be somewhat undiluted. Fieldwork with them was carried out for a period of ten months in 2018 and 2019.

I employed ethnographic studies during my fieldwork. Since I had lived and worked among the Korekore for nine years before carrying out this fieldwork, it was easy for me to immerse myself within the group. This was an advantage for participant observation, in-depth interviews and informal conversations. I carried out focus-group discussions towards the end of the fieldwork, and most of those who participated were those I had previously interviewed. This was quite helpful because they were already acquainted with my research. Ethnography also allowed me to tease out the women's sensitive experiences, which would not have been easy using any other method. I was therefore able to make a 'thick description' of the Korekore, which gave me an in-depth understanding of their culture (see Geertz, 1973). This helped me develop an understanding of the Korekore's point of view, thus opening my window as a non-Korekore to understand how they do certain things and why.

My previous work experience with these women as a nun in a Catholic ministry earned me their trust, although in a few instances, informants found it difficult to talk about sexual issues with a nun who practices sexual restraint because of her religious vows. Pastoral ministry entails caring for people's souls, which is done by praying with them, sharing in their grief and celebrating their successes (Gula, 2014). Be that as it may, very few of my research participants

indicated that there was a taboo against talking about sexuality with a religious nun. In line with my previous work experience, there was no culture shock at all, given that I am from the same Shona sub-group to which the Korekore belong, hence some cultural practices are similar to mine, although ethnography was of benefit to my study of Korekore culture.

The qualitative approach I adopted helped me explore and describe the ‘quality’ and ‘nature’ of how the Korekore behave, experience and understand their world view. As already indicated, my interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. This was meant to avoid imposing rigid frameworks on my research participants and to capture their perceptions of anything that could be complex and contradictory. However, this does not mean that I took all my research participants told me at face value. I was quite aware that these responses were supposed to be interrogated further, hence I complemented the interviews with other methods such as focus-group discussions, participant observation, informal conversations and observations, and workshops.

By speaking on the women’s platforms, such as their guild meetings and their kitchen parties, I encouraged them to attend the workshops. In deciding who should participate, the priority was given to women I had previously interviewed. However, anybody who was willing to participate could do so, even if they had not been interviewed earlier. In fact, it was difficult to leave other women out, as most of them wanted to participate in the workshop. To avoid this difficulty, I adopted a ‘first come, first served criterion’ for non-Korekore women. The number obviously depended upon the availability of resources, such as accommodation, transport and food. To allow everybody the chance to speak, groups were limited to twenty people, there being five groups of twenty, with two days per group. These workshops helped me to observe unspoken phenomena such as body language continually, which helped when it came to discourse analysis. Moreover, the workshops allowed room to take detailed notes, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue can serve the purpose of transferability. This means that any researcher can conduct a similar study using the same procedure, thus contributing to the credibility of the study results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that workshops can be a good qualitative research methodology in the social sciences, while Lain (2017) states that workshops foster engagement through collaborative discussions and constructive feedback between participants and facilitators. My main aim was to elicit more data from the research participants in a more relaxed way, where everybody could feel valued and could participate freely.

In order to make my research of practical relevance, I used ‘workshops as practice’ in which Paulo Freire’s Training for Transformation (T for T) methodology was key (The Communication Initiative, 2002) to training women as a way of capacitating them to come up with strategies to navigate their SRHR that are transformative and sustainable. T for T is a methodology based on the philosophy of Paulo Freire and has been developed by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel. It is meant to stimulate people to take active responsibility for their own lives. This they do by analyzing the causes of their problems, challenging types of injustice and planning actions to address their challenging situations (Tarusarira and Kori, 2008). T for T also uses a participatory approach, which in my case was very helpful in encouraging Korekore women to reflect critically on their challenging experiences in line with their SRHR and to identify viable strategies together to improve their situations. The workshop was guided by four steps, which were as follows:

Firstly, individual women went around the gallery looking at the picture codes and then selected one picture depicting a SRHR problem they were familiar with. This stage was known as the gallery walk and was a discussion technique that gets learners out of their seats and invites them to become active participants in the learning process (Bowman, 2005). While this method is normally used in a school environment, it is also transferable to other situations, hence I used it for the women’s workshop.

Secondly, when the individuals had chosen the pictures that resonated with the stories they were familiar with in the context of SHRH, they then identified others with pictures which showed similar problems and sat together in a small group to analyze the problems using the following questions:

- a. What do you see happening in the pictures we have selected?
- b. Why does it happen? (root causes) (attitudes, capacity, conditions, beliefs, norms and practices)
- c. Does it happen in real life situations? Give examples from your experiences?
- d. What other SRHR problems does this lead to? (effects)

Stage three was designed to allow the women to go into a sharing plenary. A plenary suggests that all members were now present and had a chance to discuss their findings. Each group presented a summary of their discussion and shared stories about some of the problems that the women had experienced or are still experiencing. In the process the facilitators assisted the group in identifying key problems and summarizing them using system-thinking methods, such

as influence maps and diagrams. Influence mapping is a tool for examining and visually displaying the relative influence that different individuals and groups have over decision-making (Hanneman, 2001).

The fourth and last stage was to identify and analyze the strategies the women use to navigate their problems in light of their SRHR. In this they were guided by the following questions:

- a. What strategies do you use to navigate each of the problems?
- b. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of the strategies?
- c. In what ways are the strategies effective in addressing the problems with SRHR that you identified?
- d. What are the constraints in using the strategies?
- e. Which of the strategies would you recommend to others in similar circumstances and why?

Using several methods was very important since it was helpful in triangulating my research data. I chose a qualitative approach over other approaches, such as quantitative methods, because its very flexibility allowed me to study the Korekore in their natural setting, identifying how their behavior and experiences are shaped by their social, economic, cultural, physical and political characteristics (Hennink, 2011: 9; Brick, 2007). In conducting in-depth interviews, I used the interview guide as a memory aide to direct the conversation towards issues around the strategies that the women use in navigating their SRHR.

Using the focus-group discussion method, I made a deliberate selection of Korekore women covering all ages from 16 to 76 and including women from both rural and urban areas. The discussions were held among four groups of different age groups, each group comprising seven participants in the same age range and both urban and rural residents. This environment created a comfortable space for participants to express their views and also helped to uncover various issues ranging from factors violating women's SRHR, the Church's teaching on sexuality, the position of women in the family and cultural practices in connected with sexuality. I used a vignette at the beginning of every discussion group in the form of a video on the conflict over

family planning methods and sexual rights.¹ According to Hughes and Hubby (2002: 382), a vignette is a text, an image or other form of stimulus to which research participants are asked to respond. This vignette was very useful in eliciting data on the sensitive topic of sexuality which the Korekore rarely have the space to talk about openly. Another method of data collection I used with the women was participant observation. One Thursday per month, the women would have regular meetings at the church or in different chosen locations where they hold discussions on several topics. They would discuss any social issues, for example, cleanliness, raising children and satisfying their husbands, among others. Being a participant in this space helped me to learn about several of the dynamics around women's sexuality and how that shapes the way they navigate their SRHR. I also observed two traditional marriages and two wedding ceremonies just to acquire an understanding of the social behavior of the Korekore, the meaning they attach to marriage and how that impacts on their meanings regarding women's sexuality.

As highlighted already, qualitative research involves understanding the perceptions, beliefs and feelings of one's informants, especially in respect of sensitive issues such as violence and sexuality (Hennink, 2011: 64). In line with the requirements of research ethics, I asked the participants to participate in the research without being coerced, to which they all gave their verbal consent. I sought permission to audio-record, video-record, take photographs and write notes. All the participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. As already noted, the issue of sexuality is a sensitive topic in most contexts, including among the Korekore. This might mean getting participants to revisit their painful experiences and thus their becoming emotional during the conversations. To remedy this, I sought free counselling services from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development in Zimbabwe to which I could refer anyone who wished to be helped. While it is important for a researcher to achieve high-quality ethical standards for the benefit of his or her research participants, I concur with Kumar and Cavallaro (2017), who argue that in researching sensitive topics, the researcher needs to exercise self-care. After a long hot day travelling and driving to the villages and listening to the women's stories, I would become tired and exhausted. To help myself, I engaged in several strategies of self-care. I found the most helpful strategy was running ten kilometres along a country road. Debriefing with my supervisor was also helpful, as his feedback refuelled

¹ <https://mariestopes.org/where-we-work/zimbabwe/>

me so I could keep going. In some cases I would play *mbira* music, the *mbira* being a musical instrument with metal keys attached to a wooden soundboard. Parallel with data collection, I also made verbatim transcriptions and engaged in some reflections, which also represented the beginning of my data analysis.

1.8.3 Researcher's Identity and Impact on the Study

The whole process of data collection was made easier due to my language, identity and experience. I am myself a Zimbabwean, and I communicate fluently in Shona (my mother tongue) and English (the official language), which are also the languages my research participants speak; hence I had no problems in accessing data. Language influences meaning, which is sometimes constructed through metaphors, proverbs and idioms that are language-specific, hence social reality can be experienced best in one's own language (Chapman, 200; Lackoff and Johnson, 1980; Ottis, 2000). Having worked with women before in a pastoral ministry, I even knew the coded language that women use when they talk about sexuality: for instance, the word 'laces' refers to the labia minora. It is this previous experience with these women that helped me create a good relationship with them. Some ended up asking for my totem (a very important aspect in Shona culture, as that starts a relationship) and then called me *muzukuru* (niece) or *tete* (husband's sister). Among the Shona, this kind of relationship makes one loosen up and makes it easy to talk about sensitive issues such as sexuality without any feelings of shame. As already indicated, my earlier work experience with women in the pastoral ministry and in the same area gave me access to the women without much difficulty, though this made it difficult to leave out other Catholic women who were non-Korekore. This is because most people wanted to participate in the interviews and discussions. In my view, this was because the women had somehow found a safe space in which to share their stories about their sexuality, a rare space for Korekore women in particular and for Zimbabwean women in general. Secondly, my identity as a Catholic nun made them want to teach me the dynamics of women's sexuality. Teaching me would give them a degree of power that they are normally not allowed in Catholic Church settings. My own experience with women and the violence they suffer would have led to my conceptual baggage influencing the data, so I used my training in research methods to maintain reflexivity. However, several interviews with the women were very long because they kept bringing up personal issues that needed pastoral care. Moreover, some of the stories were exciting for them to share since this led them to revisit the good old

days when they were growing up and even when they started dating. Most of them would laugh when they revisited those moments.

However, finding men to interview proved difficult because of the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society in general and the Korekore in particular (Chitakure, 2016; Kambarami, 2006). Initially the men found it difficult to have a woman interview them on the topic of sexuality, and also some felt that I as a researcher and a nun might condemn them for the violence that men are widely presumed to inflict on women. It took me several phone calls to get ten Korekore men, some of whom would even deny belonging to the Korekore ethnic group, but when I got started, it proved easy to the extent that some ended up asking for my contact details so that communication could continue even after my fieldwork. By the end of my fieldwork, several men had become more relaxed, and those who might have refused to participate ended up telephoning me and saying *'makapedza here zvinhu zvenyu? Todawo kuuya'* ('Are you finished with your things? We want to come also').

Collecting data among opinion formers (medical doctors, nurses, NGO personnel) was made easy because I emailed them beforehand and made some appointments. On arrival, I just needed to produce an introductory letter from my university supervisor, which made me a professional researcher. The remark I would always receive on arrival was, 'Ah! So, you are a nun?' It seems that it was unexpected for a religious figure, at least a Catholic nun, to be researching SRHR, as at the end of the interview I would hear them say, 'When you finish your research, come and work with us so that you can give us access to the Catholic Church in terms of SRHR'. This made me realize that the outside world interprets the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality as difficult to change or to be modified by non-Catholics: Catholics themselves must revisit their teachings.

Reaching out to Catholic leaders was easy because they already knew me. The bishops, priests and Catholic nuns I interviewed felt very comfortable with me as one of them, and they could genuinely share information, although the interviews were time-consuming because most of them reduced the discourse of SRHR to a matter of family-planning alone, hence I needed more time to explain the discourse. I should also note that, compared to the bishops and priests, the nuns were not very easy to interview, as some of them showed some discomfort in discussing SRHR. Although being an insider helped in my acceptance, it was not without its challenges. I

had to keep exercising reflexivity so that I would not fall into the trap of a conflict of roles, where I would have to struggle between my loyalty to the Church and my academic claims.

1.9 Chapter Outline

In Chapter one, I have introduced the entire study based on the strategies that the Korekore women of Mt. Darwin, Zimbabwe, use to navigate their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) at the intersection of Catholic teaching on sexuality and African cultural practices. More concretely, the chapter introduces the discourse of SRHR, culture and religion in Zimbabwe, with a statement of the problem under study, its justification, its significance, the research questions and objectives, scope and limitations, the methodology and the outline.

Chapter two reviews the literature on the historical development of SRHR and the politics of its evolution. It argues that it is very difficult to engage with the discourse of SRHR without paying particular attention to its historical background, which in essence has been greatly shaped by several political agendas, such as population control and many others. The meaning of the SRHR according to the Catholic Church and African culture is also deliberated on. Finally, I conduct a comparative analysis of the meanings of SRHR in the Catholic Church and African culture.

Chapter three deliberates on the second part of the literature review, focusing more on the encounter between Christianity, specifically the Catholic Church, and African culture and how that has affected women who were already struggling with the challenges to their SRHR caused by the demands and expectations of their culture. I argue that, although African culture formerly had its challenges regarding women's sexuality, the coming of Christianity and the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality added another layer of complexity.

Chapter four deals with the concepts of violence and conflict transformation. While violence has for the most part been taken to refer to something that can be seen with the naked eye, like bombs exploding, shootings and so on, in light of women's SRHR I argue instead that the problem is structural violence. I maintain that, if the teaching of the Catholic Church on sexuality and African cultural practices interferes with women's somatic and mental realization regarding their SRHR, then it is legitimate to reflect on the case of Korekore women within the

contexts of violence, conflict and transformation. I also engage with the concepts of violence and navigation which form the bedrock of my thesis

Chapter five presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that are used as lenses through which to view the strategies that women engage in regarding their SRHR. It unpacks the influence of governmentality and social constructivism on how these women respond to violations of their SRHR. The chapter argues that, because of the influence of governmentality and social constructivist theories on shaping women's strategies, the women find it difficult to engage in transformative strategies and thus fail to change the structures that are at the centre of the violation of their SRHR.

Chapter six presents Korekore women's perspectives on the discourse of SRHR and their lived experiences regarding the challenges to their SRHR. Although several women are aware of what SRHR means, there is no homogeneity of meaning or of how they respond to their challenges. Meanings and strategies are shaped by factors such as their education, their economic status, their geographical locations and their age groups. However, what is in the back of most women's responses is the influence of bride wealth, which, from the Korekore perspective, accords them a subordinate position in light of their sexuality.

Chapter seven answers the question that has guided the whole thesis: 'How do Korekore women navigate their SRHR at the intersection of Catholic teaching and African cultural practices? The chapter discusses these strategies, namely resistance, resilience, reworking, docility, rebellion and quiescence. While it cannot be entirely denied that the Catholic teaching and African cultural practices stifle women's SRHR, this chapter argues that a hermeneutical and discursive approach to women's lived experiences might be helpful. The chapter has argued that most of the strategies that the women engage in result in resistance in one way or the other. However, this resistance is covert and does not transform their challenging situations; hence I argue for a transformative and sustainable navigation of SRHR.

Chapter eight recapitulates the discourses of SRHR, Catholic teaching on sexuality and Korekore cultural practices. It further reiterates that the strategies that Korekore women engage in as a way of navigating the challenges to their SRHR do not guarantee them a genuine agency; hence I argue for transformative and sustainable ways of navigation. This chapter wraps up the whole discussion on the strategies Korekore women use to navigate their SRHR. In a nutshell,

I argue that, while these women have several ways of dealing with the challenging situations that affect their SRHR, there should be some way of helping them transform their ‘SRHR’ in ways that are sustainable.

Chapter Two: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR): A Historical Trajectory

2.1 SRHR: A Definition

In 1994 the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) launched a bold new vision of the relationships between population, development and individual well-being. At the conference, which took place in Cairo, Egypt, 179 countries adopted a twenty-year Programme of Action (PoA) to serve as a comprehensive guide to people-centred developmental progress. Among other deliberations, the ICPD Programme of Action was remarkable for its recognition that reproductive health and rights, as well as women's empowerment and gender equality, are the cornerstones of population and development programmes. This therefore marks the beginning of debates on women's SRHR. However, to begin discussing the concept of SRHR on the basis of the decisions of the International Conference for Population Development (ICPD) only and to stop there would mean missing the point to the extent of producing a distorted interpretation of current debates relating to this discourse. SRHR did not evolve out of a vacuum, but must be seen as existing within their own historical trajectories rather than as timeless givens. Given the vast amount of controversy surrounding their evolution, Finkle and McIntosh (2002) argue that they must be read as part of wider social and political movements, ideologies and religions. It is important to note from the outset that although indicators of SRHR have existed since as early as 1954, it was only in 1994 in Cairo that discussion of SRHR as a discourse began. It is therefore the definition produced at this meeting that I deploy here, involving a notion of human rights that is in line with physical, emotional and mental well-being related to sexuality and reproduction (ICPD, 1994). This suggests that everybody has a right to have sex whenever they feel like it, in whatever manner they see fit, with anyone they like and without anybody coercing them. In the same manner, it also suggests that individuals have a right to the number of children they want and the type of family-planning methods they consider suitable for them, also without being forced by anyone. Finally, one further implication of SRHR is that people should be provided with information and health facilities regarding diseases related to sexuality and reproduction.

Despite the above working definition, SRHR has been hotly debated at the highest levels, including at the United Nations, although an all-encompassing and universally accepted meaning remains evasive. This is due to SRHR's highly politicized nature and the involvement of different disciplinary actors, hence one's meaning depends on one's positionality, for

example, whether you are a population scientist, a health activist or religiously conservative (Basu, 2009). Different actors approach the concept of SRHR from different standpoints and for different agendas and goals, thus sometimes diverging from its definition and conceptualization at its inception by the ICPD (1994). From the International Conference on Population Development (hereafter referred to as the ‘Cairo document’), SRHR have been defined as involving a notion of human rights in line with physical, emotional and mental well-being related to sexuality and reproduction. This definition constitutes an inextricable fourfold discourse covering sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health and reproductive rights. The sum total of these four aspects is treated as adding up to sexuality, which in this context is understood as the central aspect of being human throughout life. Furthermore, sexuality encompasses sex, gender roles and identities, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction (Reynolds, 2006; Shaw, 2006; Pascale et al., 2006; Chitando and Njoroge, 2016). The concept of SRHR encompasses everyone’s decisions (young, old, women, men or transgender, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, HIV positive and negative) to make choices concerning their sexual activities and reproduction, free from any coercion, violence or discrimination (United Nations Population Fund, 2008: 6; Chitando and Njoroge, 2016:1; Aggleton and Parker, 2010). SRHR thus entails that individuals should be able to choose whom they want to engage in sexual activities with, when to do so, how to decide on the number of children that they want to have and finally to have access to information regarding their sexuality without anybody influencing or coercing them. This is the definition that was adopted by those who participated in the conference, but it gives rise to the following questions: did it mean the same to everybody who was there, and does it mean the same to everybody at the present day?

As mentioned earlier, the notion of SRHR has become highly politicized. Consequently, in answer to the second question above, it does not mean the same thing to everyone. Different actors choose different aspects they want to emphasize. Demographers concentrate on family planning because this contributes to reducing population, a neo-Malthusian point of view, which holds that population growth is the main cause of poverty and an obstacle to development (Ashford, 2001). Some women activists place the emphasis on reproductive rights. Etymologically the notion of reproductive rights originated with women’s groups in a non-institutionalized context. Their main goal was the struggle for safe legal abortion and contraceptives (Correa, 1997). While this is what is central in SRHR for these women, some religious conservatives have condemned this view. The Catholic Church, for example, argues

that, while women's rights are important, abortion is an example of 'exaggerated individualism' (Beattie, 2014). If SRHR give everybody the right to their own view of sexuality, this means that LGBTQ rights are also part of the package of SRHR. However, some African leaders argue that same-sex relationships are un-African and hence exclude the right to decide one's sexual orientation from the meaning of SRHR (Gunda, 2010). From the different definitions of SRHR that we have, it is plausible to argue that dealing with the concept of SRHR is a mammoth task. To understand more about this complication, one needs to go back to the historical background of SRHR. The following section will therefore trace how the discourse has evolved from as early as 1954.

2.2. The Body Politics of SRHR: Historical Background

Since the inception of SRHR in Cairo, the Program of Action (PoA) has not been fully realized by some or most states. The question to ask, therefore, is why has it been so difficult for countries to achieve the goals of SRHR? This may be grasped better if we can understand the historical development of the discourse. The concept of SRHR can be traced back to several conferences that happened before 1994. What was at the center of these conferences was population regulation. With population at the center of all the conferences preceding the ICPD, we can already begin to realize how politicized SRHR has become, with women's bodies being placed at the center of the discussions. This constitutes body politics and created controversy right from the outset. The term *body politics* refers to the practices and policies through which the powers in society regulate the human body, as well as struggles over the degree of individual and social control of the body. These powers include the institutions of government and its laws, disciplinary power exacted in economic production, discretionary power exercised in consumption, and personal power negotiated in intimate relationships (Harcourt, 2009). From the outset, body politics violates women's reproductive rights at the expense of safeguarding the economy. While issues associated with the body such as rape, contraception and pregnancy were traditionally not regarded as political, Waylen et al. (2013) place them at the core of the political order as markers of status and power. They further point out that body politics is closely linked to broader processes of sovereignty, empire-building, westernization, globalization and neoliberalism. Reproductive rights and control have therefore been central to states and international actors wanting to govern and gender bodies.

In 1954, the United Nations (UN) held a conference in Rome attended by many states. The main goal was to bring together individual population experts in their own capacities to discuss both scientific and general problems related to population and to see what solutions could be devised. The findings from this conference stated that population growth was becoming a threat which could lead to starvation, hence many countries started to work extra hard to control the growth of their populations. Influenced by neo-Malthusian beliefs, many states started to support family-planning programs. The neo-Malthusian belief held that population growth is the main cause of poverty and an obstacle to development (Ashford, 2001). This led some countries to venture into coercive practices by forcing women to have abortions. In some cases, women from impoverished populations would be given incentives. Certain social pressures were also applied by health practitioners in conjunction with politicians as a way of monitoring and controlling fertility. The focus of the world conference in Rome was to discuss population and to see how it could be regulated. However, how could a discussion to do with population have nothing to say about women's reproductive rights? Although the study had to do with population, there was a missing link in dealing with it. Nothing was said about the significance of women's reproductive rights, and yet we cannot talk about regulating fertility without bringing these rights to the table for discussion.

From the 1960s the UN continued to protest that rapid population growth was becoming a hindrance to development, so the organization issued some funding to make contraceptives available as a way of allowing people to limit their fertility if they so wished. It is difficult, however, to say that people were given the choice to limit their fertility, given the cases in which women were forced to have abortions. Zeidenstein (2009) argued that the neo-Malthusian belief constituted violence, suggesting that tracing historical developments will demonstrate why the goals have still not been met. From the beginning, its violent nature leaves a lot to be desired. As time progressed, the UN made a fund available to make sure that all countries, especially less privileged ones, would have access to free contraceptives. This resulted in the founding of the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF, 1969). As indicated earlier, the evolution of SRHR was shrouded in a lot of controversy and power dynamics.

According to Correa and Reichmann (1994), women's bodies became a platform on which to contest and negotiate state power. This and other notions provoked women to come up with conferences to deliberate on their rights themselves. In 1975, women held a conference in Mexico to celebrate International Women's Year at which women denounced coercive

practices in contraceptive research and emphasized the importance of respecting women's reproductive rights. This sparked a change of mind in the next international conference on population, also held in Mexico, in 1984. At this conference, several states confirmed the importance of human rights in the field of population control. Although this stance was adopted, the problem of forced abortion to meet demographic goals continued. It should be noted that not all states assented to the agreements produced by the Mexico conference on population. The Vatican and the US, for example, rejected abortion as a method of family planning (Berro Pizzarossa, 2018). In addition, there was more controversy from women activists, who continued to argue that the population control agenda had nothing to do with reproductive health and rights, and there was a very strong feeling among some women that they were being treated as 'factors' rather than 'actors' and as 'objects' rather than 'subjects' (Cook, et al, 2003.). This population paradigm triggered more active participation from women to challenge it. The controversy became more intense at the Vienna conference in 1993, with pressure from women activists arguing that the UN's human rights system did not promote or protect the dignity and human rights of women. This led the UN and its member states to shift their language from population control to human rights issues. From the 1954 conference to that in 1993, the technical term 'SRHR' was not used, but the discussions pointed to the meaning of the discourse. It is therefore plausible to argue that the discourse of SRHR can be traced back to 1954, even though it was only treated indirectly.

The International Conference on Population Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994, completely changed the population paradigm into a human rights paradigm. Whereas the population paradigm emphasized fertility control, which is a vertical approach, the ICPD became a horizontal and holistic human rights approach. Instead of focusing on fertility control, as was the case in previous conferences, the ICPD focused on safe sex and pregnancy free from coercion, discrimination and violence. It is the ICPD that most people refer to as the beginning of SRHR, but we should nonetheless be aware that this has a long history and that failure to acknowledge that history limits our understanding of the discourse. As we have noted, the ICPD specifies that SRHR give everybody the right to his or her own sexuality and reproduction. In essence, it is about everybody's right to make a choice whether to be sexual or asexual, who to have sexual relations with, whether to use family-planning services and what type of family planning to use, whether to have children and how to space them, and finally to ensure that everyone has information and access to his or her SRHR. This was what was adopted in theory by the 179 countries that attended the conference, but the question is whether it meant the same

for everyone in practice. Although the document was signed as an agreement, it did not have the same meaning and it was not practical for some nations to introduce it, for example, most African states and the Vatican. For example, allowing abortion to women as a right was going to pose problems for some nation states due to their beliefs, making it difficult for the goals of SRHR to be met universally. As early as 1954, the Vatican had already argued that population growth is not the problem the economy faced but how resources are distributed (Ashford, 2001). To be able to investigate how Korekore Catholic women navigate their SRHR, it is crucial to understand how the Catholic Church, which influences their lives, gives meaning to SRHR. The following section will therefore reflect on the Catholic Church and its attitude to SRHR.

2.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: A Catholic Church Perspective

The position of the Catholic Church regarding the discourse on SRHR has been criticized by some scholars, with others referring to its stance together with those of other religious conservatives as an '*unholy alliance*' (Berro Pizzarossa, 2018; Hume, 2010; Berer, 2001). Mattar (2008) observed that the Church poses a threat to the universality of human rights through its political use of religion, culture and tradition to deprive women, unmarried individuals, sexual minorities and others of their SRHR. The position of the Catholic Church on the discourse of SRHR has not been specified in its teachings, hence the only way to learn about its position is to use the evidence in its missions' official statements made at key UN-documented forums, from the ICPD in 1994 to recent statements made in April 2014. I will also relate the Church's position to some of its teachings on sexuality because that is what informs its responses to the deliberations of these conferences.

The term 'Holy See' refers to the international sovereignty of the Pope as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church. In some contexts, he is referred to as holding the 'see of the bishop of Rome'. The term therefore refers to the city state of the Vatican because it happens to be the territory in which the Pope resides. The United Nations refers to this term as signifying the government of the Roman Catholic Church, which accordingly has legal jurisdiction on a par with United Nations member states to negotiate, sign and ratify UN-sponsored international law-making treaties (Coates et al., 2014). The Holy See's formal position as a Non-member Permanent Observer to the United Nations dates back to 1964 and was reaffirmed by a General Assembly resolution in 2004. Using its official privileges, the Holy See engages actively in negotiations at international conferences and throughout the sessions of the General Assembly,

Human Rights Council, Security Council and the various commissions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In the ICPD (1994), reproductive health was defined as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters related to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes’ (UN International Conference on Population Development, 1994a). This definition implies that people should be able to have a satisfying and safe sex life, as well as the ability to reproduce and the freedom to decide whether they should reproduce, when they should reproduce and how often to reproduce. According to Berro Pizzarossa (2018), this notion offered a comprehensive and integrated approach to health needs related to reproduction and places women at the center of the process. Reacting to this notion of SRHR, the Holy See argued that it rejects any attempt that seeks to weaken the family or to propose a radical redefinition of its structure, such as assigning the status of the family to other life-style forms. This position can be interpreted as having been influenced by the Church’s teaching on sexuality, which puts marriage and family at its center (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968). In the Catholic Catechism, the Church emphasizes the importance of the family, which it refers to as the ‘original cell of social life’ (CCC 2207), hence its position on SRHR: ‘Regarding the terms “sexual health” and “sexual rights”, and “reproductive health” and “reproductive rights”, the Holy See considers these terms as applying to a holistic concept of health, which embrace, each in their own way, the person in the entirety of his or her personality, mind and body, and which foster the achievement of personal maturity in sexuality and in the mutual love and decision-making that characterize the conjugal relationship in accordance with moral norms’ (UN International Conference on Population and Development 1994a).

The notion of the family being at the center of the Catholic Church’s teaching will be discussed in more detail in the next section. The Church also argues that it cares about people’s lives, as it has an obligation to be ‘present in the life of the nations. According to the Holy See, this is made evident through the global network of over 5000 hospitals, 18,000 health clinics, 15,000 homes to care for the elderly and disabled, and 25% of all care and treatment for the world’s population living with HIV/AIDS (Coates et al., 2014). For the Holy See, the family is the principal cell or building block of human society, for which reason it has always taught the importance of the family as the basic unit of the social fabric of society itself, according to its catechism: ‘Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society’ (CCC 2207). While neither the

UDHR nor any other international legal instruments seem to have paid any attention to the family, the Holy See continues to express its position on the family and points out that these rights are laid down the UDHR, Article 16:3, which says: ‘We know that a man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, form a family which is the natural and fundamental unit of society’. Informed by this, it goes on to argue that the family cannot be redefined at the whim of rapid evolutions. On the other hand, the Catholic Church opposes those aspects of SRHR that give everybody the choice over whether to engage in sexual activities as they wish and limits sexual behavior to procreation between a married man and woman. Berro Pizzarossa (2018) points out that this aspect of the Catholic Church’s teaching on sexual rights excludes any consideration of the sexual rights of the unmarried and LGBTQ.

The ICPD PoA further states that individuals have a right to their own choice of family-planning services without any discrimination. On the issue of family planning, the Church outlined its moral objections to sterilization, contraceptives and condoms for contraception and HIV prevention (Coates et al., 2014). The Church emphasizes responsible parenthood (*conscia paternitas*), which entails not using contraceptives as a means of limiting the family but resorting to natural family planning only, and only if there are justifiable reasons (*iustae causae*) for spacing children (*Humanae vitae*, n. 16). Although there does not seem to be any consensus over what constitutes a ‘justified cause’, we can rely on the explanation given by Pope Paul VI (1968) that it specifies four areas of human life from which such reasons might arise: physical and mental health, and economic and social conditions. The notion of responsible parenthood covers the couple’s responsibility to God and to new life and not simply to their own self-fulfilment. This is why, at the Beijing conference of 1995, the Church argued that sexual rights pertain only to the responsible use of sexuality within marriage. The Church further argues that fertility regulation is a private matter which is of relevance only to the traditional married man and woman. The Church rejects the notion specified in SRHR that abortion is a way of controlling fertility. For the Church, this is a violation of the right to life as stipulated in the UDHR and the idea that life begins at the moment of conception: ‘no compromise can be made with a person’s right to life itself, from conception to natural death’ (UDHR, 1948: Art, 1).

Apart from emphasizing the individual’s sexual and reproductive rights, the ICPD (1994) stipulates that individuals should be given information about their sexuality and reproduction, meaning that states should see to it that information is provided without any kind of discrimination. This is further supported by the UN’s Special Rapporteur on Education (2010),

which stipulates that the rights-based approach should involve a commitment to provide comprehensive sex education. Regarding the latter, the Catholic Church cites the Convention on the Rights of Children (Art. 18, 1), which states that parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. They argued that it is the responsibility of parents, not states, to educate children and adolescents on matters of sexuality. In light of the Catholic Church's stance on comprehensive sex education, Coates et al. (2014) argue that the Church seems to have overlooked the fact that in the same Convention of the Rights of the Child, the child has a right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds (Art. 13), and also that state parties have the obligation to recognize the right of the child to education on the basis of equal opportunity (Art. 28).

On gender equality and women's rights as included in ICPD (Art. 4.1), the Catholic Church described this as an example of 'exaggerated individualism', which it says is promoted by the sexual and reproductive rights movement. The Holy See stated that the term 'gender' is grounded in biological sexual identities, male or female, which excludes dubious interpretations (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995). On sexual identities, the Church holds that there should not be unjust discrimination towards homosexuals, but it criticized the terms 'sexual orientation' and 'sexual identities' as being ambiguous. In its view, the Catholic Church holds that when we talk of women's rights, it is important to acknowledge that women exist within a context of relationships that provide meaning, richness, identity and human love, which have profound effects on the choices they make throughout their lives. While the ICPD (1994) has been hailed as the moment that shifted the population paradigm to a human rights paradigm and the moment when we begin to speak of women's SRHR, it does not mean the same for everybody. As I have already shown, the Catholic Church interprets this discourse in a manner that is in line with their beliefs and teachings, making it very difficult for women to meet the goals of the ICPD. Having deliberated on the Catholic Church's view of SRHR, I now proceed to interrogate how Africans in general and the Korekore in particular understand and interpret the discourse of SRHR.

2.4 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: An African Perspective

The ICPD Program of Action (PoA) agreed on several elements that needed attention so that the goals of SRHR would be achieved. In this section, these are the issues I relate to the African context to assess whether they have the same meaning as how they were defined in Cairo. They are contraceptives, abortion, LGBTQ rights, maternal and child health, family planning and sexually transmitted disease (STDs). Within the discourse on SRHR, how are these aspects understood in Africa?

At the center of African lives in interpreting any discourse is culture, understood as the traditions, values, customs and norms that shape every aspect of life (Geertz, 2017). However, this is not peculiar to Africa alone. Geertz asserts that culture is a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by members of a society. Culture is a powerful tool which shapes all human activities, including SRHR. To be clear, Africa is not a country but a continent with various differences across the 54 countries. It thus makes sense to ask whether there really is an African culture. I argue that, despite these variations and geographical divisions, there are similarities which can be brought together to form an African culture. Issues such as gender norms, dress codes, leadership structures, marriage patterns and so on tend to be understood in similar ways.

According to the ICPD (Art 7.2), reproductive health implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the ability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. It also implies that both men and women have access to information and to safe, effective and affordable methods of family planning of their choice. Women are also given rights to regulate fertility in ways that are not against the law. Reproductive health care therefore consists of the whole constellation of methods, techniques and services that contribute to reproductive health and well-being by preventing and solving reproductive health problems. It also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations, and not merely counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases. The question is, does this mean the same in most African countries, including Zimbabwe?

Most Zimbabwean women do not have much say when it comes to safe and satisfying sex. Women are not allowed to choose any methods of having safe sex, nor are they allowed to state

when they are not sexually satisfied or when they feel they want to be intimate with their husbands. This is mostly due to Zimbabwean patriarchal traditions and customs, which make it difficult for them to express their sexuality. For the most part, it is regarded as taboo for women to express their sexual feelings openly (Makombe, 2015). From an African perspective, sexuality includes a great number of things, including the way one dresses, one's way of walking, talking, sitting, laughing and so on (Gelfand, 1975). Moreover, as ways of behaving are categorized as either feminine or masculine, in expressing their sexuality, women strive as much as they can to be feminine, which places a lot of pressure on them. Kambarami (2006) argues that for the most part femininity has to do with women being subordinate to their husbands in everything, especially in issues related to sexuality. This is contrary to the meaning of sexuality in the ICPD. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sexuality as 'a central aspect of being human throughout life, encompassing sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction'. Women have their own ways of thinking about sex, yet according to Masvaure (2013) most societies do not allow them to speak openly about what makes their sexual worlds go round.

In the same vein, Makombe (2015) argues that female sexuality has been intricately linked with male sexuality and is only expected to be experienced in the context of marriage. However, this does not mean that marriage is a passport for a woman to be able to express her sexuality freely: it only allows her to experience her sexuality. As I have indicated above and as has been argued by several scholars (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon 1976; Schmidt, 1992; Kambarami, 2006), women's sexuality is in the hands of men. The payment of a bride wealth by the man to the woman's family grants him exclusive sexual rights over her sexuality (Chitakure, 2016). Marriage payments give men the right to claim certain rights from the woman, including domestic, sexual and childbirth rights (Parkin 1980). To be clear, the payment of a bride wealth does not mean the women being bought and sold as a property which, when one is tired of her, one can sell to another buyer. This would be too simplistic an interpretation. Through the payment of a bride wealth, a woman acquires a status rather than losing one because this is one way among others for the man to demonstrate the value he places on the woman and their marriage (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1976).

While from its inception SRHR entails that everyone has a right to a safe and satisfying sex life, despite one's status, this is not the case for most Zimbabwean women. The right to a 'satisfying safe sex' is not granted to everyone. First and foremost, it has to take place in the context of a

marriage. This is one of the reasons why marriage is treated as so important among the Korekore (Bourdillon, 1976) and why it is a social obligation (Tatira, 2016). Regarding marriage as a social obligation can be linked to the African practice of seeing SRHR through communitarian lenses. Communitarianism emphasizes collectivism rather than individualism, hence group feelings supersede individual feelings (Amzat et al., 2020). This is commonly referred to as *ubuntu* philosophy. *Ubuntu* is a Nguni Bantu term which literally means ‘humanity’ and is translated to mean belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity. It is often expressed in the statement ‘I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am’ (Mbiti, 1969: 108-109). To expect Africans to understand SRHR in the light of individual choices is to miss the point. The concept of *ubuntu*, which is deep-seated in most Africans, influences the way they give meaning to most of life’s events. I do not want to neglect the fact that this is no longer the same in all African contexts because of the infiltration of Western values. Nonetheless, although African society is adopting Western values, the concept of *ubuntu* is one among others which has arguably stood the test of time.

If in African society sexuality can only be expressed and experienced in the context of marriage, then it follows that there are some groups of people who, in the African view of SRHR, have no rights to their sexuality. These include the unmarried, the divorced and the LGBTQ. Most African countries treat same-sex relationships as sodomy, indecency and unnatural, yet in the ICPD everyone has a right to his or her sexuality, including sexual orientation (Amzat and Razum, 2020). Apart from this negative attitude to same-sex relationships, another divergence from the Cairo document has to do with young women, who are not expected to express their sexuality. The sexuality of young women is denied within a framework of protection, regulation and discipline (Shefer and Nyabaza, 2015). It may be argued that the concept of *ubuntu* influences the African preoccupation with regulating female sexuality.

Apart from everyone having the right to satisfying safe sex, SRHR insists that everyone should have the ability to reproduce, should be granted the freedom to choose how many children one should have, how to space them and what family-planning services to use to regulate one’s family (ICPD, Art. 7:2). This is not the meaning most African countries give to reproductive rights. Among the Korekore, the language of reproductive rights does not apply to women, only to men. The moment a man pays the portion of bride wealth known as *danga* (cattle); he receives exclusive rights over the woman’s reproductive rights (Chitakure, 2016). The woman therefore cannot take any decision about her reproductive capabilities, nor can she decide

anything in matters of family planning. As for her having more or less children, this is at the sole decision of the man, and what makes this more challenging is that many African men prefer to have huge families. Having many children among the Korekore was traditionally a sign of wealth (Bourdillon, 1976). Although nowadays things may have changed because of factors such as economic challenges and the influence of globalization, the key idea in most Korekore families is that a childless marriage is incomplete. Children are important because they offer social security, assist with labour, confer social status, provide continuity through reincarnation and maintain the family lineage. Because of the patriarchal nature of most African societies, it is difficult to discuss reproductive rights as entailing a choice for everyone, to have the number of children everybody wants or to use the type of family planning one desires. It is therefore plausible to argue that meanings of SRHR are dealt with differently, as they are shaped and influenced by one's cultural, religious and economic situations. In trying to understand how Korekore women respond to the challenges to their SRHR in the context of the Catholic Church's teaching on sexuality and cultural practices, it is important for me to discuss the Church's view of SRHR and Korekore culture side by side and assess where they agree on some aspects of SRHR and where they disagree. This assessment will help us in understanding the impact of this encounter on women's SRHR.

2.5 The Catholic Church and African Culture on SRHR: A Comparative Perspective

The participants from the ICPD agreed that SHRH meant everybody having his or her right to sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health and reproductive rights (ICPD, 1994). What is central in this agreement is everybody's right and autonomy to his or her own sexuality and reproduction without discrimination or coercion. Yet as already noted, these four aspects have not been interpreted in the same ways by the Catholic Church and some African countries, particularly Zimbabwe, in which my research is situated. In this section I therefore compare and contrast the Catholic Church and the Korekore's meaning of SRHR, specifically women's SRHR.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sexuality as the sense of being human throughout life, a state of physical, mental and social well-being that requires a positive and respectful approach. According to the Cairo document, everyone should be granted the right to have a pleasurable and safe sexual experience, free from coercion, discrimination or violence (ICPD, 1994). In relation to the physical well-being of women's sexuality, the Church has

emphasized that it is its obligation to be ‘present in the life of the nations’. At a very practical level, it is worth noting that the Church contributes to the world’s eradication of sexually related diseases through the provision of hospitals and clinics (Coates et al., 2014). However, it is difficult for every woman to go to hospital for the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases because of stigma. Like the Church’s view of sexuality, the Korekore too consider that sexuality can only be expressed in marriage. To that end, some women who are divorced or who are just single find it difficult to access sexual health in hospital. In these circumstances, such women turn to indigenous medicines for their survival. They can do this thanks to the pluralistic nature of most African societies, in which two traditions co-exist, for example, indigenous versus modern medicines.

Bode (2011) argues that culturally constructed concepts of disease are powerful tools which influence one’s choice to seek medication. Even though both indigenous and modern medicines for treating sexually transmitted disease are available in Zimbabwe, it is not easy for women to seek this medical assistance because of the negative perceptions generated by sexually transmitted diseases. Being infected by diseases such as HIV/AIDS, gonorrhoea and syphilis is frequently taken as a sign that one has loose morals, hence most affected women prefer to suffer at home and will only visit a hospital when the situation is beyond their control, that is, if they can still walk, otherwise they prefer not to seek medical help. I argue that, while the Church has provided medical facilities to increase sexual health, educating people in accessing these services is lacking. The Church needs to embrace more liberating progressive interpretations of women’s sexuality by using the pulpit to engage in life-giving biblical hermeneutics. It is not enough to provide services without educating people, as the latter helps debunk cultural constructions that do not promote women’s SRHR (Chitando and Njoroge, 2016).

SRHR thus envisages everybody having a choice when it comes to enjoying a pleasurable and safe sexual experience. The Church and African culture both object that it is not for everybody but only for those in traditional marriages. Responding to the meaning of SRHR as stipulated in the Cairo document, the Catholic Church has maintained that sexual rights pertain only to the responsible use of sexuality within marriage (Coates et al., 2014). This position is influenced by its teachings, namely that marriage and conjugal rights are ordained for procreation and the education of children (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965) and that humanity has been made to increase and multiply. Thus, those who have committed themselves to matrimony should participate in procreation (Genesis 1; 28). In ICPD (1994) negotiations, the Church outlined its moral

position, limiting sexual behaviour to procreation by a married man and woman, and placing sexual behaviour in the realm of personal ‘responsibilities’. To this end, understanding SRHR as including ‘everybody’s choice in the light of sexual rights’ does not seem to have a place in the Catholic Church.

This way of understanding sexual rights also applies to Africans, specifically here Zimbabweans. Not everybody is granted the right to his or her sexuality, but only those in traditional marriages, which disadvantage women the most. Yasmine et al. (2015) state that cultural and religious beliefs related to sexuality often impose stricter sanctions on women than on men. They also argue that in many societies, men tend to associate sex with power and masculinity, while women are taught to associate sex with immorality and the possibility of becoming pregnant. In order to conform to these norms, most women give up their sexual rights unwillingly. Evidently, scholars seem to agree that female sexuality as we know it today is, by and large, constructed by society (Makombe, 2015; Chitakure, 2016; Kambarami, 2006). Those who are not yet married should have their sexuality tightly controlled for their own benefit and that of society. In their study of what they call life-orientation (LO) programs, Shefer and Ngabaza (2015) described how, in South African high schools, attempts are made to curb teenage pregnancies, unprotected sex and the danger of contracting sexually transmitted diseases like HIV and AIDS. Although the initiative has good intentions, it continues to emphasize the dominant trope of danger, risk and consequence in which young women are constructed as those responsible for avoiding such consequences, both for their own sakes and for that of the health of the wider social and moral landscape (2015: 74). This is an example of how most African countries do not regard sexual rights as applying to young women. This African perspective tends to inadvertently deny and silence female sexuality by associating it with moral degeneration to the extent that young women who want to have sex are thus constructed as a danger, not only to themselves, but also to society at large (Makombe, 2015).

Moreover, some African societies in Zimbabwe do not regard elderly women as having any sexual rights. According to Mapuranga in Chitakure and Njoroge (2016), old women are starved of sexual relations and of any space in which to express their sexuality. She argues that among the Ndau (a Shona subgroup) elderly women are not expected to be sexually active. This is also the case in Nigeria, where sexual activity is said to be restricted to procreation, hence it is presumed to cease once reproduction is over (Olatalayo et al., 2015). Indeed, if elderly women were to engage in sexual activities, this would bring misfortune on the land. They are even

stereotyped as '*vakatsveruka*', 'without morals'. What exacerbates their losing their sexual rights is that they themselves have internalized this notion as reality and give up their sexual rights even if they feel they still want to be sexually active (Mapuranga, 2016). However, I am not overlooking the fact that biologically most women become sexually disinterested in sexual relations as they advance in age. This decline in interest on the part of older women could be due to the changes in the female anatomy that come with aging. The hormonal transition, and the low serum level of oestrogen and testosterone that accompanies it, are known to be responsible for decreased libido, sensitivity and dyspareunia in older women, as genital atrophy and reduced lubrication interfere with sexual comfort and pleasure (Gelfand, 2000).

Although there are women whom the Church and African culture categorize as deserving sexual rights (the married), this too is not to be taken at face value. We need to analyse whether they really have such rights. Even when the women are married, in reality African culture does not treat them as individuals who should have any sexual rights. In Shona culture, certain practices promoted by patriarchy deprive women of any form of agency in relation to their sexuality (Kambarami, 2006). The word 'patriarchy' comes from the Greek word *patriarches*, literally a reference to rule by the father. At a macro level, it is 'a social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or in a family, the legal dependence of the wife and children, the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line, broadly controlled by men of a disproportionately large share of power'. (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 1999) From this definition, it can be argued that men are already elevated in the social hierarchy when they are born. Similarly, Catholicism too tends to collude with African culture to enforce the belief that women are just the appendages of men and that their sexuality is subservient to male sexuality. Women are often tamed and coerced into submission through scriptures such as Paul's Letter to the Colossians (3:18), which encourages women to submit to their husbands. Although the Catholic Church does not explicitly teach this, scriptures such as these are normally used in giving instruction on marriage at weddings. Several biblical verses can be cited, and are cited even by the women themselves, so that they too contribute to their giving up their sexual rights. Paul's letter to the Colossians (Colossians 3: 18, 19) encourages women to 'submit to their husbands' and men to love their wives. Such interpretations of scripture tend to leave most women at the mercy of their husbands when it comes to their sexual rights because obedience is easier to measure than love. If a woman does not do what her husband wants, that can be easily construed as disobedience. However, if a man does the same, he can still maintain that he loves his wife.

Sexual rights entail that everyone, including women, has a right to sexual pleasure (ICPD, 1994). This means that women too are allowed to express their sexual satisfaction or dissatisfaction to their husbands. Not only that, it even extends to their initiating sex themselves if they so wish, although this does not happen among most Africans. Among the Shona, the man initiates every sexual move, while the woman follows to the extent that she can sometimes be forced so that she realizes what she wants. African culture seems to believe that women are passive and incapable of initiating sexual desire without stimulation by men (Groneman, 1994). Moreover, patriarchy regards sex as a symbol of male domination. A real man must use sex as a weapon of subjection to put a woman in her place. Sex (the act) is a site for exhibiting masculinity and demonstrating maleness as a superior sexuality. In some cases, sex can be used as a form of punishment for women. In Shona culture, the phallus is a weapon that men wield and use to put women in their place. Men in Shona culture tend to think that a stubborn or non-conformist woman needs a strong man to discipline her sexually, and this stubbornness is defined as the woman claiming her rights, including sexual rights (Kambarami, 2006).

Another aspect of SRHR agreed in the Cairo document is the use of family planning, which stated that couples and individuals should decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, to ensure informed choices and to make available a full range of safe and effective family-planning methods (ICPD, 1994: 7.12). In the Cairo PoA, the Holy See's position on family planning voiced moral objections to sterilization, contraceptives and condoms for contraception and HIV prevention. As compared to the discourse on family planning in the ICPD statement, the Holy See has come to focus less on defining morally acceptable behaviour and more on the responsibility to devise suitable policies that maintain the couple's 'dignity' and 'rights'. In essence, this is based on the Church's teachings on responsible parenthood, clearly set out in the encyclical *Humanae vitae* (1968: no. 6), which reads:

If therefore there are *iustae causae* for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances, the Church teaches that married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse only during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained.

Examining this more closely, we can see that the Church is against any form of family planning, stipulating that the results of conjugal acts should be children. It is in this way that the Church and Korekore culture agree in rejecting family planning, as this is said to interfere with the process of begetting children. As the Catholic Church places great importance on marriage and the family, so do the Korekore. Bourdillon (1976) argues that in most African contexts, the Korekore included, marriage and procreation are intertwined and inseparable. It is almost always presumed that readiness for marriage is readiness for procreation; to get married is an opportunity to contribute freely, through procreation, to the survival of the lineage and of society at large. This explains why, at a wedding (both traditional and Christian), there is a common prayer of good will addressed to the 'newly married' for the fruit of the womb. From the Catholic perspective, prayers such as the following may be said: 'God grant you many children'. In these wishes, both the social perception of marriage and the use of sexuality in marriage as primarily geared toward the begetting of progeny are encapsulated (Thatcher, 1999). This demonstrates how difficult it is for the Catholic Church and Korekore culture alike to perceive SRHR as giving women access to family planning. However, I am not arguing that because of this perception women do not use family-planning services. This will be discussed in another chapter.

Under the heading 'Health, Morbidity and Mortality, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development' (ICPD, Paragraph 8.25), attention was drawn to the public-health impact of unsafe abortion and the need to reduce recourse to abortion by expanding family-planning services. Although the conference specified that abortion should not be considered a means of family planning, one group of women activists argued that women should be given the right to safe abortions. However, this was one of the most difficult issues to negotiate at the ICPD (WHO, 2000), with conservatives like the Catholic Church rejecting it. According to the Holy See, 'no compromise can be made with a person's right to life itself, from conception to natural death' (Coates et al., 2014). This position is further stated by Pope Francis in his apostolic (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013), namely that the Church cannot be expected to change its position on the question of abortion. Again, responding to the UN Secretary-General's report (2013) asserting that victims of rape in situations of conflict should have access to emergency contraception and services to terminate pregnancies, the Holy See protested that abortion invites further violence on a woman who is already in difficulties. It is interesting to note that, due to the objections of the Holy See and other conservative actors, treating abortion

as family planning was dropped in the final resolution, being changed instead to the ‘sexual and reproductive health’ of victims of rape in conflict (Coates et al., 2014). Abortion is also controversial in most African countries: for example, section 48 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe of 2013 guarantees ‘every person the right to life’, while Section 48(3) states

An Act of Parliament must protect the lives of unborn children, and the act must provide that pregnancy may be terminated only in accordance with the law, that is, a) when continuation of the pregnancy would constitute a serious threat of permanent impairment to the woman’s physical health; b) when there is a serious risk that the child to be born will suffer from a physical or mental defect as to be permanently, seriously handicapped; and c) finally when the pregnancy is the result of unlawful sexual intercourse such as rape, incest or sexual intercourse with a minor. (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013)

Several African constitutions also state that abortion is illegal, for example, those of Angola, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritania, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Senegal. Similarly, Obianuju Ekeocha, founder of Culture of Life Africa, a pro-life organization based in England, has argued that abortion is un-African and that the call for safe abortion by European countries amounts to neo-colonialism. She even argues that abortion is a Western project that violates African traditions and culture. However, this argument may risk homogenizing Africa, overlooking the fact that there are some African countries in which abortion is legal, such as Cape Verde, Mozambique, South Africa and Tunisia. Tamale (2014) is of the opinion that homogenizing African women is paramount to silencing (some) African women’s voices and that it fails to acknowledge and celebrate the diversities and multiplicities of the continent’s women. Although debates around abortion are controversial, research has indicated that generally both the Catholic Church and African culture adopt the same position on rejecting abortion as a means of family planning, which has been taken as denying women their reproductive rights (Berro Pizzarossa, 2018).

Gender equality is another goal of the ICPD Programme of Action, emphasizing that women should achieve equality and equity based on harmonious partnerships between men and women and that women should be enabled to realize their full potential (ICPD, 1994: 4.3a). At the Fourth World Congress on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Holy See argued that the term ‘gender’ is ‘grounded in biological sexual identity, male or female’ which necessarily ‘excludes

dubious interpretations which assert that sexual identity can be adapted indefinitely to suit new and different purposes' (Coates et al., 2014). Gender equality therefore involves the 'complementarity' of women and men in dignity. The Holy See also argued that there is a distinction between the sexual and reproductive rights agenda and the authentic or genuine advancement of women. Advancement of women can only happen through recognition of the deep fundamental anthropological truths about men and women, and not through the 'exaggerated individualism' that is promoted by the sexual and reproductive rights movement (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 14 September 1995). As I have indicated already, the Holy See argues that we should not overlook the fact that women are defined by their social circumstances, in which they function as wife or mother. To this end, the goals of SRHR must 'acknowledge and enable women to overcome barriers to equality without forcing them to abandon what is essential to them'. Moreover, women exist within the context of relationships which provide meaning, richness, identity and human love. Their relationships, and especially their role within the family as mothers, wives and caregivers, have profound effects on the choices women make and their own prioritization of the rights they exercise throughout their lives. What the Catholic Church seems to suggest about gender equality is that the diversity of contexts from which every problem must be seen must be acknowledged because of the risk of entering into the politics of representation, which focuses on the question of who speaks for whom and what is being said about what. Spivak (1988) explains representation as involving a dual process of speaking about and speaking for others. In Spivak's notion, the type of representation which most women activists do is what she calls *vertreten* (to represent or speak for politically). In other contexts, this is when Western scholars, for example, tend to assume that they know and understand the situation the 'Others' are in and can thus speak for them. (2010). I do not mean to romanticize gender inequalities in terms of SRHR, but rather want to demonstrate the danger that women activists sometimes fall into when they take the lived experiences of the people for granted.

The Holy See's statements from different conferences, including the ICPD, may be interpreted to mean that the Church does not have gender equality on its agenda or that its interpretation is different from that in the ICPD PoA. The same applies to African culture. For example, in Shona culture, patriarchal practices shape and perpetuate gender inequality right from childhood. The socialization process in Shona culture differentiates female children from male children, with males being socialized to view themselves as breadwinners and the heads of households, whilst females are taught to be obedient and submissive housekeepers (Bourdillon,

1976; Chitakure, 2016), a position that has become normalized. McDowell and Pringle (1992) further point out that women are not only constantly defined in relation to men, they are defined as dependent on and subordinate to them as well. As a result, women are socialized to acquire those qualities that fit them for a relationship of dependence on men. These qualities include gentleness, passivity, submission and always striving to please men. In such situations, it becomes difficult to discuss women's SRHR from the perspective of gender equality. Most women have internalized their subordinate positions to the extent that they feel being subordinate is the best position for them, as it is interpreted as being feminine. The family acts as a brewery of patriarchal practices by socializing the young to accept sexually differentiated roles. The socialization process in the family, which instils patriarchal practices into the young, does not end with the family but also infiltrates other social institutions like marriage, education, politics and the economy. In marriage, for example, a man can have as many wives as he wants and can have extra-marital affairs as a bonus, but if a woman does that, she is treated as a person of loose morals and risks being sent back to her family (Leclerc-Madlala, 2000). To be clear, I am not suggesting that women should be promiscuous; all I am demonstrating is that there are no equal opportunities in African cultures in terms of how marriage is understood. Moreover, African culture does not maintain gender inequalities in this way alone: education in Africa involves gender inequalities between girls and boys. If we pay particular attention to the textbooks that are used in schools, they depict boys as tough, rough, mentally skilled and adventurous, whilst girls are depicted as soft, gentle and enjoying carrying out household duties. This even extends to dress, as the uniforms for boys are suitable for more adventurous play such as tree climbing, while those for girls are made in such a way that they can only play simple and soft games like musical chairs. This is why some scholars like Chirimuuta (2006) have criticized the education system in Zimbabwe for being gender-insensitive and gender-blind, as it encourages male models, male-authored textbooks and theories, while making it clear that women should be academically subordinate. As a result, the enrolment ratio for girls in Zimbabwe declines with the level of education: for instance, in secondary schools the enrolment ratio for girls is only 42% (UNAIDS, 2004). This can be ascribed to the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society, which views educating girls as a waste of resources, since they will marry out and benefit another family (*Human Rights Monitor*, 2001). Education is another way of bridging gender inequality, especially as perpetuated by African culture, but in fact it fails to solve gender inequality problems because society silences those who are educated in such a way that they themselves give in to these social expectations. If they work hard to address their inequalities, they are labelled 'unmarriageable' (Chirimuuta, 2006). We cannot emphasize

enough that marriage is important among the Shona, to the extent that every woman strives to get married, doing whatever possible to be seen as marriageable, at the cost, very possibly, of compromising her rights.

Economy is another arena in which some African countries display gender inequality, for example, in Zimbabwe: patriarchal attitudes allow few women to occupy leadership positions. Most women occupy less challenging positions, like secretarial or clerical positions. This is also the situation in Parliament, where the constitution gives 25% of positions to women and 75% to men. However, we should not overlook the fact that there have been some developments in addressing gender inequality, as in the past females could only occupy less challenging positions, for instance, those to do with gender, culture or education. Now women in Zimbabwe are in ministerially challenging positions, such as Minister of Defense.

In this section, I have shown that the Catholic Church and African culture have many similarities in the manner in which they prioritize issues of gender inequality. The language used by the ICPD and the way it agreed to address gender inequalities is not the same as the way the Catholic Church deals with this issue. This is due to the conservative nature of African culture and of the Catholic Church on issues related to sexuality.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the definition of SRHR, its historical development and the Catholic and African perspectives on it, and finally conducted a comparative analysis of the meaning of SRHR for the Catholic Church and African culture respectively. I have argued that arriving at a universal definition of SRHR is very difficult due to the fact that the discourse surrounding it has become highly politicized. Hence one's definition depends on one's positionality, for example, whether one is a health activist, a religious conservative, a population scientist and so on. It is also greatly shaped by one's cultural context. However, the definition I will use in this thesis is that agreed at the ICPD in 1994, namely that SRHR entails a notion of human rights connected with physical, emotional and mental well-being in relation to sexuality and reproduction. The definition of SHRH has also been greatly influenced by the historical development of the discourse surrounding it. We have a lot to learn from how SRHR was influenced by population scientists and demographers as a response to curbing population growth, which in the neo-Malthusian belief was thought to threaten economic development. Historically, the goal of SRHR was to control population out of political expediency. In deliberating on the meaning of SRHR, I have established that the Catholic Church rejects most of the goals of the ICPD PoA in relation to family planning, abortion, same-sex relationships and many other issues, believing that these lead to extreme and exaggerated individualism which threatens the meaning of the family. Although African culture has no written literature that can be seen as rejecting or opposing the ICPD PoA, African practices and belief systems demonstrate that, like the Catholic Church, the family and community are important, rendering most of the goals of SRHR un-African. It is plausible to conclude that the meaning that the Catholic Church and African culture both hold of SRHR exert pressure on women and shape the ways in which they navigate these challenges.

Chapter Three: Religious and Cultural Encounters: SRHR, Violence, Transformation and Navigation in Zimbabwe

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is the second part of the literature review which focuses more on the encounter between Christianity, specifically the Catholic Church, and African culture and how that has affected women who were already struggling with the challenges on their sexuality. The main argument in this chapter is that although African culture formerly had its challenges regarding women's sexuality, the coming of Christianity and the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality added another layer of complexity. The chapter also delves deeper into the notion of African religion and/or culture. It has been argued that the Africans are notoriously religious and to separate religion from any facet of their lives is very difficult. This then seems to affect the way the women navigate their SRHR. I argue that although religion is a very important facet of African life, it is also a cultural process of all societies and hence is important in many societies not the African society only. When we argue to religion as being inseparable from culture and all aspects of life in African societies, we need to be very critical otherwise we risk stereotyping all African as religious. The chapter finally deliberates on the teaching of the Catholic Church and how it affects the way the Korekore Catholic women navigate their SRHR.

3.2 African Religion and / or African Culture: A Problem

The notion that in Africa religion encapsulates all aspects of life can lead us to conclude that religion and culture are inseparable. Several African scholars have argued in this manner, for example, Parinder: 'Religion is a fundamental, perhaps the most important influence in the life of the West African' (Parinder, 1949: 2). In the same manner, Mbiti has argued that in their traditional ways of life African people are deeply religious. It is religion more than anything else which colours their understanding of the universe, making it a profoundly religious phenomenon; hence, 'to be is to be religious in the universe' (Mbiti, 1969: 262). Mbiti seems to suggest that religion is the bedrock of African existence to the extent that absolutely everything that happens in an African's life is religious, for example, courting, sneezing, eating, trading and so on. However, some research has demonstrated that it is possible to separate religion and culture in Africa, with culture being reduced to the secular. In Zimbabwe the terms *chivanhu* and *chikaranga* (in Shona, the language spoken by about 80% of Zimbabweans) are used to differentiate between the religious and the secular, with *chikaranga* referring to culture

(Shoko, 2007). Again, we should not neglect the fact that the differentiation between the religious and the secular by the Karanga has resulted from certain hegemonic tendencies in the definition of the category of religion, with the secular referring to the indigenous religion and the sacred to Christianity. Through the process of social constructivism (Luckmann and Berger, 1967), the Karanga, like most African ethnic groups, have been made to internalize the notion that the 'real' religion is Christianity and that their indigenous religion is non-religious, hence they made a distinction between what is 'religious' and what is 'secular'. I argue that the notion of *chivanhu* and *chikaranga* as secular is a result of colonialism and unequal power relations. In essence, *chivanhu* and *chikaranga* just means the culture of the people who live in southern Zimbabwe, including their language and their style of living; hence, separating African religion from African culture might be difficult to sustain. In the same vein, the notion of being religious, Chidester argues, is a matter of constructions: 'Religion is at once a reality, an idea, a construction, an invention and a functioning' (Chidester, 1985: 79). In other words, religion is a product of academic imagination. If, as Mbiti (1969) and Parinder (1942) argue, religion permeates all aspects of African life, is African religion not the same as African culture?

While I agree with these scholars that religion is indeed a very important facet of African life, that should not be exaggerated. It needs to be critically addressed, or otherwise we risk stereotyping all Africans as being religious. Religion is part of cultural processes of all societies and not only for Africans. In line with Chitando, we might consider that 'to argue that religion is everything in African societies in fact is to say nothing is religious' (Chitando, 1997: 90). We need to understand the contexts in which these arguments are put forward. For example, scholars such as Parinder and other early African scholars were reacting to early western scholars who had denigrated indigenous religions in writing or even argued that in Africa the notion of religion does not even exist. That being the case, to base arguments directly on these reactions and conclude that this is the state of affairs in Africa might be problematic. However, in most African contexts, it is difficult to separate religion and lifestyle: for example, Bourdillon (1976) argues that among the Korekore it is very difficult to separate the two completely. Hence in my research the concept of the religion and culture of the Korekore will be referred to as Korekore cultural practices.

In discussing African religion and culture, we are therefore dealing with the complicated phenomenon of how to define religion. The difficulty in establishing a unanimous definition makes it difficult also to deal with the question of whether religion and culture are the same

thing. Primarily, we need to understand what constitutes an acceptable definition. How do we account for diversity? Does religion exist in the singular or the plural, and can language account for religious experience? These questions and many more create the impression that religion is notoriously difficult to define. No wonder Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1963) has argued that: ‘...the sustained inability to clarify what the word religion signifies in itself suggests that the term ought to be dropped; that it is distorted [and] not really corresponding to anything definite or distinctive in the objective world’ (1978:17).

Smith’s argument suggests that we do not have the word ‘religion’ in other non-English languages apart from the ‘so-called’ primary languages (English, French, German and Italian). This has also been argued by Ninian Smart (1989), who pointed out that European languages have been dominant in the definition of religion. Over the centuries, there have been attempts to define the phenomenon of religion by psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, theologians and now even biologists, yet no one definition has proved sufficient. However, we need to acknowledge the attempts that have been made by some scholars as a starting point, but of course not an end point. Ray defines religion as a ‘meaning system’ or a theory of meaning (Turaki, 1999: 70). For Idowu (1973), religion is the means whereby God as a spirit communicates with human beings, hence it is the result of humanity’s spontaneous awareness of a living power. In the same vein, Steyne in Turaki (1999) sees religion as involving a search for a relationship with the supernatural. I argue that the definition of religion, like every definition, is embedded in one’s political, social and religious background, among other things. Approaching religion from an African perspective, Beyers’ definition (2010) might be something to build on. He argues that religion constitutes continual participation in traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. Given that tradition includes rituals and practices, this project takes religion as a cultural system, as Geertz (1996) argued. However, I do not take it for granted that there are problems surrounding the word ‘tradition’, which has been opposed to ‘modernity’ (Graburn, 2008). Following this line of argument, it seems problematic to separate religion and culture in Africa, hence when discussing Korekore culture, I pay particular attention to their lived religion. The concept of lived religion focuses on the laity, not the clergy or elites; on practices rather than beliefs; on practices outside religious institutions rather than within them; and on individual agency and autonomy rather than collectivities or traditions (Ammerman, 2016). In essence, the notion of a lived religion requires attention to be paid to religion going beyond traditional institutions and beliefs to focus on ‘individuals’ practices in everyday life’ (McGuire, 2008: 16).

Although the inextricability of African culture and African religion was alluded to earlier, it is important at this juncture to show what is meant by African culture before delving more deeply into arguments that it does violence to women's SRHR and into how women navigate their rights. Etymologically the word 'culture' comes from the Latin *cultus*, which means tilling, cultivating or refining. The tilling, cultivating and refining process should produce an end-product that evokes admiration and respect (Dawson, 2013). Put simply, culture refers to the ways in which people think and do all the things they have inherited from past generations, including worship. As I noted above, religion and culture are intertwined, although according to Bonney (2004), the globalization aspect of religion, especially of Catholicism, tends to affect its relationship with African culture by creating a binary opposition between superior and inferior (McLaughlin, 1996; Sourou, 1994), a dichotomy that tends to have a negative impact on women's SRHR.

3.3 Christianity Encounters African culture

In pre-colonial times, respect for women was inherent in most African cultures. Many natural processes related to women, such as childbirth, were considered mysterious, and thus women enjoyed great prestige. According to Charles Finch (1991), African men did not know about the link between sex and birth, hence it was believed that new life was created by the woman alone. This perception of birth also led people in many African societies to conceive God as female. On another note, African women were powerful economically, religiously and politically, as, for example, among the Bantu of Zaire, the Ashanti of Ghana, the Baddibunka of Gambia and the Shona of Zimbabwe (Phillot-Almedia, 1994). It is argued that in the pre-colonial era, in some African countries, descent was (and still is) matrilineal, that is, the lineage was based on the mother rather than the father, as is the case in most African states today. Examples include the Akan of Ghana, Ivory Coast and Togo; the Bainouk of Guinea, Gambia and Senegal; the Bantu of central Africa; the Chewa of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia; and the Makonde in Tanzania. Women were permitted to inherit property, and a husband was expected to move into his wife's house, hence there was none of the discrimination against women that is experienced nowadays. According to Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (1985), in some cases women were even considered superior to men, as evidenced by men's statements: 'We

live at the homes of the women; the land here belongs to women; women have a say in everything we do; we listen to their opinions...' (Schoepf, 1985: 5).

Politically, women had important roles as queens, princesses and warriors: for example, Llinga fought the Portuguese in Congo in 1640; Nehanda Charwe Nyakasikana led the MaShona nation of Zimbabwe between 1862 and 1898; Taytu Betul (1850-1918) was an Ethiopian Empress who personally led troops to establish the modern capital of Addis Ababa; the Queen of Ghana, Yaa Asantewaa (1850-1921), led her army in continuous battles against the British until her capture; and Queen Amina, the Hausa warrior, extended her nation's boundaries to the Atlantic coast and personally led her army of 20,000 soldiers from 1536 to 1576 (Abidemi and Bukola, 2019). While it is true that women had power in several areas, such as agriculture and village administration, it should not be forgotten that they did not have absolute power over men.

If the women had power in different aspects of life, did they also have power over their sexuality? As has been argued by Abidemi and Bukola (2019), previously men did not recognize any link between sex and birth. Women had much more knowledge of sexuality than men, and their sexuality and ability to reproduce gave them power. This might be the result of their socialization. In Zimbabwe, girls were and still are taught much more to do with sexuality as they grow up than boys. Their aunts and grandmothers give them intensive lessons on their sexuality and their roles as reproductive beings, which enhances their knowledge of sexuality. Although the boys were also taught, by their grandfathers, that was not as intensive compared to the teaching of the girls. Schmidt argues that the coming of Christianity around the 16th century shifted women's power over their sexuality (Schmidt, 1996). The struggle to control women 'sexuality', which was not an issue in the years before the fifteenth century, became central to the shaping of the Zimbabwean political economy. The control of African women's sexuality became everybody's business: that of African men, European men and even European women, who feared that African women's supposed potency would threaten their husbands. It can therefore be argued that the coming of both Christianity and colonialism respectively to the present-day Zimbabwe added another layer of complexity to the women who were already fighting to negotiate their power under such circumstances of patriarchal dominance. Schmidt (1996) refers to this as being 'beholden to two patriarchs', a reference to how women would negotiate the impact of the encounter with the missionaries and colonizers, as well as Zimbabwean patriarchal power structures over their lives. Most of the history of Zimbabwean

women has been written by white males, who have presented the women as entirely subordinate second-class beings from time immemorial and in every sphere of their lives, including sexuality, and deliberately disregarded the power that women had in the pre-colonial era. Furthermore, neither European politicians nor missionaries recognized the female authority that had been exercised in pre-colonial Zimbabwe: for example, women had high status in farming, status that declined in the colonial period. Missionaries encouraged male-dominated farming by giving plows, oxen, new agricultural techniques and improved seeds to men alone, thus fostering the idea of patriarchal, patrilineal male-dominated households with women uncharacteristically playing a subordinate role.

Like state officials, European missionaries also displayed strong gender prejudices. For example, in the early years of the mission, one Jesuit priest in Chishawasha opposed the employment of African women as teachers or catechists on the grounds that their characters make their involvement in such a serious occupation impossible and that they are too ignorant, too volatile and too feather-brained to allow them to be entrusted with any such task. He further argued that they would not be listened to with any respect, even by the natives themselves: their efforts to instruct would only be laughed at. They also described women as downtrodden beasts of burden at the beck and call of tyrannical husbands (Schmidt, 1996). This view of women by some missionaries presented women as downright subordinate. Fr. Hartmann concluded that in Zimbabwe women are regarded as 'non-existent' (Schmidt, 1996: 19). While missionaries, explorers, hunters, travellers and colonizers had their own conceptions of Africans, Africans had their own conceptions of them. This might be understood better in what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) refers to as the 'interpretative encounter', a reference to the way the colonizers and the colonized interpreted each other when they encountered each other. In Zimbabwe, missionaries and explorers were known as '*vasina mabvi*' (those without knees) (Mavhunga, 2007). This description had nothing hegemonic about it but was just a way of describing their knees being concealed out of sight in long trousers. While African women in general and Korekore women in particular understood and interpreted their sexuality in their own ways, missionaries, explorers, hunters, travellers and colonizers had different ways of doing so. This interpretive encounter therefore deeply affected women's sexuality. The coming of Christianity naturalized women's subordination in terms of their sexuality and in many aspects of their day-to-day lives. On the one hand, because of their allegedly innate qualities, women were suited to being wives and mothers. On the other hand, because of their supposedly greater aptitude for rationality, men were considered best suited to be the guardians of these homes. This perception

of roles drew on biological distinctions between the sexes for its foundation and, as a result, these distinctions and their resultant roles were viewed as entirely 'natural' (Erlank, 2001).

Segueda (2015) argues that it is difficult to separate colonialism from religion, especially Christianity. Christian missionary activity has been shown to be an operational strategy of colonialism. Christianity and colonialism worked hand in glove in suppressing women. While women were revered in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, the coming of Christianity around the sixteenth century, together with the colonization of Zimbabwe in the seventeenth century, complicated women's position in society in almost every sector. It can be argued that the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society that we see today and consider to be the nature of many African countries can be seen as resulting from the coming of Christianity and colonization. Schmidt has noted (1996) that missionaries and colonial officials both manipulated gender ideology to achieve their economic and political objectives. She further argues that colonization had a destructive effect on indigenous gender relations. The most unfortunate aspect of this is that Zimbabwean men joined European men in establishing control over women's sexuality and mobility (Schmidt, 2016). This encounter complicated women's sexual lives. The colonial officials and the missionaries had realized that men were receptive to their European teachings, whereas women rejected their so-called 'civilization'. Thus, to deal with the women, who were more powerful and arrogant, it was important to have the men who had power, like the chiefs and headmen, join in suppressing the women. This encounter is one among other factors that marks the beginning of women losing their power. Its influence on the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society cannot be overlooked. This arrangement of Zimbabwean society affected all aspects of life, including sexuality. It is often forgotten that the way most Africans handle their sexuality has been greatly shaped by the coming of Christianity.

It is the task of this thesis to investigate how women negotiate their rights in such a dialectical situation. Africa is inhabited by various ethnic nationalities with diverse cultures, but there are several similar practices, making it possible to investigate how violent these practices have been and still are in any African context and to apply them to the Korekore situation. The payment of *lobola* (bride wealth) in the African context as we understand it today cannot be properly grasped without linking it to the coming of Christianity, specifically Catholicism and the colonization process. Schmidt (2016) argues that the concept of *lobola* as we have it today is historically un-African, its commercialization only starting to be felt with the advent of Christianity and colonization. She further argues that commercializing bride wealth was a way

of taking power away from the women and also of making it difficult for young men to pay it so that they would have to work for it and provide cheap labour in the process. Historically, bride wealth was considered a token of appreciation and a signal to cement the relationship between the two families, who would just give a hoe or an axe and one or two head of cattle. After the onset of the European occupation of Zimbabwe and the introduction of a cash economy, the colonizers and missionaries changed the meaning of the payment of *lobola* so that it became compensation for the loss of a worker by the in-laws, who would lose the labour power generated by their daughter and secondly to pay for the reproductive function that the girl would perform for her new family. This transaction, according to (Erlank, 2018), turned women into men's personal property, with which they could do whatever they wished. As Chitakure (2016) has argued, this would make it difficult for the woman to decide on the number of children she wanted because of the transaction.

Because of the influence of Christianity and colonization, which contributed to making the payment of bride wealth much more important, nowadays girls are caught up in the pressure of wanting to get married like everyone else, as this comes with pride for herself and both families. It is important to most Africans that they make their families proud of them because that is what is at the heart of African culture. In most parts of Africa individualism is not left with any space. The individual's success is the family's success, and likewise one's failure is also the family's failure. This also applies to marriage, as is explained clearly by the African *ubuntu* philosophy mentioned earlier, according to which 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti, 1995). This philosophy emphasizes the idea that humans cannot exist in isolation. The community is central to the African way of life. To this end, when a woman gets married, she can be controlled by anyone else; some have argued that once the bride wealth has been paid, the woman becomes the property of the whole family. This is why, in recent times, the practice has been criticized by some African countries (Kelly, 2006). Their objections stem from the view that the practice is transactional in nature and therefore results in women being commodified, which has adverse consequences. Husbands may feel that, because they have paid for their wives, they can mistreat them, exposing married women to physical violence and conflict (Kambarami, 2006). For example, from the Ugandan context, when some men hit their wives, they say 'I am beating my cows' (Eryenyu, 2014). Due to these abuses in the payment of bride wealth, some African nations are coming up with measures to curb the violence to women that results. For example, Kenya's new rules on marriage stipulate that a token bride wealth must suffice to meet the needs of the custom. Equally, the Zambian government has also

spoken out to discourage families from requesting exorbitant amounts for their daughters (Muwati, etal 2014). Zimbabwe too (at the time of writing) is in the process of amending the marriage bill, with particular attention to the payment of bride wealth, which has seen most parents commercializing it (*The Herald*, 25 June 2020). However, Bourdillon (1976) cautions against claiming that bride wealth leads to all women being treated as property, as this might mean producing a hasty generalization. His argument is that, in Zimbabwe, the payment of bride wealth by the man to the woman's family gives the woman status rather than leads to her losing it. Payment of a high bride wealth therefore both expresses and enhances the value the husband places on his wife. As a result, she earns respect among both her in-laws and her family (ibid.: 50), an argument that is, however, debatable.

On the other hand, it might not be reasonable to blame women's subordination entirely on the coming of Christianity and the process of colonization. While there is a sense in which these processes exacerbated women's subordination, culture itself has a major part to play, the encounter with the two institutions complicating women's SRHR accordingly. The fact that the woman's own family would receive compensation for loss of her labour shows that even her own family played a part in violating her rights. Some scholars have argued that in post-colonial African societies, modernization has changed the conception of *lobola* so that it is not so oppressive to women. Because of the increasing tendency to educate girls to higher levels, it is claimed that customs related to marriage and the family have also started changing or are disappearing. This has resulted in individuals choosing their own marriage partners, rather than this being decided for them by the parents, greater autonomy in SRHR, as evidenced by increased divorce, and a reduced role for bride wealth in marriages (Vandewiele and Hondt 1980, Pillai and Barton 1998). However, a more critical analysis may show that the change is one of degree or dynamics rather than of kind or logic. Anderson (2003) argues that modernization has indeed led to increased levels of prosperity. However, due to the economics and the greed and profit motives that come with capitalism, some societies have inflated bride wealth payments, instead of reducing them as modernization theorists would believe. To this end, it can be argued that modernization has influenced processes, trends, perceptions and experiences of bride wealth dialectically. Zimbabwe is no exception in this regard. Due to the economic challenges, the practice of *lobola* has been shifted away from being a traditional practice that binds families to becoming a money-spinner, which continues to affect women negatively, since they cannot negotiate safe sex, resulting in their sexual health being compromised (Chitakure, 2016; Chitando and Njoroge, 2016; Chabata, 2012; Bourdillon,

1991). The payment of *mombe dzedanga* (a portion of bride wealth paid in cattle) gives the man full rights over the woman's body. As a result, she finds it difficult to take any decisions over her sexuality, such as when to have sex, how to have sex, the number of children to have, whether or not to use contraception, what type of contraception to use, and so on.

Other scholars have argued that the concept of *lobola* is itself subject to firm patriarchal control. Despite the fact that the process of bringing up children from birth until they marry is the women's task for the most part, they have very little to enjoy when their daughters get married, as three quarters of the *lobola* goes to the father and his relatives, and only about a quarter or less is reserved for the mother. In most cases she may only be given the *mbudzi yemasungiro* (a goat paid towards the first child's delivery), *mombe youmai* (a cow for the mother) and some clothes, while the father receives nine cattle or more, clothes, and a lot of money known as *rusambo* (Dzadagu, 2017). The fact that mothers have been socialized to perceive *lobola* as making them lose rights extends to them not even having a say over their own children. This is in itself disempowering and violent, as it makes them vulnerable to accepting any decisions that can be made regarding them as normal. No wonder Dzadagu (2017) argues that it is disempowering of women when *lobola* is shared disproportionately between the mother and the father. Kirmani and Phillips (2011) have argued that religion and traditional cultures are conservative patriarchal institutions which often disempower rather than liberate women, an insight that also applies to the Catholic Church and Korekore culture.

This patriarchal ethos is even more evident when it comes to women's SRHR, with several notions of what women's sexuality should be like. Among the Korekore, patriarchy affects several facets of life, including religion, politics, education and the economy, and it shapes gender roles. There are some roles which are meant for men and others for women, as is made clear to children at a very tender age. For example, as boys grow up their parents buy them 'so-called' important masculine toys, such as wheelbarrows, scotch carts and cows, to mention only a few, while girls are given teddy bears or kitchen utensils of some kind. This already defines the central duties of girls as having children and looking after the family through cooking, washing and so on. The girls are socialized to become a weaker sex than the boys. In this manner it is clear that socialization within families plays a very large role in the subordination of women (Kambarami, 2006), in which sexuality is not spared. There are several ways of viewing sexual issues in most African contexts that contribute to the violation of women's SRHR: for example, sexual matters cannot be discussed openly because of the taboo surrounding this, making it

embarrassing (*zvinonyadzisa*) (Maunze, 2009; Landa and Fushai 2018). Gao (2013) defines a taboo as any subject that is prohibited or that evokes avoidance by society, as it is perceived to be harmful to its members. While Henflick (2011) has argued that sexuality is tabooed because it is linked to humans' animal nature, I argue that among the Korekore it is tabooed because it is regarded as sacred.

Its sacredness is demonstrated by the fact that most or all events that are related to women's sexuality and that reproduction cannot be performed without religious figures such as aunts, chiefs, uncles, priests and even close friends known as *sahwiras*, who are also regarded as religious figures. These religious figures are there to make events such as marriages, preparation for delivery, preparation for weddings and so on, sacred. Because sexuality is sacred and is regarded as a religious phenomenon among the Korekore, it is plausible to evaluate the impact of the sacred on women's SRHR. Tabooing sexual matters makes it very difficult to find a platform to discuss most issues regarding sexuality, one result of which is that women are infected with sexually transmitted diseases because of their lack of knowledge (Shoko, 2006: 105). The Korekore's attitude, expressed in the word *zvinonyadzisa* (it is embarrassing) and in some of the teachings of the Church on sexuality, especially its position on the use of artificial family-planning services, seem to affect women doubly, as both culture and religion make them vulnerable and prone to sexually transmitted diseases. I do not mean to make any value judgement regarding the Church's teachings, but what I do seek to demonstrate is how this encounter impacts on women's sexual health.

Another issue with sexuality is shame, which applies to both old and single women. Paying particular attention to old women first, in traditional African contexts, women who have reached the menopause normally leave the bedroom that they used to share with their husbands during the years of their fertility and go and sleep on their own. This comes from the belief that one ceases to be sexually active once one has passed child-bearing age (Garland and Blyth, 2005). As has been mentioned before, the Ndaus of eastern Zimbabwe treat having sex after the menopause as a shame, and they even go so far as calling such acts *makunakuna* (taboos), which may result in the rains failing, among many other misfortunes. Among the Korekore, the women themselves have been socialized to believe that when they are advanced in age they should not be sexually active, for that will result in them developing a very big tummy, as if they are pregnant, which is known as *kamimbamutekwe* (literally 'fake pregnancy'). This will result in them being stigmatized by society as old women with loose morals. However, this does not

happen to old men: on the contrary, they actually find a young woman to satisfy their so-called 'endless' virility (Mapuranga, 2016: 63). This view of older women's sexuality as expiring in itself constitutes violence against women's SRHR, as these women give up their sexual rights and opt to suffer in silence for fear of society giving them a bad name. It is also important to investigate how these old women negotiate their sexual desires in light of these pressures from their culture. The same shame is experienced by single mothers when they have sex outside marriage: for example, when they become pregnant, society regards them as prostitutes because they too are expected to be sexually inactive, not having husbands. In African contexts generally and in Zimbabwe in particular, it is only the married who are allowed to have sex. There should be no sexual relations outside marriage. This is also the case in Catholic teaching, which says that sex is reserved for heterosexual married couples (Pope Paul VI; Salzman and Lawler, 2008). Moreover, the attitude of some missionaries in Xhosaland demonstrates further that the Catholic Church regards sexuality outside marriage as immoral and disgusting behaviour (Erlink, 2018). Again, I am not romanticizing loose morals.

Although issues of sexuality are not discussed openly in most African countries, some beliefs and forms of socialization lead people to hold certain values and norms about it: for example, sexual intercourse may be seen as a weapon to discipline and silence women who are thought to be getting above themselves. In this case, sexual intercourse is framed as a tool to instil discipline in women, thus being used as an instrument of domination, control and discipline, and showing men's power over women. In line with sex being a tool of discipline, in most Zimbabwean cities, if a girl goes around wearing a mini-skirt she is harassed and stripped naked, and sometimes people shout that she needs a man, showing how sex is used as a tool to impose discipline (Magaisa, 2017). This type of socialization also does violence to women's sexual rights.

As marriage in most African countries is held in very high esteem and is the goal of every woman, most families take pains to make sure that they prepare girls as they grow up to become good and 'fit-for-marriage' girls and become good wives for the future (Kyalo, 2012). A wife's goodness is rooted in her being able to satisfy her husband's sexual desires, hence the duty of the family, especially the aunts, is to make sure that they prepare the girls fully for this. Some scholars have argued that the very process of this preparation does violence to their SRHR (Landa and Fushai, 2018; Guttmacher Institute, 2014). In most parts of East and Sub-Saharan Africa, young girls undergo a process of labia minora elongation (Shoko, 2006; Mutsvairo,

1996; Perez, 2014; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1994), that is, enlarging the labia minora through manual manipulation, which is done for men's sexual enhancement, aesthetics, symmetry and gratification. Women are treated as if they do not have feelings in this regard. Another way of ensuring that women can sexually satisfy their husbands is to fatten the would-be wife. This is a common practice among the Efik and Ibibio tribes of eastern Nigeria and is known as *mbodi* (Poponoe, 2012). Although this is considered to enhance the woman's beauty, we see again that women in several African contexts are regarded as sexual tools who only exist to satisfy men's sexual desires. What tends to be overlooked is the fact that this practice violates women's health, especially in this case, where ailments like obesity, diabetes, cancer and many more are caused by being over-weight.

Speaking at a workshop about their sexual rights, a lady in her early forties said, '*Kana dai ukasagutswa nababa, haugoni kutura nekuti baba ndibaba*', that is, 'Even if your husband doesn't sexually satisfy you, you cannot openly say it because "a father is a father"' (UWP 41). I have since shown that for the Shona in general and the Korekore in particular, a husband is respected and revered in the same way one respects one's biological father. Culture is central in defining and understanding women's sexuality in most African contexts. The Korekore, like many other cultures, are predominantly patriarchal and thus encourage male dominance and female subordination (Kambarami, 2006). Following the statement by UWP 41, it is clear that women cannot dictate the pace on sexual matters (although given the chance they would want to) in case they are regarded as whores. In agreement with this, Gupta (2000) notes that in most African contexts there are significant differences in what men and women can or cannot do about sexuality.

The argument raised by UWP 41 (above) indicates that women's sexuality has been externalized. Among the Korekore, society defines women's sexuality as indicating, for example, when, how, with whom, under what circumstances and with what outcomes a woman should have sex. Among the Korekore, as in several African societies, girls are taught as they grow up that their sexuality is the property of their husbands. To support this, several cultural practices are carried out to make sure that they will satisfy their husbands when they get married. A good example among the Korekore is the safeguarding of virginity (Kambarami, 2006). When a girl is married as a virgin, her husband pays the family a cow known as *mombe yechimanda*. *Chimanda* refers to the hymen, the integrity of which when a girl gets married being a sign that she is still a virgin; hence the cow is paid to celebrate the girl's virgin status

at the time of the marriage. According to Baloyi (2010), the first day the couple are supposed to come together in intimacy, the husband's aunts are supposed to provide them with white bed sheets, which they will remove early in the morning. If the girl was a virgin, she is supposed to bleed during her first sexual encounter to show that the hymen has been broken, evidence of which will be on the white sheets. In circumstances where the new couple cannot spend their first night together somewhere near their aunts, the husband is instructed to investigate on the family's behalf whether the woman was a virgin, and if she was indeed a virgin, he is supposed to confirm this by paying *jira remasungiro* to the girl's family. This payment consists of a piece of material not less than six meters in length which the mother of the virgin will use to make an outfit. If the girl is found not to be a virgin, they make a big hole on the cloth. This is not unique to the Korekore: in Georgia and Egypt also, men demand medical verification of their fiancées' virgin status (Kamm, 2016; Wyne and Hassanein, 2017). In Iran, women who were not virgins when they married may be divorced (Abboud et al, 2019). The issue of virginity can go to other extremes: for example, in Zimbabwe in 2014 an apostolic sect emerged which forced women who were not virgins when they married to acquire virgin girls for their husbands as compensation for their loss of virginity (Vengeyi, 2016). These constructions play a key role in inducing women to police their own virginity.

Another cultural practice that most Korekore women emphasized to make sure that girls are prepared to satisfy their husbands when they get married is labia minora elongation. The women work very hard to make sure they have what is expected of them in their marriages, including elongated labia. In most of Africa, including among the Korekore, labia elongation signifies women's completeness, femininity and sexual attractiveness (Mano, 2004). When you have elongated labia, you are regarded as *mudzimai pane vamwe* (a woman among other women); those who do not have elongated labia, by contrast, are associated with derogatory euphemistic labels such as 'open holes', 'houses without a door' and so on. Most women said that it is a requirement to make sure you possess them. In a discussion with the women, one woman from the urban part of the district said '*zvinodiwa nemunhukadzi wose, chero nemiwo even muri mupikiri munotofanira kuva nazvo, ndihwo humai hwacho...*', that is, 'It is needed by every woman, even you as a religious nun; you need it, that is real motherhood' (UWP 44). This shows how this concept has been constructed as an important aspect of women's sexuality and how women take it as such. Some think that this aspect has been overtaken by time, but I found that it really existed among the Korekore. This thus contradicts Williams' argument (1969) that labia elongation is losing its relevance for Shona urban women because it is backward and

therefore no longer appropriate to their lifestyle. Due to the social pressure on women who do not have elongated labia, most women still think it is necessary to have them. The ways in which women have internalized several practices such as virginity safeguarding and labia elongation, among others, impact on how they navigate their SRHR. We need to understand the power of language in this whole situation of the internalization of the social demands on women's sexuality. Foucault (1976) argues that language or discourse creates and forms identities. In this whole situation, indeed, women are created as subjects of their sexuality without them even realizing. This shapes the way they respond to the challenges to their SRHR.

Like the language used for women who have not had their labia elongated, the language used to refer to women who are not virgins when they marry is also pivotal to the way women internalize social expectations concerning their sexuality, in this case, the importance of their virginity. Among the Shona, virginity is taken as a sign of purity and dignity, which most girls work very hard to preserve. According to Bourdillon (1967), when a girl is married as a virgin she is called a '*musikana akazara*' or 'full girl', while a non-virgin will be described as a '*musikana akatambiswa*', or 'wasted girl). It can be argued that the way Korekore women navigate their SRHR is greatly influenced by the social construction of language. Burr (2003) maintains that language is a powerful tool of class consciousness and class control, thus in essence creating class categories. As already noted, there are several agents of the socialization of girls into womanhood, and for the most part the language that has been used in the process of mentoring the girls has been at the centre of creating the women as second-class citizens with regard to their sexual rights. One often hears statements by aunts to their nieces or by mothers to their daughters who are about to get married, such as '*Murume haafaniri kunyimwa bonde, izvozvo hazvifaniri kuitwa zvachose*', that is, 'A man should not be denied sex; never do that at all', and '*Unofanira kuita mukadzi kwaye*', 'You must be a good wife'. A good wife is defined first and foremost as one who subjects herself to her husband's wishes, including in sexual matters. She should be ready to give him sex whenever he wants it, cook for him, wash his clothes and do everything to make sure that he is happy (Chitakure, 2016). Failure to be a good wife results in being returned to one's parents or, in blunt language, being divorced. Because of the fear of being a social misfit, women internalize this social construction of sexuality without realizing that these are just social constructions which can be deconstructed and reconstructed in time and space. This therefore affects the way they navigate their SRHR. This brings us to another social construction which seems to impact on how women respond to the challenges to their SRHR; 'the inextricability of marriage and children'.

What we need to understand is that marriage among the Shona is highly revered to the extent that those who do not get married are stigmatized as '*vane chitsinha*'. Moreover, those who have been divorced are stereotyped and stigmatized, hence every woman works very hard to make sure that she gets married and preserves her marriage. While marriage is important to most Africans, including the Korekore in particular, it is incomplete without children, and this affects the manner in which Korekore women navigate their reproductive health and rights. In most African contexts, the value of children is derived from the function they serve and the needs they fulfil for both their parents and society (Dyer, 2007). Although this might differ from one context to another, generally in most African countries children are important, leaving no place for infertility. For instance, in Tanzania, a woman's status is increased by the number of children she has, to the extent that if she is grand-multiparous she is respected in all respects, including being accorded a platform to speak in meetings of male elders (which is not the case in normal circumstances). This is not unique to Tanzania: in Mozambique too, women who have never had children are not allowed to train children or even to mix with them because it is expected that they will harm them (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973). In Zimbabwe, women without children are not respected, being called by their first names instead of by their eldest child's names. Behind all these social constructions, most women feel that they should have children so that they are respected by society. Moreover, if a person, whether a man or a woman, dies without having children, he or she does not qualify to be an ancestor (Mbiti, 1989). For Chitakure (2017), without children one dies forever, while to deliberately refuse to bear children is an insult both to oneself and to the community. He further argues that this is tantamount to choosing death over life and to choosing the finitude of humanity over perpetual existence. Most Korekore women indicated that it is indeed of benefit to them to have many children because that is where their security is. Sexuality should take place within the confines of marriage: among the Korekore divorce is not acceptable, especially by women.

The belief in witchcraft in other African cultures also impacts on women's SRHR. Because some people believe in witchcraft, it is very difficult for women to seek antenatal care services, at least in the first three months of pregnancy, because during this time pregnancy is kept secret. Mathole et al. (2004) have argued that some women in Zimbabwe felt that pregnancy had to be kept secret during its early stages for fear of evil-doers who might bewitch the pregnant mother so that she gives birth to a disabled infant or suffers a miscarriage. From a simplistic vantage point, this might look as if the women themselves take the decision to hide their pregnancies,

leading one to conclude that they are disadvantaging themselves. However, the Foucauldian metaphor of the panopticon helps us understand that there are systems of power at work that render those with less power docile and that by so doing they end up surveilling themselves and hence become easy to govern (Foucault, 1975). I argue that most of these cultural beliefs are greatly influenced by patriarchy, yet it is the women who suffer most of the consequences. As indicated earlier, the payment of a bride wealth, specifically *mombe dzedanga* (cattle), by the man to the woman's parents gives him power over the woman's reproductive rights (Chitakure 2016). As a result, when the woman gets married, she knows that one of her duties is to bear children, and so she does whatever it takes to make sure that she has children in what can be seen as an example of panopticism.

Children are paramount in most African cultures, including Korekore culture. African culture situates the relevance of the family in having many children (Schmidt, 2012). In Senegal, Ghana and Zimbabwe, infertility is considered the greatest tragedy, as the true meaning of marriage is only fulfilled if the couple conceive and produce a child, preferably a boy (Tabong, 2013; Chitakure, 2016; Pathisa, 2008; Tamale, 2011). This invokes all means of ensuring that the couple have a child: for example, the Ndau of eastern Zimbabwe resort to a practice known as *kupindira* (a young brother having sexual relations with the brother's wife so as to have a child). This is normally done to cover up the husband's infertility. In the event of the wife being infertile, they practice what is known as *chimutsamapfiwa* (one who lights the fire where there was no fire). Normally a young sister or brother's daughter is expected to cover up her sister's or aunt's infertility respectively (Tamale, 2012; Chitando and Njoroge 2016). African society has expectations regarding how women should behave sexually so as to be able to keep their husbands coming home. If a woman does not perform well sexually, she runs the risk of losing her husband to other women (Accilien, 2008). In all these deliberations, the woman is not consulted on whether she would give her consent to having a second husband or whether she would like to play a compensatory role for her sister's or aunt's infertility. Paradoxically, all or most African cultural, traditional and customary practices, including those pertaining to women in this case, were based on the concept of *ubuntu*. This African philosophy shows its limitations, as in this case it compromises women's SRHR.

Although several African cultural practices are said to exert violence on women's SRHR, as different scholars have found (Chabata, 2012; Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1991; Chitando and

Njoroge, 2016; Dzadagu, 2017; Kambarami, 2006), there is a problem in achieving the ideals of human rights because human beings are diverse in nature, with different cultures existing in different contexts and with different traditions. It is therefore necessary to take a cultural relativist approach, that is, a view that regards the beliefs, values and practices of a culture from the viewpoint of that culture itself, without judging it against other cultures (Lowie, 1953). It is important in this context to understand the lived experiences of Korekore women. Thus Tamale (2008) argues that there are several African norms and practices that are egalitarian and that reinforce and raise up women's rights, what she calls the communitarian, solidaritarian and *ubuntu* ethos. Apart from these institutional practices, we also need to take into account the fact that even the women themselves create redemptive windows which allow them to rebel against and go beyond the religious, cultural and social demands and expectations regarding their SRHR. This is what Scott (1985) has referred to as 'weapons the weak', which I discuss below. However, what we need to ask is, to what extent are these redemptive windows transformative and sustainable?

Some of the violence embedded in cultural practices was influenced by colonialism and Christianization. The introduction of the Natives Adultery Punishment Act (1916) punished the indigenous people for having sexual relations with a married woman without paying the bride wealth. For the men to be able to pay a bride wealth, they had to work in the mines to raise the necessary money. Like the colonizers, European women also displayed a gender prejudice regarding African women's sexuality, referring to women as lustful animals who are unable to control their sexuality. The Western attitude to African culture has had some influence on how some women react to the discourse of SRHR. This is made worse when Western feminist scholars are for the most part at the forefront of dictating the pace regarding African women's sexuality. This brings with it the danger of projecting a very specific Western notion of difference over other cultures, thus creating a trajectory of 'self' and 'other'. in which a group that has political power controls the powerless. In this case, Western women took themselves to be modern, developed, free and liberated, as well as becoming the mirror image for 'other' women from developing countries to view their sexuality, as has been argued by other scholars (Amadiume, 1987; Arnfred, 2011: 112; Smith, 1999). Direct engagement with the women in my research has opened up an understanding of the multiple, heterogeneous, entangled, complex and complicated determinants of their realities, going beyond conclusions based on monism and dualism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007; Georgakopoulou and Dionysis, 1997; Butler, 1992; Foucault, 1979; Keller, 2013; Allan, 2006; Van Leeuwen, 2008; Mbembe, 2001).

Mbembe (2001) refers to the process of knowledge about women's experiences as requiring 'reshaping' and 'rejecting' the process of imitation and mimicry that takes Europe as the model. In the same vein, Ngugi calls this a 're-centering' and 'rejection' of the notion that the modern west is the central root of Africa's consciousness and cultural heritage (1998: 101). Conclusively, both the advent of Christianity and the process of colonization piled on the challenges to women's SRHR, as they had to negotiate between their existing cultural expectations and the demands and expectations of the new culture (Christianity). As my specific focus is on the Catholic Church, especially on its teaching on sexuality, it is now appropriate to turn to the Church's teachings on sexuality and then assess how that can be linked with the impact of Korekore cultural practices on women's SRHR.

3.4 The Teaching of the Catholic Church on Sexuality

While women were already struggling to navigate the demands of their culture on their sexuality, the teaching of the Catholic Church adds another layer of complexity. In some cases, its teaching complements Korekore culture in exerting the same pressures, while in others it conflicts with the culture but still exerts the same pressure on women's SRHR. It is this encounter I refer to as 'a clash', and the way the women try to deal with it as 'navigation'.

The teaching of the Catholic Church on sexuality can be traced back to as early as the sixth century, during the era of the Church Fathers. These teachings are found in the manuals known as the penitentials, which were designed to help monks deal with their penitents during confession (Salzman and Lawler, 2008) and contained a list of sins and their penances. However, Noonan (1986) argues that although the penitentials provided a list of the sins that were to be dealt with, they did not offer many detailed explanations about the moral justifications to be used to determine the sinfulness of certain acts. All the penitentials contained canons censuring various types of sexual behaviour, such as the heterosexual life of the married; the heterosexual life of the unmarried; homosexuality and lesbianism; bestiality; masturbation; safeguarding chastity; and seminal pollution (Pierre, 1984). This makes the teachings of the Church on sexuality complicated, as we see the evidence of a human hand, yet unfortunately the human being involved in this whole teaching is male, a fact that opens women's sexuality to misinterpretation. The teachings of the Church compose a vast discourse based on topics such as marriage, homosexuality, pornography, masturbation, abortion, contraception and family planning. For the purposes of my project on women's SRHR, I deliberately focus on

three specific teachings of the Catholic Church, namely marriage, contraception and procreation, as these are set out in the encyclicals *Casti Connubii* (1930) and *Humanae Vitae* (1968). However, it is appropriate to begin by describing briefly the teachings of the Church on sexuality at a general level, as this will show how broad and complex the teaching is.

The Catholic Church defines sexuality within the confines of marriage. For that reason, acts like homosexuality are intrinsically disordered because they go against the fundamental teachings of the Church. Firstly, sexual (genital) expression of love should only take place in the confines of marriage and should be between a man and a woman. Secondly, and most importantly for the Church, it must be open to the transmission of new life (Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC, 2357). However, to be clear, the Church respects the rights of LGBTQ, as it advocates and defends the fundamental human rights of every person (Pope John Paul II, 1982). The Church is also opposed to pornography because it goes against chastity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC n. 2354) states that as an aspect of sexuality pornography perverts the intimate giving of spouses to each other, hence it is regarded as a grave offense. Another aspect of sexuality on which the Church teaches is masturbation. The Church holds that the deliberate stimulation of sexual (genital) organs to derive pleasure is a disorder when it is done outside marriage (CCC, n. 2352). Further, from the moment of conception, the human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person. In accordance with this view, the Church teaches against abortion, infanticide and euthanasia (CCC n. 2270). Pope John Paul II (1995) argued that a child should not be treated as an object that human beings can be free to do whatever they like with. It is a gift, and it has rights as the fruit of its parents' conjugal love (*Gaudium et Spes* 58). This is one of the reasons why the Church has a problem with prenatal diagnosis when it is done with the intention of possibly inducing an abortion. It is proper when it is done for healing purposes (CCC 2274-75).

I have described the teachings of the Church on sexuality with respect to aspects such as homosexuality, abortion, masturbation and pornography in a bid to give the reader an appreciation of how broad the discourse of the teaching of the Church on sexuality is. In particular, it should not be reduced to contraception only. However, these aspects – homosexuality, abortion, masturbation and pornography – do not directly apply to the women in my case study. Rather, I deliberate on what directly affects them, namely the Church's teachings on marriage, contraception and procreation. Chitando and Njoroge (2016) and Chitakure (2016) argue that the Church needs to embrace more liberating and progressive

interpretations of women's sexuality by using the pulpit, which gives it the platform from which to address both the perpetrators and the victims of the violence. Shaw (2006) also agrees with the above arguments, claiming that every religious institution has a responsibility to consider how it can support SRHR, rather than just disregarding them, despite their having potentially fatal consequences for women. In line with the above arguments, I seek to understand how religious actors, specifically the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe, have positioned themselves in the discourse over women's SRHR historically.

For the Catholic Church, marriage is a sacrament that unites two people, a man and a woman, for the mission of Christ. The two enter into a covenant, which is first and foremost meant for the good of the spouses and for the procreation and education of the children (CCC 1001; *Gaudium et Spes*; Code of Canon Law 1013). It should be understood that although the purpose of marriage may be procreation, a non-procreative union is no less a marriage (Selling, 2016). In the same manner, what is at the centre of marriage for the Catholic Church is conjugal love. However, the only type of sexual act that is permissible and moral is 'natural', and heterosexual (Salzman and Lawler, 2008). Sexual activities such as oral and anal sex are against the teachings of the Church because they are not directed to the transmission of new life. In fact, all sexual activities that take place outside marriage are evil (*Evangelium Gaudium* 66). Reading this notion of the Catholic Church on sexuality, some scholars such as Aline Kalbian (2014) have argued that the discourses about sexuality are embedded in violence and do harm to others, social justice and the common good. While her argument sounds plausible, it is also important to understand that it is much more complex than it seems at first sight; hence, a discursive and hermeneutic approach is needed to be able to understand exactly what this teaching means and its impact women's SRHR. For the Catholic Church, intended non-procreative marriage promotes individualism and does not resonate with the Church's teaching, hence anything that seems to point towards it is challenged. In line with the Church's position on individualism, Christian (2011) argues that this is incompatible with social teaching, since it is rooted in atheist philosophies. One's full personal potential is realized through communities, from the family to the office to the neighbourhood and to the global community; thus, 'Catholicism is not about me, but we'.

It is clear that for the Catholic Church marriage and family are very important and central to their understanding of human sexuality. Their importance is based on the fact that these two institutions weaken extreme individualism. Moreover, in emphasizing the transmission of new

life, the Church holds that it is fighting against a consumer mentality which favours a lifestyle that weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds (Familiaris Consortio, 6). Addressing families in Manila, Philippines, on January 16, 2016, Pope Francis said that the Church needs to guard against all forms of ideological colonization that are out to destroy the family. This further demonstrates how important the family is to the Catholic Church. As discussed above, this resonates very well with African culture, which emphasizes the philosophy of *ubuntu*, which fights individualism. Such ideologies from both the Catholic Church and Korekore culture permeate women's SRHR, making the encounter important for my investigation of the latter.

Still on the concept of marriage, the teaching of the Church is centered around the transmission of new life and rules out the use of artificial contraception (Humanae Vitae, 1968). Contraception is any form of activity that excludes or hinders the possibility of conception from the sexual act of married couples. These include intra-uterine devices (IUD), the pill, depo Provera injections, condoms, vasectomies and tubal ligation. However, if there are grave reasons arising out of the couple's psychological or physical circumstances, they may follow the natural rhythm method, that is, periodic abstinence, where couples should engage in sexual intercourse during a woman's naturally occurring infertile times, like during her ovulation. This is what is referred to as Natural Family Planning (NFP), that is, a range of fertility awareness which helps the couple either to achieve or to avoid pregnancy without offending moral principles. This research seeks to understand the impact of this teaching on women's SRHR and the strategies women devise to negotiate this teaching if it challenges their SRHR.

To make it clearer, the Catholic Church teaches that marriage and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children and that to this end contraception, by which is meant all artificial methods designed to prevent pregnancy, is prohibited. The Church does not allow any form of artificial contraception, and this includes condoms, diaphragms, cervical caps, intrauterine devices, contraceptive implants, contraceptive sponges, sterilization and spermicide. By taking advantage of the natural cycle, however, moral principles can still be observed (Pope Paul VI, 1965). This teaching is contained in the dogmatic constitution of the Church known as *Gaudium et Spes* ('Constitution on the Church in the modern world'), which came about as a result of the Second Vatican Council that was held from 1962 to 1965. From this point onwards, several encyclicals have been issued by different popes buttressing the practice of natural family planning (Pope Paul VI, 1968; Pope Benedict XVI, 2011; Pope John

Paul II). The Church also holds that since human life belongs to God, any human activity that violates human life is tantamount to rejecting God. Drawing on biblical teaching (Genesis 1:28), the Church argues that humanity's main task is to increase and multiply, hence those who have committed themselves to matrimony should participate in procreation (Pope Paul VI, 1965). However, some scholars argue that these teachings are discriminatory and do violence to women's SRHR (Noonan, 1986; Madu, 2014; Kalbian, 2014; Genilo, 2014). As Galtung (1990) puts it, often people tend to understand violence to mean those acts that can be seen with the naked eye, such as bombs exploding and shootings, while they ignore violence that is invisible, such as cultural violence, which is what I am dealing with in this case. For the most part, people cannot see cultural violence because it tends to make reality opaque, so that hidden violent acts are not seen or at least are seen as non-violent (Galtung, 1990). It is therefore important to unravel these acts, which are treated as non-violent, and analyse how they do actually commit violence to women's SRHR.

The Catholic Church also prohibits contraception because it is a violation of the sixth commandment, which does not allow killing, and also because it promotes immorality, especially among the young. Human life belongs to God, and to use contraceptives is to attack human life, which is ultimately tantamount to attacking God himself (Pope John Paul II, 1995). Life has to be guarded jealously from the day of conception until death, and death should be by natural means. As already indicated, instead of using artificial contraceptives, it is recommended to take advantage of the natural cycle, thus controlling birth in a way that does not offend moral principles. The position regarding the use of condoms to protect against HIV/AIDS and of different contraceptives in cases of rape, conception and birth control can be interpreted as compromising women's SRHR. While it is good that the Church emphasizes that couples should practice natural family planning, this overlooks the fact that this is culturally specific. African culture does not openly give women the right to negotiate over the use of natural family-planning methods since they do not have rights over their own bodies (Chitakure, 2016). The concept of *lobola* (bride price), already discussed above, shows that from the African perspective women are seen as property that has been purchased, giving them no rights in any form. As discussed earlier, women have been 'panopticed' by the Church and socialized by Korekore culture into thinking that to be docile is to be a good woman, a process that extends to normalizing violent acts (Schmidt, 1992; Kambarami, 2006; Kalbian, 2014). By giving in to the demands of society and the teachings of the Church, women end up compromising their SRHR. In most cases women end up with reproductive health problems,

such as endometriosis, uterine fibroids, gynaecologic cancer, interstitial cystitis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and sexually related health problems such as HIV/AIDS, gonorrhoea, chlamydia trachomatis and syphilis (Setel et al., 1999).

The Church's argument that marriage is also intended to promote the education of children seems to be one in favour of development. However, this becomes complicated in the Korekore context, where culture does not leave any room for women to negotiate the number of children they should have, nor is it easy for them to negotiate the use of natural family-planning methods, as required by the Church (Kalbian, 2014). If it is difficult to practice natural family planning, that simply means there is the risk of women ending up having more children than they wanted, more than match their resources. This results in a scarcity of resources to educate these children and also to ensure their health. How, then, do these people educate their children? In most cases among the Korekore, the women are left to carry the greater part of rearing and educating the children, while the men care for these activities less. This results in a form of psychological torture to the women, namely invisible violence (Galtung, 1990). How do these women handle this pressure? Might it be necessary to educate fewer healthy children than to struggle with many unhealthy children?

On the other hand, the Catholic Church holds that marriage is permanent and indissoluble, a long-life covenant, hence divorce is wrong and is not allowed. Nobody has the right to put asunder what God has ordained (Mark 10:9; Madu, 2014). Although this is the position of the Church, there are many divorces in Zimbabwe, and when this happens, the Church takes a very long and complicated time to nullify these marriages so as to grant freedom to the couples to move on with their lives. In this scenario the parties cannot marry in church again until the first marriage has been nullified. In Zimbabwe, traditionally the man goes on to marry another woman, something that appears difficult for the first wife, who ends up deciding to stay as a single parent because society treats the remarriage of women as evidence of loose morals. It is important to realize that these women have sexual desires, so how can they negotiate their sexual rights? If they find sexual partners and have sexual relations without using contraception they may fall pregnant, and society will treat them as promiscuous. These single women will end up using contraceptives secretly so that they satisfy their sexual desires. The position of the Church on the nullification of marriage needs further investigation, as it seems to compromise women's sexual rights. To be clear, in acknowledging single women's sexualities, I do not mean to promote promiscuity within the Catholic Church. Rather, I seek to emphasize the

humanity of women and their sexual needs and emotions which the Church needs to confront against the background of the argument that a lot of violence is being perpetrated on women's SRHR. The following chapter unpacks the concept of violence and the potential for transforming it.

3.5 Conclusion

The chapter has deliberated on the encounter between religion, specifically Catholicism and African culture. I have argued that the coming of Christianity among the Korekore society complicated the women's lives in terms of their sexuality. It is indeed true that they had their own challenges posed by the effects of a patriarchal set up. Be that as it may, the encounter of Christianity and the Korekore culture added more complications to women's sexuality. This encounter made it difficult for the women to navigate the challenges on their SRHR. The chapter has also discussed the notion of African religion and/or culture, whether African religion can be said to be the same as African culture and how this inextricability can be a barrier in the way the women navigate their SRHR. To this end, I have argued that although religion is important in the lives of many Africans, to say that because in Africa religion it is inseparable from people's lives, women find it difficult to navigate their SRHR is too simplistic. It needs to be addressed critically otherwise we risk stereotyping all Africans as religious yet religion is important even in most non-African contexts. There is therefore need to be critical when we argue that the inextricability of religion and African life affects the way the Korekore women navigate their SRHR. The chapter finally deliberated on the teaching of the Catholic Church on sexuality and how it affects the way the Korekore Catholic women navigate their SRHR.

Chapter Four: Conceptualizing Violence and Conflict Transformation

4.1 Introduction

If the Catholic Church's teaching on sexuality and African cultural practices interfere with women's somatic and mental realizations regarding SRHR, then it is legitimate to reflect on the case of Korekore women within the context of violence, conflict and transformation. Technically, violence has mostly been defined as the intentional use of force to injure or kill (Dewey, 1916). Although this understanding of violence is pragmatically correct, it overlooks innumerable other forms of injury, for instance, economic, psychological and social. Bufacchi (2005) argues that we should be careful not to take for granted the fact that violence may not be associated with a clear actor, but rather with the impact of violations of one's rights, as opposed to the active inflicting of injury, on a person's well-being and bodily integrity. The narrower conception of violence has also been challenged by Johann Galtung (1969), who argues that violence is a broad category that includes both physical and non-physical forms and that could occur on both the personal and structural levels. For Galtung, violence is 'the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is. It is that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance' (1969: 168). Simply put, 'violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations' (ibid.: 169). My project touches less on violence that works on the body (physical) than on violence that works on the mind (psychological), which Galtung (1969) suggests includes lies, brainwashing, indoctrinations of various kinds and threats and which serves to decrease mental potentialities. This is what he refers to as structural violence (1990), which, in his view, reflects widespread inequalities that are not confined to the individual relationship between the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s). This definition is important for understanding violations of women's SRHR, which, in its current conceptualization, are perceived as an outcome of structural inequalities of gender.

When people focus on violence and conflict as relating to wars between nations only, they overlook the mental inhibitions regarding women's lives (see Galtung, 1990; Tarusarira, 2017). This project deploys a hermeneutical discursive approach to investigate how the Catholic Church and African culture have negatively influenced women's agency when it comes to realizing their mental and physical potential. Violent acts can be manifested as direct and

structural violence. This work dwells on cultural violence, which Galtung identifies in religion, ideology, language, art, empirical science, formal science and cosmology. This refers to those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence, that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence (1990: 292-301). This research discusses cultural violence as expressed in ideologies and religion, where sometimes there is no human being directly harming anyone; rather, the violence is built up into the structure and shows up as ‘unequal power’ and ‘unequal life chances’. In the face of violence, women’s navigation may involve engagement with the perpetrators of violence, in whatever form it may rear its ugly head, as a way to transform the conflict situation expressed in suppression and oppression, in this case, the denial of SRHR.

In the process of navigation, women can also make the effort to transform their situations thus, landing themselves in a process of conflict transformation. Lederach states that conflict transformation entails ‘envisioning and responding to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships’ (Lederach, 2003: 14). It is sufficient to view conflict transformation as a process of making a thorough and rigorous investigation of and engagement with the invisible influences of Catholic teachings and Korekore cultural practices that stifle women’s SRHR and trying to find sustainable ways of transforming these social injustices. The conflict transformation approach takes the process of handling violence and conflict beyond management and resolution. In so doing, it acknowledges that the situation in which women find themselves is not one that can be managed or solved through some mathematical formula, as conflict management and conflict resolution tend to imply. The strategies women employ are taken to mean the tools they use to transform their conflicts as they are seemingly denied agency in relation to their SRHR. As a way of transforming women’s conflicts regarding their SRHR, my research uses Freire’s empowerment theory (1993), especially the Training for Transformation methodology (Hope and Timmel, 1995). The main goal of this methodology is to empower women to come up with strategies of navigation that are transformative and sustainable. The following section unpacks the idea of navigation.

4.2. Conceptualizing Navigation

There are several ways in which people with less power deal with the injustices or the violence that is perpetrated on them, either directly or indirectly, by those with more power than themselves. This thesis is concerned with women's navigation of the challenges to their SRHR against a backdrop of the Catholic teaching on sexuality and Korekore culture. Navigation may mean different things in different situations. Vigh (2006) understands navigation as an act of moving in an environment that is changing and unsettled. When used to illuminate social life, it directs our attention to the fact that we move in social environments consisting of actors and actants, individuals and institutions, that engage and move us as we move along. If we interpret this in the context of women's challenges in relation to their SRHR, we realize that they are not passive, and although they may lack the structural power to effect change on a large scale, their daily navigation is vital to maintaining daily life and resisting violence that is beyond their control. Vigh (2006) further argues that navigation encompasses both assessing the dangers and possibilities of one's present position and plotting and attempting to actualize routes into an uncertain and changeable future (Vigh 2006). Navigation in computer-based information spaces has focused on finding the shortest path between two locations (Svensson, 2002). It can also be an experience, for example, when a user wants to travel by the most beautiful or interesting path. We need to take note of the fact that navigation is not only limited to one's actions, it can also be applied to a learning experience, for instance, when a person wants to travel by the most informative path (Dieberger, 1994). In light of Korekore women's SRHR, the way they navigate should be understood as being shaped by individual differences such as spatial ability and technical aptitude. These differences are among the factors that determine the extent to which their strategies are transformative and sustainable.

In a bid to fight injustice, which points to the incontrovertible and indestructible nature of human dignity, the women engage in several strategies as coping strategies that are by no means insignificant. The existing literature indicates some of the ways in which people with less power navigate their exposure to violence. Women may resort to *resistance*, covertly or overtly, yet the goal is to challenge the power dynamics around their oppression. Where there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1980: 95). It has been argued that women, especially African women, cannot resist openly, but there are several examples which demonstrate the history of women's use of open resistance as a way of fighting against the violence done to them. In the Flour War of 1775 in the northern, eastern and western parts of the Kingdom of France, women

protested against the unequal distribution of resources by taking violent action (Bouton, 1990: 743). Another example of open resistance occurred in Nigeria in 1929, when women responded by force to colonial taxation and market policies (Caroll, 1989: 8). It was the actions of women which culminated in the Russian Revolution, as they initiated industrial labour strikes (ibid.). Women's open resistance can also be evidenced in different contexts, such as South Korea (Karl and Cheung, 1983: 91-97), Malaysia (Ong, 1997: 195-213), Bolivia (Nash, 1975: 261-270) and Jamaica (Wieringa, 1975: 18).

In negotiating the topography in which they navigate, people find that it is not fixed, but constantly shifting, thus the intensity and visibility of navigational efforts are dependent upon the speed and/or opacity of social change and their ability to control oncoming movement (Guyer, 2007). Although there are several examples of women's open resistance, most women in Africa choose to resist in subtle ways. This type of resistance is invisible and has been referred to as *infrapolitics*, or in other words as a 'hidden transcript' (Scott, 1985; 1990). However, it needs to be understood that its invisibility does not mean it is non-agentic. There are several ways of this kind of covert resistance. It can, for instance, happen through persistence or distancing. This normally happens in work environments, where workers resist the oppression of their managers. A good example of persistence is persisting in obtaining information from their managers or concealing sensitive information from their bosses as a way of escaping or avoiding the demands of authority. By so doing, resistance becomes the power of the subordinate (Collinson, 2000: 180). Other types of covert resistance can be evidenced in the context of the Malaysian peasant women who used foot-dragging, mimicry, slander, sabotage and false compliance as a way of resisting landowners who had hired combine harvesters to replace manual labour (Scott, 1985). Another form of latent resistance is songs, poems and autobiographical skits. Buddhists nuns compose songs that reflect women's subordination and how they should resist it (Majumdar, 1985: 7). Folk songs can also be used to demonstrate dissatisfaction with members of the affinal family (Ensiin, 1990). Women can also resist by using sexual jokes about men's impotence, thus undermining male superiority (White, 1992; Gold, 1989; Agarwal, 1994). Apart from songs, women may also use secrets and silence as a way of resisting their oppression. Silence is also common among Tamang women of Nepal as a way of registering their disapproval of family decisions or social interactions. Although silence can be interpreted to mean respect and subordination, it is difficult to ascertain whether the woman is acting out of deferential respect for duty or declaring her independence. Among the Bedouin of eastern Libya, women use secrets and silence to fight their sexual

segregation (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 43). This is done as individuals. Another example which women use as a weapon of the weak is spirit possession. In Somalia, women are possessed by a spirit and through it demand that their men buy them luxurious clothes, perfumes and exotic dainties (Lewis, 1971: 75-76). Sex can also be used as a weapon of resistance. For the women of Nepal, sex as the means of having children and of influencing their husbands is the most effective weapon in their battles for security and respect (Bennet, 1983: 176-7). Resistance can also take the form of compliance, though compliance should not be taken to mean complicity. Agarwal (1994) argues that compliance does not mean that women lack a correct perception of their interests. It is rather an important resistance strategy that women use to deal with men.

The term 'navigation' conjures up images of maps, compasses and guidebooks, which are regarded as tools used to get around from time to time (Guyer, 2017). However, there are some moments when people fail to use the available tools to navigate and choose to follow what they see other people doing; this is known as 'social navigation'. This term was first introduced by Dourish and Chalmers (1994), who describe it as the process of guiding activities aimed at determining people's position and planning and following a specific route based on what other people have done or what other people have recommended doing. This can be understood better by what Scott (1985) refers to as 'reworking', which is used more by subordinate groups in trying to create conditions that are more workable and viable in their challenging situations (Scott, 1985). This can be done in several ways, such as arson, sabotage, boycotts, disguised strikes or theft. *Reworking* is another type of resistance, although it is done covertly. It entails creating conditions that are workable and viable for challenging situations (ibid.). Resistance, resilience and reworking are all similar in one way or the other in that they are all weapons of the weak. They all represent some acts of infrapolitics. With respect to Korekore women's SRHR, I seek to investigate what strategies the women use. I do this bearing in mind that every strategy that those with less power engage in is context-specific, hence the relevant historical, political, religious and cultural factors will be considered.

Another strategy used by the weak is *resilience*. In mathematics, engineering and the environmental sciences, resilience entails the capacity to bounce back to equilibrium from a shock (Ryan, 2015). In social psychology it is defined as the response to psychological adversity or events that are considered stressful and that hinder normal functioning (Luther, 1993; Rutter, 1995; Masten, 1994). I take resilience to mean everyday strategies women use to adapt to and

cope with violations of their SRHR. Some scholars have taken resilience to be different from resistance, but it can also be viewed through the lens of *sumud*, which is used by Palestinian women to cope with and adapt to Israeli occupation. Although women use several strategies that demonstrate the aspect of resilience, I discuss traits such as coping, adaptation, perseverance, steadfastness, staying in, memorialization and normalization.

Coping is used when a weaker group realizes that it can do nothing to change its oppression and hence devises methods of living with its situation without that necessarily meaning that it will be happy with that situation. Among Palestinians, it is the women who are in charge of the day-to-day running of family affairs like cooking, washing and so on. In the context of the Israeli occupation, water is tightly controlled by the Israelis, which makes it very scarce for Palestinians. The women have adapted to the scarcity of water as normal. Their argument is that, even though they might not want to normalize it, that is the situation, and to refuse to normalize it results in their devastation (Ryan, 2015: 305). Another aspect of resilience is 'staying in'. Although subordinates may realize that they are in a situation they do not like, they devise a method of staying in. According to Van Teefelen (2011: 51), staying in is an active, not a passive decision, a type of adaptation. In the context of the Palestinian occupation, staying in is meant to challenge the status quo indirectly. When they decide to be resilient and stay in such oppressive circumstances, what they are communicating is simply that they are not afraid of the Israelis, and by so doing they defy their power.

Another way in which the weaker group can be resilient is through the memorialization of events, persons, places and symbols. This can be done in multiple ways: for example, Palestinian women were able to display maps of the villages in their current homes from which they were displaced or the keys they had kept to the houses they had been displaced from (Richter-Devroe, 2011). Steadfastness is another aspect of resilience which the weaker group uses, through which the oppressed can carry on with life and even seek to enjoy it, even in the midst of hardships. What makes the weaker group steadfast is the knowledge that they will never be able to challenge the status quo. A good example is the peasants of Sedaka village in Malaysia. Although the introduction of the combine harvester made them angry, they could not revolt openly because they still relied on the landowners for labour and assistance. They had to be steadfast and devise strategies of survival (Scott, 1985: 240). I demonstrated above that navigation is engaged with by different people for different goals. My thesis is concerned with how Korekore women use several strategies to navigate their SRHR. That means that I take

into account the cultural and religious contexts within which they operate and which in some cases shape their process of navigation and how that impact on their agency as actors in this complex field.

4.3 At the Crossroads of Korekore Culture and the Catholic Church

The Kikuyu adage, '*Njogu igiri ikihurana, nyeki niyo yumagira*', or 'When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers', seems true of the violence on women's SRHR, where women become the site of struggle over clashing value systems, namely Catholicism and Korekore culture. My research suggests that, among others, the encounter between religion and culture makes it difficult for women to navigate the challenges to their SRHR. As has already been highlighted, there are some aspects of both Korekore culture and the Catholic Church which agree and exert the same pressure on women, and there are others which conflict but still exert the same pressure on women, which calls for women to be prudent in engaging in different strategies of navigation. While the patriarchal nature of Korekore society had already defined how women should behave sexually, the coming of Christianity and the teachings of the Catholic Church in particular complicated women's lives still more. It is the impact of this encounter between the Catholic Church and African culture and religion on women's SRHR that I seek to understand in respect of how Korekore women navigate their SRHR. I do not mean to suggest that religion and culture are the only factors that impact on women's SRHR; I want to show that this is the scope of this research. The way Korekore culture and the Catholic Church value marriage somehow falls within the same degree. For Korekore culture, marriage is highly revered as the goal of every woman so that anyone who fails to get married is treated as a failure by society (Kambarami, 2006; Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1991; Schmidt, 1996). It is this notion that makes women compromise their SRHR sometimes, even when they are experiencing the violence that might call them to engage in strategies such as rebelling by divorce. It is the same in Catholic teaching, in which marriage is very important and at the centre of the Catholic faith. As indicated earlier, for the Catholic Church marriage and the family weakens extreme individualism (Pope Paul VI 1968; Salzman and Lawler, 2008). Furthermore, in his speech to Philippine families in Manila, Pope Francis said, '...there is need to guard against all forms of ideological colonization which are out to destroy the family' (January 16, 2016). Thus, marriage and the family are very central to both the Catholic Church and Korekore culture.

Moreover, for both the Catholic Church and Korekore culture, children are the *sine qua non* of marriage. The Catholic Church emphasizes that those who commit themselves to marriage should know that their mission is the transmission of life and the education of their children. Children are a supreme gift from God (Pope Francis, 2016; Code of Canon Law 1013). For Korekore culture, the portion of *lobola* known as *danga* ('cattle') is meant to give the husband and his family exclusive reproductive rights such that the number of cattle demanded by the in-laws will be equal to the number of children the woman should bear – hence the Bantu saying 'cattle beget children' (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1967; Mutsvairo et al., 1996). For the Shona, children are important to the extent that when a person dies without leaving a child, he is said to come back as *ngozi* (an angry spirit). To avoid this, the dead person is buried with a rat in his or her coffin. The rat signifies the child he/she did not have while he/she was still alive. From the Zimbabwean context, it is believed that most people would wish to have children, but for the most part this violates women's SRHR greatly, as women also want to have children and can do whatever it takes to do so. They can even give in to practices such as *kupindira* and *chimutsamapfihwa*, which compromise their SRHR. Since the family and children are at the centre of the Catholic Church and the Korekore culture, there is no space left for contraception. Both institutions emphasize natural family-planning methods.

Although there are many respects in which the Catholic Church agrees with Korekore culture, there are some practices and teachings that do diverge between the two. However, they still need to be evaluated to see whether they violate women's SRHR and if so, how they do so and how these women navigate the violence. Korekore culture mostly uses indigenous medicines for their sexual and reproductive health. This clashes with the Church, which seems to go against the use of these medicines. Although nowhere is it explicitly spelt out in the teachings of the Church, the attitude of some priests to these medicines seem to suggest that the Church is against their use. This becomes very clear when some priests refer to them as *juju* (meaning 'witchcraft'). A case in point is the attitude of a Jesuit priest, Fr. Richartz, who beat up the local herbalist in Chishawasha and destroyed his medicine container (McLaughlin, 1996). This attitude can also be found in most Catholic hospitals, where pregnant women have their bags searched when they come to the hospital to deliver in order to make sure that they do not have any indigenous medicines with them. If they were to be found in possession of these medicines, they would be thrown away. This ignores the fact that for these Korekore and other indigenous peoples, their life is these indigenous medicines and the medicines are their lives, the two being

inseparable. Smith argues (1999) that to deprive any indigenous people of their cultural practices is equal to denying them their identity.

The teachings described above and the attitude of the Church have led some scholars to condemn the Church for being opposed to women's reproductive health. Hulme (2009) and Berro (2018) have argued that the Holy See commits violence on women's SRHR. They cited the letter which Pope John Paul II wrote in response to the implementation of the ICPD: 'in the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life' (UN International Conference on Population and Development 1994c). The authors condemned this attitude as being insensitive to women's reproductive health and lumped the Catholic Church together with some Islamic conservative states as an 'unholy alliance'. Although it cannot be denied absolutely that there are some elements of Catholic teaching which women feel make their lives complicated when it comes to their sexuality and reproduction, I argue that to associate the Catholic Church with this 'unholy alliance' on the basis of this letter might be too simplistic. Unless efforts are made to understand the core roots of the Church's teachings, there are bound to be misunderstandings among scholars, activists and even politicians. To begin with, the *Oxford Dictionary* defines an 'alliance' as a relationship based on similarity of interests, nature or qualities (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 1999). If we are to go by this definition, the arguments of Hulme (2009) and Berro (2018) seem faulty. In signing the ICPD document, the Holy See's refusal was in line with its views on abortion, whereas Islamic states focused on blocking access to family-planning services for 'adolescents' and oppose notions of sexual health and sexual rights. Moreover, Pope John Paul II's letter specified the importance of life, which is contradictory to abortion. This follows the teachings of the Church, which say, 'from the moment of conception, the human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person' (CCC n.2270). Again, SRHR are pro-life, so for the Pope to sign a document that promotes abortion would have been contradictory. In fact, the Church has been an exponent of SRHR as this is at the heart of Catholic social teaching, which involves proclaiming the truth of Christ's love in society (*caritas in veritate in re sociali*). Just as it has been argued that SRHR is an aspect of development (Sadik, 2013), Catholic social teaching emphasizes proper development that is based on truth and love and the absence of private interests. In the light of people's development, Pope Benedict IX argued that the success of any project of development depends on how it builds community with, not simply for, the poor, thus allowing the people participate in their development.

While the world celebrates the silver jubilee of the launch of SRHR in Cairo in 1994, there is some evidence that several countries have not yet met and are still very far from meeting its goals. For instance, in Zimbabwe there are data indicating continuing problems regarding women's maternal mortality ratio (MMRatio). The MMRatio is the annual number of female deaths per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes). It includes deaths during pregnancy, childbirth or within 42 days of the termination of a pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, for a specified year. Although the MMRatio has declined from 530 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1998 to 458 deaths in 2017, this ratio is still unacceptably high (WHO, 2017). It must be admitted that the Zimbabwean Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC) has done a commendable job in addressing the goals of SRH, yet not much has been done to meet the goals of SRHR, especially women's SRHR. Several efforts have focused on young people's, girls' and adolescents' SRHR (Muchabaiwa, 2019; Landa, 2018; Bhebhe, 2018; Marimo et al., 2015). As already indicated, conversations about women's SRHR cannot reach the desired results unless we bring religion and culture to the table because these institutions mostly define how women should behave sexually. Moreover, the people themselves also internalize these beliefs and live by them. Hence in discussing strategies to navigate one's SRHR, attention must be paid to the extent to which such strategies are transformative and sustainable, which is the focus of the following section.

4.4 Transformative and Sustainable Strategies

Transformation, according to Jack Mezirow (2004), involves a change of perspective in a frame of reference, a personal paradigm and a habit of mind, together with its resulting points of view. The Greek word *metanoia* helps us capture what transformation means. *Metanoia* in *Merriam-Webster* is defined as a complete change of heart, and especially a spiritual conversion. Transformation therefore entails a change in attitudes because one is continually questioning and challenging beliefs, assumptions, patterns, habits and paradigms. According to Mezirow (1996), transformation involves a process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new and revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action. While Korekore women engage in several strategies to navigate the challenges to their SRHR, I seek to determine the extent to which these strategies are transformative. If women are to have agency in relation to their SRHR, they must acquire a critical consciousness that allows them to constantly question which religious and cultural beliefs are behind the violation of their

SRHR and to be able to develop new attitudes so that they devise transformative strategies. Transformative strategies are essential because they help to break the cycle of violence, as well as facilitating a sustainable way of living with SRHR. Knowledge and acknowledgement are the starting points of transformative strategies. If knowledge and acknowledgement are absent, talking about transforming discourses, narratives, ideas and ideologies is a nonstarter because there is no acknowledgement of what is overt, let alone what is covert (Tarusarira, 2019: 221). If women are to come up with transformative strategies, they must have knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality and of Korekore cultural expectations regarding their SRHR and how these teachings and explanations are violations of their SRHR. It is also important for them to have knowledge about their SRHR. As long as they do not have such knowledge, action is very difficult. Once they have acquired profound knowledge, they will have a basis for judging their own decisions and actions. Transformative strategies consider the root cause of the violence, while knowledge helps them understand what particular discourses, narratives, ideas and ideologies support the thesis of their violation, which then need to be transformed in order to prevent a recurrence of violence and to facilitate the sustainability of their SRHR.

According to Kegan (1994), when people develop the ability to reflect on something they were previously unaware of or took for granted and to make conscious decisions about it, they have an opportunity to be transformed. This applies to Korekore women regarding the knowledge concerning their sexuality and reproduction. In his writing on transformative apologies and forgiveness, Tarusarira (2019) emphasizes that acknowledging feelings of anger and resentment contributes to transformation. This means that those who have been wronged should acknowledge their feelings. In the context of the violation of SRHR, if we are to arrive at transformative strategies for women's SRHR, they themselves should be in a position to express their feelings. For example, if having more children is detrimental to their health, they need to acknowledge this challenge and talk about it. Because of the patriarchal nature of most African societies, women choose strategies such as subtle resistance, reworking, resilience and silence, among others. However, it is necessary to ask whether these strategies are transformative and sustainable. Engaging with most of these strategies in a subtle way does not promote the ideas of transformation and sustainability. For example, in respect of the strategy of silence, Cheryl Lawther (2013) argues that it is not transformative. While for some silence may be pragmatic and at times a successful strategy of coexistence, for Lawther (2013) strategies such as silence can also be interpreted as an expression of passivity and loyalty. In terms of passivity, women

may choose not to react, even though they realize there are injustices regarding their sexuality. When silence is interpreted as being loyal, women may decide to be faithful to the powers that be or to the system that is in place, despite them possibly violating their SRHR.

Tarusarira (2019) also argues that transformation is not only retrospective but also future-oriented: if women engage in transformative strategies, this helps them not only to address their current challenges, but to focus on potential future violations of women's SRHR; hence transformative strategies have broader social affects, which result in the goals of SRHR becoming sustainable. It can therefore be argued that women's achievement of SRHR results in a sustainable society being built.

The concept of sustainability has also been interpreted in various ways. According to Kuhlman and Farrington (2010), the word sustainability, in German *Nachhaltigkeit*, was originally coined in 1713 in the practice of forestry, where it was said that people should never harvest more than the forest yields in new growth. The main concern was to preserve natural resources and maintain the soil's fertility. In this manner, the concept of sustainability was associated more with environmental issues. However, it also has to do with society, where traditional leaders saw sustainability in the light of stewardship and concern for future generations. In this manner, Wilderer (2007) argued that sustainability must be understood in the light of a past, a present and a future. If we are to understand this notion in the light of women's SRHR, women's sustainable strategies may need to take into account the fact that there is a history, a present and a future to women's challenges; hence they should find strategies that address the violent past as well. The present then means that women have to devise strategies that help them in their lives at the present but also address possible future violence. This shows that transformation and sustainability work hand in glove and that transformation is not only retrogressive but also future-oriented (Tarusarira, 2019). This therefore suggests that transformative strategies will produce a sustainable society in light of women's SRHR.

Wiersum (2000) traces the origin of the concept of sustainability to the Brundtland Report of 1987, in which the concern was to address the tensions between humanity's aspirations for a better life on the one hand and the limitations imposed by nature on the other. The Brundtland Report was issued by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which introduced the concept of sustainable development and described how it could be achieved. The concept of sustainability thus has its roots in social justice, conservationism and

internationalism, ideas that had come together in the call for sustainable development by the twentieth century. In its historical evolution, sustainability means meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Strange and Bayley (2008) further explain that the idea is embedded in the principles of social equity and economic development, and not only in economic development. However, like many other organizations working on sustainable societies, the Brundtland Report overlooks the fact that sustainability has a past and just dwells on the future, a way of engaging with the concept of sustainability that ignores the transformative element. Going back to the past helps uproot the past, which may block the present and the future.

As already indicated, if women are enabled to take decisions about their own sexuality, this increases their confidence and competence in participating in their development and that of their countries, hence accessing these values is of transference value. This is why I argue that SRHR and sustainable development are just two sides of the same coin, such that to achieve one you need the other. They actually exist in circumstances of mutual assistance. For a long time, women had been treated as tools through which to implement programs and policies, but the ICPD brought about another paradigm shift which sought to recognize the rights, autonomy and empowerment of women in relation to their SRHR within their social, economic and political contexts. When SRHR were accepted as a human right, this was then adopted as part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Shaw (1995) argues that every stakeholder has a responsibility to implement SRHR, whether politicians, clinicians, religious leaders or academics, for this is one way to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The SDGs are a Post-Millennium Development Goals initiative of the UN which sets out seventeen global goals covering social issues such as poverty, hunger, health, gender equality and social justice (Kalasa, 2015; Osborn, 2015: 3). SRHR is thus directly linked to SDG 3 (Good health) and SDG 5 (Gender equality). Investigating the strategies that women use is indeed relevant in attaining sustainable development goals by 2030, as this contributes to finding interventions to help women access maternal and antenatal health-care services.

Sustainability, according to Elkington (1994), suggests a corporate social dimension. This suggests that, in light of women's SRHR, it is everybody's responsibility to enhance their goals. At this point, it is worth revisiting the landscape of SRHR in Zimbabwe. Most countries and territories are working hard to implement the goals of ICPD, and Zimbabwe is no exception, where has been noticeable progress in enhancing SRHR. For example, the Ministry of Health

and Child Care (MoHCC) has crafted and adopted a number of sexual and reproductive health-related policies in an attempt to improve the well-being and healthy lives of all groups. The Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (ZNASP III), for example, emphasizes a holistic and integrated approach to the provision of sexual and reproductive health services. However, for several African countries such as Zimbabwe, it is very difficult to achieve the goals of SRHR by leaving religion out. In many cultures, the Korekore included, religion is an important governing factor in the delineation and implementation of sexual norms and values (Bartelink, 2015). Korekore religion generally features the spirits of the deceased, who are often remembered as the elders of the community. The surviving elders of the community, such as uncles and aunts, are also regarded as religious authorities. In conformity with this, they must always follow the wishes of their religious authorities, both the living and the dead (Bourdillon, 1979). Although the religious authorities do not directly control the way people live, Hughes (1992) argues that religious beliefs often contain and express moral values to the extent that the Korekore believe that complying with religion brings them benefits, whereas rebelling against religion brings sanctions. In complying with their religion, sexuality is not spared. Whether the efforts that the Zimbabwean government has made in relation to women's SRHR are transformative and sustainable research shall tell.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that pre-Christian and pre-colonial-era African women were powerful religiously, politically, economically and sexually, but that the advent of both Christianity and colonialism complicated women's lives when they were already trying to negotiate away the pressure of certain cultural practices that were posing a challenge to their SRHR. The argument made by a number of scholars that African women had been subordinate from time immemorial and that all African cultural practices commit violence against women's SRHR must not be taken at face value. Although there are some practices which were indeed unfavourable, there were others that favoured women's lives. However, the coming of Christianity, coupled with colonization, shifted these practices so that they rendered women decidedly subordinate. One factor here is *lobola*, the payment of bride wealth, which was made to shift from its original meaning. I also dealt with African religion and culture, arguing that they present a very complex phenomenon given the hegemonic tendencies that infiltrate scholarship when African religion and African culture are being defined. Be that as it may, separating African religion and culture is indeed a mammoth task, hence in this context it will be taken as meaning one and the same thing.

Apart from discussing the impact of the advent of Christianity and colonialism on women's SRHR, I have also dealt with the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality. What is at the heart of the Catholic Church when it comes to sexuality is marriage, procreation and the education of children. It then follows that artificial means of family planning are out of place in the Catholic Church. In the event of a 'justified problem', couples must resort to natural means of family planning, that is, follow the woman's natural cycle. However, this depends greatly on whether men want to cooperate, since, if they are unwilling, it makes things difficult for the woman, given that she does not own her own sexuality, despite possibly wanting to follow the natural method. There should be a joint agreement with the husband, yet in most cases men do not consider the views of women when it comes to sexual encounters, but for the most part dictate the pace of events themselves.

Chapter Five: Social Constructivism Governmentality and Transformative Theory

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to a discussion of the interrelated theoretical and conceptual frameworks this dissertation uses in interpreting the empirical data relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), Catholicism, and African culture and religion. To interrogate the influence of the actors at the intersection of SRHR, the Catholic Church, (African) Korekore religion and Korekore women, I deploy the following theoretical and conceptual frameworks: social constructivism, governmentality, transformation theory and agency. I use social constructivism to investigate how, as discourses, African culture and Catholic teaching on sexuality have constructed and externalized women's sexuality, how women have internalized these constructions as reality, and how this affects the way they navigate the challenges to their SRHR. The concept of governmentality provides the language and framework with which to understand the relationship between governing (the Catholic teaching on sexuality and Korekore culture) and governed (Korekore women's sexuality). Governmentality helps us understand how women's sexuality has been shaped, controlled and regulated by both the Church's teachings on sexuality and certain African cultural practices. I also engage with the concept of transformation (Mezirow, 1991) as a way of trying to understand the extent to which the strategies the women use to navigate their SRHR can change their "unfavourable" situations and whether they are sustainable. On another note, to also assess whether these strategies are sustainable. Subsequently, the concept of transformation helps in examining what tools can be used to unlock the taken-for-granted and unquestioned assumptions about women's sexuality. Finally, I use the concept of agency to examine how women respond to the violence that is perpetrated upon them. It is this agency I refer to as 'strategies' to transform their violence. The Catholic Church and African culture's perceptions of women's sexuality should be understood as a discourse. As discourse scholars have argued, there are no discourses that emerge naturally (von Stuckrad 2013). It is in this manner that I take an appreciation of discourse analysis as a research perspective to understand how women's sexuality has been constructed.

5.2 Women's sexuality: a discourse

There are many definitions of the word 'discourse'. According to Chilton (2014), discourse is the use of language in any form of communication, such as written, spoken, or sign language. In this sense, language plays an important role in communicating or transferring messages and knowledge across society, time, culture and customs. In the same vein, Aras Abdalkarim Amin (2017) argues that generally discourse is how language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life, for example, political discourse and medical discourse.

Etymologically the word 'discourse' dates back to the fourteenth century, its root being the Latin word *discursus*, or 'conversation' (McArthur, 1991). Although it may be defined in different ways, it basically refers to language and its use. While it has been known since the fourteenth century, it gained in prominence around the 1970s, when scholars like Foucault revealed its applicability in different disciplines, not just in linguistics. In his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault refers to discourse as ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations that are inherent in such knowledge and the relations between them. In simple terms, these are 'larger systems of thought with a particular historical location that make certain things thinkable and sayable and regulating who can say them' (ibid.). To further understand what Foucault means by discourse, we can ask questions such as: What is it that can be said and what cannot be said? What statements can be counted as meaningful or meaningless? What even counts as a topic for discussion? Who is allowed to speak? How can what has been spoken be interpreted and counted as truth? In essence, discourse entails finding pre-conditions about what makes statements possible. Schiffrin et al. (2013) divide discourse into three categories, namely anything that goes beyond the sentence, the use of language, and a broader range of social practices that include non-linguistic and nonspecific instances of language. However, one might ask whether it is at all important to discuss the concept of discourse in the context of women's SRHR? According to Foucault (1975), it is vital to understand that discourse constructs the very thing that it describes and that whatever action follows is based on what has been constructed. Hence, in investigating the strategies that Korekore women use in navigating their SRHR, it is important to understand Catholic teachings and African cultural and religious tenets on sexuality discourses that emerge, regulate, shape and reshape how women are supposed to think and act sexually. Foucault (1975) was interested in the relationship between power and

knowledge and was trying to understand the concepts and theories that people crafted in the context of crime, as well as how that shapes decisions made regarding those who had transgressed against society. However, this can be used to understand women's sexuality.

In the context of women's SRHR, it is vital to acknowledge the existence of a language that has been used to refer to women's sexuality by both the Church and Korekore culture. In this research I focus on this language to refer to women's sexuality, what is allowed to be said and why, who should say what, and how this affects the way Korekore women respond to the challenges to their SRHR. Discourse not only includes language but extends to social practices like the type of clothing people wear, the kinds of things people carry around with them, for example, electronic devices and handbags, and so on (Mills, 1997). We need to ask whether social practices such as these have any impact on women's SRHR.

Discourse *analysis* is the interrogation of the use of language, signs, patterns and structures. It means understanding what speakers mean, regardless of what they actually say. As analysts go beyond the sentence, the process of analysing language includes taking into consideration three main categories, namely *language beyond sentence*, *language in use*, and *language as larger social practices* (Gee, 1999). In light of my study, particular attention needs to be paid to the language the Church and Korekore culture use with reference to women's sexuality and how that language impacts on the way the women navigate their SRHR. Discourse analysis also looks at the practices that are linked to the establishment of meaning; for example, the paying of bride wealth is an action that confirms the transferal of ownership to the man; it is linked to discourses on ownership and control, but it is beyond language. Another example is that, among the Shona of Zimbabwe, as we have already seen, a woman who expresses her sexual feelings openly is regarded as a prostitute. Accordingly, it is the duty of the men to dictate the circumstances of sexual encounters. In discourse, language is followed by action. This kind of language leads women to give up their sexual rights because they do not want to be stigmatized as prostitutes. Should we invest our time in discourse analysis in order to understand women's SRHR? The answer is in the affirmative. According to Van Dijk (1997), discourse analysis helps to increase awareness of the hidden motivations of others and ourselves and therefore enables us to solve concrete problems not by providing unequivocal answers, but by making people ask ontological and epistemological questions (ibid.: 3). Discourse has the power to naturalize processes and make them appear self-evident. Thus for Stubbs (1983), the significance of discourse analysis is that it takes processes apart, looks inside them and checks

how they work, in a sort of forensics of communication. It is also about the limits of what can be said and thought. This according to Foucault (1977) is known as *tacit knowledge*, which in this context refers to the taken-for-granted knowledge about women's sexuality. In most cases it is the hidden knowledge that has been created through social interactions; hence, in light of the strategies that the women in my study use in navigating their SRHR, discourse and social constructivism exist in a mutual relationship.

Turning now to the discourse on women's sexuality, we realize that the latter is constructed either through the actions of the women themselves or by social structures that promote particular actions. In Shona culture, certain practices promoted by patriarchy perpetuate gender inequality and deprive women of any form of agency in relation to their sexuality (Kambarami, 2006). Religion colludes with patriarchy to enforce the belief that women are an addendum of men in light of their sexuality. Although the Catholic Church has no dogma explicitly linking female sexuality to subordination, the various encyclicals mentioned earlier constitute a discourse. The same can be said of the frequently selected scriptural readings at marriage ceremonies such as Paul's Letter to the Colossians, which encourages women to submit to their husbands (Colossians 3: 18, 19), and the creation story, which is often cited to justify treating women as helpers whose sole responsibility is to support men. The language used when a woman fails to do what her husband wants leaves a lot to be desired. These kinds of statements lead women to give up their SRHR.

5.3 Social Constructivism, Agency and SRHR

What is central about social constructivism is the idea that there is not one absolute truth about reality and our understanding of the world, that the way people see and perceive the world is something that is constructed between them and therefore should be discussed and handled critically. Human communication makes use of categories that help us comprehend and relate to phenomena in the world, and social constructivism points out that these categories are formed by people and that they are not static or hard-lined. That there is anything objective and neutral is difficult to sustain. 'Reality' is constructed by people and understanding of things change over time and space (Burr, 2003). The concept of "reality" being something that is constructed by people shapes the way the Korekore women navigate their SRHR in one way or the other. Social constructivism is a theory that is concerned with meaning and understanding as

constructed through social interaction and the intersubjective influences of language, family and culture (Lock and Strong, 2010; Hoffman, 1990). According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967), the construction of reality happens in four stages, namely typification, institutionalization, legitimization and reification. This means that about 95% of what we know as human beings and what we hold as truth is a result of what other people have told us or what we have learnt and internalized from institutions through what is called externalization and that we hold as objective and reified reality through the process of internalization (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Our knowledge is not a direct perception of reality: as a society or a culture we create our own versions of reality between us, hence reality is dependent upon the historically and culturally situated perspective of the perceiver and is unstable and multiple (Gergen, 1985; Teifer, 1987). Moreover, 'knowledge of the world is not an innate cognitive skill but the cultural response to symbolic systems that are provided by the social environment' (Von Stuckrad, 2013: 8). This study uses social constructivism as a lens through which to view the cultural and historical context of the Korekore, how the Catholic Church has created women's sexuality through language and power, and also the language used by SRHR that presses women to want to respond. For example, the teachings of the Church on sexuality with which I deal involve not just private decisions but also deeply social, cultural and political decisions with profound global implications (Kabian, 2014: 5). Berger and Luckmann (1967) further argue that when individuals are born, they are without any perception of society and are made into members of the society through a process of socialization or learning. This socialization takes place at the primary and secondary levels at the hands of different agents, namely the family, one's peers, religion, social media, etc. In this thesis I ask what type of socialization occurred in relation to women's sexuality and how it shapes how women respond to the challenges to their SRHR.

If reality has been created at a particular point in time, social constructivism argues for the need to take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and thus opposes the positivism, empiricism and epistemological positions that are characteristic of the hard sciences (Burr, 2003: 2). This means that there are no essences. It is only through the interaction of socio-cultural processes with the intrapersonal self that the construction of knowledge is nurtured (Villanueva, 1997: 12). This assumption of social constructivism is used to understand what knowledge the Korekore and the Catholic Church consider objective when it comes to women's SRHR. Some forms of knowledge, some discourses, have been taken for granted, and these need to be questioned. Burr (2003) gives an example of gender and sex, which are assumed to

refer to men and women. Social constructivism asks whether these categories are natural. If they are natural, how do we reconcile practices such as gender reassignment, a process whereby one's physical sexual characteristics are changed through medical procedures (Neto et al., 2012)? Accordingly, Simone de Beauvoir (1997) argues that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman'. If discourses generate realities, it is not nature that formulates reality; rather, reality is produced in communicative and social processes, hence the need for a discourse analysis perspective, as I have proposed above. If, according to social constructivism, reality is socially constructed, then it can also be deconstructed and reconstructed. This deconstruction is a process of critical thought whose main task is to subvert knowledge systems that have formerly been considered axiomatic. This helps in understanding the meanings related to Korekore women's sexuality that the women themselves have long held, as has society at large, and how, in the process of empowering them, we can build upon the meanings they already have. Deconstruction allows people to move beyond these problems to devise a better way of dealing with them (Gergen, 1985). Thus, it allows people to negotiate a better way of dealing with their problems.

Social constructivism holds that the way in which people understand the world, the concepts and the categories they use is culturally and historically specific (Burr, 2003). The working of structures can only be understood if we know their history and formation (Stuckrad, 2013: 11). Thus, I ask how the Korekore understand their world. What concepts and categories do they use to understand their world, specifically regarding women's rights to sexuality and reproduction? How has this understanding of the world that is peculiar to the Korekore affected women as they try to navigate any form of violence in light of their SRHR? How do the social and economic arrangements that prevail in the Korekore context affect the women? In asking these questions, I do not judge the Korekore's world view of women's sexuality and reproduction because to do so would do no more than reflect my own background as a Catholic nun, which is not based on their contextual experiences.

As noted earlier, social constructivism holds that language is at the centre of people's perceptions of the world. Unlike psychologists, who hold that language is passive (Frazer, 2009), social constructivists argue that it is rather performative and has practical consequences for people as it triggers action, hence the saying 'language is not transparent' (Burr, 2003; Dulcan, 2009). If the way people speak and write about things (i.e. discourses) results in action, then language and power are intimately linked (Burr, 2003). In line with this Foucault (1964)

further argues that language is constructive and the construction happens through texts (Burr, 2003: 20). However, texts must not be taken to mean the written or spoken language only but anything from which meaning can be drawn, for instance, buildings, fashion, images and so on. Thus, the way people think and talk has implications for how they treat other people, hence it is language that produces phenomena, and 'it is the world of words that generates the world of things' (Von Stuckrad, 2013: 11).

It has been established that language mediates and creates knowledge, which according to social constructivists results in action. Each kind of social construction invites a different kind of action from human beings (Burr, 2003: 5). A good example to explain how language, knowledge and power determine action has been provided by Burr (2003: 61). She argues that people label a person who hears voices as mental and that the action that accompanies that language consists in referring him or her to a psychiatrist, whereas if that same person who hears voices is labelled a prophet or a seer, this will automatically change the action that follows in that he will be consulted for spiritual guidance. In this respect, it is plausible to argue that how we describe ourselves and other people has consequences for our actions both as individuals and as a society. In terms of women's sexuality, how cultural and religious institutions describe them has consequences for their actions. It must also be noted that language, knowledge and power can dominate, resulting in subjectivation (subject formation), a Foucauldian philosophical concept that refers to the construction of the individual subject in what is an identity-forming process. According to Foucault, individuals become subjects by being subjected to forces of disciplinary power and normalization. The individual is an effect of strategic power relations (Allen 2009). When ideologies and ideology work well, they are lived as if they were obvious and natural (Ndlovu-Gatheni, 2009; Tarusarira, 2017). When a particular body of knowledge, in this case knowledge about sexuality, is deposited within a people and determines their existence, it constitutes power. No wonder Judith Butler points out that 'Power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are' (Butler, 1988). In other words, any form of knowledge or understanding that Korekore women assume they cannot live without, ranging from what their religion and culture is to what the Catholic Church teaches them about sexuality, becomes power. Therefore, when a body of knowledge or information is impressed upon people, an inner life is produced in the process of subject formation through various social institutions. As has been pointed out, subjection produces a radical ambivalence in which the subject emerges through a passionate attachment to his or her

own subordination (Allen, 1999; Tarusarira, 2017). In this research, I ask: What kind of language is used by the Korekore and the Catholic Church as institutions, and what kind of power is produced by that language regarding women's SRHR? I ask about the extent to which the body of knowledge about sexuality as it cascades from the Catholic Church as an institution and Korekore religion and culture might result in the subjectivation of Korekore women, thus interfering with their somatic and mental potentials, and resonating with Galtung's definition of violence, already introduced above. I also want to understand what language the women use as a way of navigating their SRHR.

The relationship between social constructivism and agency is paradoxical. The question whether social constructivism allows any room for human agency is problematic, given that it sees people as the product of discourses and seems to offer more agency to discourses than to people. However, several social constructivists argue that, despite the fact that the human being is the product of discourses, it is still possible for people to change their situations or those of others through their own intentions and actions (Burr, 1995: 89). However, before delving more deeply into this paradox, it is important to understand what agency is. Agency is an elusive term, which has been associated with aspects such as selfhood, personhood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom, and creativity. It implies that an individual, through their own intentions and motives, can act either consciously or unconsciously in such a way that their actions have consequences for both their immediate and distant surroundings in both spatial and temporal terms. As such, agency is often stated to be an expression of power (Giddens, 1986; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Kabeer 1999; Williams 2017). In this thesis, agency shall be defined as the capacity of the Korekore women to influence their SRHR in the manner that is desirable to them.

In line with Burr (1995), Sawicki (1991) argues that, although the human person is constituted by discourse, he or she is still capable of exercising some choice with respect to discourses and practices for her or his own use. If we take how social constructivism affects the understanding of women's sexuality, we can ask whether Korekore women have the agency to engage in transformative and sustainable strategies in the light of their SRHR. Burr (1995) further states that human beings can critically analyse the discourses that frame their lives and can resist them, although this depends on the right circumstances. Foucault (1979) holds the same view: for him, change is possible through 'consciousness raising'. This entails opening up marginalized

and repressed discourses to make them available for use for their own purposes, thus people become discourse users (Burr, 1995: 90). Following Sawicki's argument, Gergen (1989) proposes the idea of the 'warranting voice' to explain the fact that, although human beings are defined by discourses, they can still have agency. What he means is that human beings have the desire to be heard and that to achieve this they present constructions of themselves that authorize them to speak out; they manipulate discourse and use it for their own ends. Mahmood (2004) refers to the 'politics of piety' as an example of a 'warranting voice' in writing about the agency of the women's mosque movement in Egypt. In the same vein, but in different contexts, as I mentioned earlier, Scott (1985) talks of 'weapons of the weak' with reference to the agency of peasants in Malaysia. These peasants resisted social domination by the status quo when the government retrenched several peasants from rice-farming by introducing a combine harvester that replaced human labour. This resulted in the peasants feeling oppressed. However, as the weaker group they could not express their discontent overtly, so they devised strategies to resist their domination, namely resistance, resilience and reworking. Be that as it may, we need to understand that in Gergen's view of the 'warranting voice' human beings do not have equal access to discourses: those with power have their voices heard more than those without power, and hence the notion of agency is closely linked to power. We may, for example, talk of doctors having more power than patients do.

The following school of thought (Sawicki, 1991; Foucault, 1971; Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1989; Scott, 1985; Kitzinger, 1989) asserts that the fact that human beings are a product of discourses does not prevent them from being agentic, but what is different is the way people act out their agency and the degree to which this agency can be made effective, depending on the actor's position on the ladder of power. If that is the case, the concept of agency can be applied to Korekore women's SRHR, leading me to ask to what extent these women can have agency regarding their sexuality under a situation of strong patriarchy. Can we by any chance talk of agentic tools such as resistance, resilience and reworking as exploited by, for example, the peasants of Sedaka in Scott's writing? Can these strategies give us a framework for understanding how the Korekore women in Mt. Darwin navigate their SRHR? For Katz (2005), the above strategies are often used by those who have less power. He argues that 'resistance places the emphasis on the way individuals and groups find ways of reworking their situation in the face of power and oppression'. In *Domination and the arts of resistance: hidden transcripts*, Scott (1990) used the term 'infrapolitics' to refer to the strategies of resistance that subordinates employ but that go unnoticed by their superiors.

Another argument regarding human agency refers to the relationship between the agent and the structure, that is, what is referred to as ‘an interplay’ (Burr, 1995; Settersten and Gannon, 2005). As individuals are the products of society, their choices and decisions are defined in terms of social norms and values. When human behaviour changes, society also changes. This is what Antony Giddens (1984) has developed into what he calls structuration theory. Put briefly, how people act influences and is influenced by society. If that is the case, it is important to understand how the structure is constructed before going into the concept of human agency. As a sociological theory, Giddens’ structuration theory can be applied to a vast array of social situations. I therefore apply it to understanding how Korekore society is structured and how it can or cannot give women the space for their own agency in line with their SRHR. Social structures have multiple and conflicting influences and pressures. As social constructivism is a broad theoretical paradigm, one that has been conceptualized differently by different disciplines, the idea of a social script is one way among others that can also be helpful in understanding some aspects of women’s sexuality among Zimbabwean women in general and Korekore women in particular.

As sexual scripts provide new metaphors and imagery for understanding human sexual activity in terms of social and learned interactions, social scripts being connected to social constructivism. According to social-script theorists such as Gagnon and Simon (1973) and Wilderman (2005), a great deal of sexual behaviour seems to follow scripts that are similar to those used by actors in a play. Thus, social scripts instruct the members of a society regarding the appropriate behaviour and the meanings to attach to certain forms of behaviour. In Zimbabwe, social scripts instruct women’s sexual behaviour. There are three dimensions of interconnected social scripting, namely the cultural, the interpersonal and the intrapsychic. Cultural scripts are a way of spelling out different local conventions of discourse using the metalanguage of universal semantic primes, but they are not intended to provide an account of real-life social interactions. Rather, they are intended as descriptions of commonly held assumptions about how people think about sexuality. Interpersonal scripts are seen as the ordering of representations of self and other that facilitate the occurrence of a sexual act. Finally, intrapsychic scripts represent the ordering of images and desires that elicit and sustain sexual arousal. However, I refer here to cultural scripts representing cultural discourses constructed around sexuality that provide guidelines for sexual conduct (Wilderman, 2005). Religious and cultural scripts can be appropriated and used to regulate and control female

sexuality. According to *The Herald* of 13th December 2013, Church founder and senior pastor Martin Gumbura was found guilty of sexually abusing women in his church. The title of the story read: 'RGM Church women belong to Gumbura'. This title is one example demonstrating how social scripts can be used to regulate women's sexuality. In this story, it is said that Gumbura claimed that he had the right to marry or have sexual intercourse with all the women in his church, including married women who had only been given to their husbands as a loan. Gumbura is a polygamous pastor with eleven wives, most of whom were said to be married to him by 'divine' force. In this story, women are scripted as the passive objects of male sexuality, and they themselves give in to such sexual scripting.

Every person's behaviour in any group has certain actions that create the structure of the group. However, this structure either empowers or constrains the actions of the people in this particular group. Giddens refers to this as the duality of agency and structure (1984: 25). This means that structures are the medium and outcome of practices, thus, although people shape their structures, structure determines what people should do. According to Scott (2005), society determines what should be done by creating rules and resources. Rules represent each person's understanding of how things should be done, while resources are the means that allow that person to act. Rules are learned throughout life, while resources change from time to time. It is also important to realize that people understand these rules differently and have different resources. How do Korekore women understand the rules of their culture, religion and the Catholic Church, and what resources are available that empower or constrain them to act in line with their SRHR? Coleman (1990) suggests that action is always a complex social phenomenon. Chitakure (2016) argues that in Shona culture, the man initiates every sexual interaction, while the woman follows and, in some cases, must be forced to realize what she wants. In a patriarchal society such as Zimbabwe's, social scripts present sex as a symbol of male domination in which a real man is expected to use sex as a weapon of subjection to put a woman in her place (ibid.).

To return at this point to structuration theory, this states that each person has capability and knowledge, capability in this case referring to the power the person has to influence or reject, even when the structure poses limitations on this (Giddens, 1984). According to Sewell (1992: 20), agency arises from the individual's knowledge of structural patterns. I argue that although the structure of society determines how a person should act, persons can still be agentic if given the tools with which to act. In the same manner, even though Korekore culture is highly

patriarchal, women can still be agentic in multiple ways. The question is, how transformative and sustainable is their agency?

Craib (1992) argues that each person has his or her identities and routines. Identities in this context refer to how a person perceives him- or herself in a social structure, while routines are taken-for-granted patterns of behaviour that recur over time. To explain this further, as people are in a group, the way they behave is influenced by either the structures that are already in existence or those structures that are changed through people's behaviour. Giddens (1984) considers what he calls the 'structure-agent divide' to be a false dichotomy. You cannot have one without the other; thus, it is plausible to say that social structures and agency have what I will refer to as a 'chicken-and-egg' relationship. This relationship tries to do battle with power relations: which has power over the other, the structure or the person? I want to understand how this conundrum affects the way Korekore women respond to the challenges to their SRHR. At this point I therefore now turn to women's sexual agency.

John Hyman (2015) argues that there are four dimensions to human agency, namely the physical, the psychological, the ethical and the intellectual. I will amalgamate these four into a single dimension which I shall associate with several terms such as selfhood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom and creativity (Emirbayer, 1998; Marshall, 2005). All these terms and others I have not mentioned here amount to agency as the power of persons both as individuals and collectively, consciously or unconsciously, to devise and implement social and political change (Giddens, 1989: 8; Burr, 2003; Mortimer and Shanahan, 2003). Giddens further argues that since to be agentic is an expression of power, agency can be split into two distinct categories: the power to shape society (shaping agency), and the freedom to act on one's own accord (acting agency). Luhmann (1979) also distinguishes acting agency from shaping agency. For him, acting agency is what affects the environment, which is taken to mean anything that is external to the social system, for example, the individual's physical body. When one acts in a way that influences another person, that is regarded as an expression of freedom to act, though this is not necessarily the same as the power to shape society. Shaping society happens when the individual's act influences society to change, which happens through language. Luhmann (1979) further argues that action on its own does not achieve any results but must be accompanied by communication, since meaning is communicated through communication.

Human agency has been contested as a concept on the basis that it cannot be applied to women in non-Western contexts because of the patriarchal nature of these contexts. However, this kind of judgement is ethnocentric. This view shows that agency has been understood to mean a single aspect connected with political activism, yet there are also subtle ways of being agentic, hence we need to understand it from the point of view of people's contextual experiences. When applied to SRHR, the concept of agency implies that individuals have the capacity to self-direct in a manner that is not caused by the social environment, and it also describes the role of the individual in utilizing one's power to influence sexual and reproductive encounters. In the present thesis, it means that when women exercise their agency, they stop following the pre-established sexual and reproductive routines that are set by the society. According to Holland et al. (2003: 92), in patriarchal contexts women are expected to play second fiddle regarding sexual and reproductive matters, to be unconditionally submissive and to cede their capacity for agency to their male sexual and reproductive partners.

Because of the influence of patriarchal domination, Korekore women's agency may be understood better through the concept of *infrapolitics* (Scott, 1985; 1990), as we have already observed. In Scott's works, those with less power employ strategies such as resistance, resilience, reworking and hidden transcripts, which he defines as *infrapolitics*. This can be taken as a starting point to interrogate the extent to which the women in my research might have agency with their SRHR. As mentioned already, this is how people with less power devise strategies to fight their own oppression in ways that go unnoticed by their superiors. Several studies in Africa show that this concept can indeed be applied to the African context (Van Schalkwyk, 2018; William, 2017). I use the concept of agency as understood by Giddens to explore whether Korekore women have the capacity to do what they like with their sexuality and reproduction. I also use the three modes of agency, namely individual, proxy and collective, to examine how these women exercise their agency. According to Bandura (2001: 13), individual agency occurs when people exert influence over their lives as individuals; proxy agency happens when people try to get those who have access and power to act at their behest to secure outcomes they desire; and collective agency is when people share beliefs and act as a group to produce the desired results. It would be too simplistic, however, to talk about women's agency without paying attention to factors such as structure, identity and consequences. These will be discussed in the following section. While most proponents of agency argue that human beings are free, Davies (2000) and Bandura (1997; 2006; 2008) ask whether human beings are

born with agency or whether agency is acquired through one's life in a particular environment. Asking this question helps to understand the Korekore women's agency in their SRHR.

This question may be answered by using Giddens' (1984) duality of structure, in which the structure influences the individual's agency and vice versa. I use this concept on Korekore women's agency to understand how the social structure impacts on their actions. As already alluded to, the duality of structure suggests that how society is arranged enables as well as constrains people in their actions, thus having a twofold effect. Moen (2013) argues that the greater the degree of the loose coupling of institutional factors, the greater the opportunity for agency. How enabling is Korekore culture and Catholic teaching when it comes to women's SRHR? Do they give women an opportunity to act in whatever way they desire? According to Mukova and Mangena (2016: 116), married women in African Apostolic Churches in Domboshawa stated that, 'far from being passive sexual and reproductive vessels at the mercy of their husbands, they have devised some strategies of agency to map and recreate their sexual and reproductive spaces and capacities'. As in the case of the Catholic Church, artificial contraception is prohibited. Be that as it may, women are aware of the religious prohibition on the use of contraception, but they secretly acquire contraceptives from clinics that are distant from their area of residence to avoid being seen and reported to their husbands and the Church leaders. They also keep these contraceptives in secret places where they will be least expected by their husbands, for instance, handbags that they rarely use, travel suitcases, pillows, vegetable gardens, grass-thatched kitchen roofs and rarely used cooking pots. In this way, these women demonstrate agency in relation to their sexual and reproductive health. Mukova and Mangena (2016: 119) also demonstrate how the women can exert agency in respect of their sexual rights: for instance, when they are not willing to have sex, they can just say '*musana/musoro uya watanga*' (my 'that' back/head is aching again). Although this can be regarded as giving the women agency, one question to ask is 'to what extent are these acts transformative and sustainable in light of the challenges to their SRHR?' I argue that the notion of *transformative agency* is helpful in allowing women to achieve sustainable goals in respect of their SRHR.

Giddens (1984) argues that one's past history can play a part in one's capacity to act, for example, how social structure and past events during childhood or adolescence might have shaped one's agency (Clausen 1991; Elder, 1998; Gecas, 2003). What historical narratives exist in line with women's sexuality and reproduction? Do these allow them to navigate in obtaining

their rights? As already noted, Giddens (1984) argues that the structure creates rules that impact on people's agentic status. A person's rules are created from three basic structures: significance, legitimation and domination. The significance of these is that certain things are allowed to be done in any given context and that they depend on the person's power and knowledge to do so. The power to intervene, to influence and to abdicate choice is what Giddens (1984) refers to as the agent's capability. These rules are interpreted differently by people in the same context, which seems to result in the type of agency that the people will choose to have. This may call for a brief regression and connection to the modes of agency that have been discussed previously. Bandura (1997; 2006; 2008) refers to them as modes of human agency. Because of several of the factors I have outlined and others I have not been able to consider here, the person will choose whether to exert individual, proxy or collective agency (Giddens, 1984; Luhmann, 1979).

Bandura (2017: 130) further postulates that agency operates through a triadic, codetermined process of causation. By this he means that human action is a product of one's reflexive thought processes, the kind of behaviour one chooses to engage in and finally the environmental processes that infringe on one. In line with this argument, I understand agency as being greatly influenced by what Bandura (1997) refers to as self-efficacy. This concept was used in educational circles in measuring teacher efficacy by Albert Bandura in his work *Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory* (1986) to explain how teachers believe in their innate ability to achieve goals. This has to do with how well a person can execute the causes of actions that are required to deal with a prospective situation. A strong sense of efficacy enhances human achievement, whereas a low level of self-efficacy results in failure. For the women in my study to be able to navigate their SRHR in a manner that produces positive results, this greatly depends on their self-efficacy. Inspired by Paul Lederach (2014), I refer to this positive change as 'transformative navigation'. However, it might be difficult for all women to acquire self-efficacy because it is not an innate characteristic.

Even though Korekore women might not have self-efficacy, it can still be acquired. However, the question is how women can acquire self-efficacy so that they are able to respond to the challenges to their SRHR in a manner that is transformative and sustainable? One school of thought argues that it can be acquired through social modelling (Bandura, 2007; Mischel and Shoda, 1999; Pajares and Urdan, 2006). Bandura (2007) defines social modelling as the ability to copy the behaviour of that one reverts as models, imitation that must involve four factors:

attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. To be able to assimilate the goals of social modelling, one must pay close attention to observing the behaviour of those one is emulating so as to be able to retain and reproduce what one has copied while remaining motivated in trying to retain the relevant forms of behaviour. Bandura (1997) further argues that the person can only emulate someone else by realizing that their models' actions have positive consequences. Although the model's actions could indeed have positive consequences, identity in agency may still obscure one's agency. Sewell (1992: 21) and Davies (1991: 44) argue that agency is enhanced by the place one occupies in society: for example, in a patriarchal society such as the Korekore, men seem to be more agentic than women (this will be explored further). It is finally worth noting that whether individuals or groups choose to act in whatever way, there will always be consequences accompanying the action, a situation Giddens (1984) calls 'unintended consequences'. In other words, Merton (1936) refers to them as 'unanticipated consequences', and I go by his view in understanding some of the factors that may limit Korekore women's agency. According to Bandura (2007: 133), people use their self-reflectiveness to judge whether their action will change society. He further argues that 'unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their action, they have little incentive to act...' It seems plausible to argue that human agency is closely intertwined with structure, identity and consequences.

5.4 The Theory of Governmentality

Governmentality is understood as the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour. In essence, it can be defined as how states exercise organized political power and expand it to include the active consent and willingness of individuals to participate in their own governance at the benefit of the state. It is a mentality which constitutes all modern forms of political thought and action, an ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power (Foucault, 1997). Historically this theory was developed in Foucault's lecture series called 'Security, Territory, Population' (1977-1978). He was mainly interested in power relations, thus, in how the state exercises control over its population. He argues that there are three distinct types of power, namely *sovereignty*, *disciplinary* and *governmentality*. It is governmentality that is of interest to my research. This concept shifts power from the centre to the population at large. People are taught to control their actions for the benefit of the state, and this is achieved through non-direct ways by conducting the conduct of the people: thus, Mitchel Dean (2010) calls it the 'conduct of conduct', and continues:

Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes. (ibid.: 19)

Using Foucault's concept of governmentality, Dean developed the so-called 'Four-Dimensions': visibility, episteme of government, techne of government and identity formation of government in his book, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, 2010. In light of the Korekore women's SRHR, the four dimensions help us to understand who or what is to be governed? Why should they be governed? How should they be governed? To what ends should they be governed? It is in the light of the above that Foucault (1997:85) further states that the governed are, variously, members of a flock to be nurtured or culled, juridical subjects whose conduct is to be limited by law, individuals to be disciplined. Government entails ordering and directing human conduct, which may be regulated, controlled and turned to specific ends (Dean, 2010: 18). People are formed and regulated according to certain norms, values and attitudes, hence government is based on a particular understanding of knowledge, ideals and techniques. What this means is that, when analysing government, there is need to focus thoroughly and systematically on how and in what way government works without being simplistic and zeroing in on a descriptive approach to how authority may operate. There is also need to understand that multiple ways of governing are based on a plurality of structures, means and ideals, thus the regimes of government are heterogeneous in both numbers and nature. It is a question of 'an art of government' embedded in practices and ideals, and coloured and informed by local contexts (Dean, 2010: 28). That said, it can be argued that government is not merely a feature of the state but can also be applied to other actors and institutions in society, such as the Church, prisons, hospitals, schools and so on. In trying to understand Korekore women's sexuality as explicated by Catholic teaching and as defined by Korekore culture, it is important to analyse the forms of thought that underlie the dogmas of the Church and Korekore cultural practices. In essence, such forms of thought seek to unify practices in relation to particular objectives (Varman et al., 2011), what is called the teleology of government (Dean, 2010). What is the teleology of the Catholic teaching on sexuality and of certain Korekore cultural practices in the light of women's sexuality?

For a person to be a full member of the Catholic Church, the Church has a duty to initiate that person into the Christian Catholic faith. This is done through the process of Catechesis. The

person who is under catechetical instruction is known as the catechumen. The core aim of catechesis is to provide the catechumens with a thorough background in Christian teaching. As the United States of America bishops conference described the process, 'A thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of the Catholic doctrine and moral life, aided by approved catechetical texts, is to be provided during the period of the catechumenate' (U.S. Conference of Bishops, National Statutes for the Catechumenate, Nov. 11, 1986). This catechumenate training presupposes a learning process through which new members are drawn into formative and regulatory practices with collective as well as individual implications. Through this catechetical training, the catechumen are not only expected to learn but also to effectively integrate and internalize what they have learned in order to be well equipped as full-fledged Catholics.

Reading it from the governmentality point of view, catechism can be taken as a discourse that forms, controls and regulates subjects. In responding to the teachings of the Church, new Catholics govern themselves. On the other hand, the patriarchal society of the Korekore has several cultural teachings, practices and rituals that induce women to control themselves to suit the demands and expectations of society. For example, the ideal marriage is defined as marrying a woman who has undergone the process of labia minora elongation. In this manner, most women perceive enlarged labia as a way of making their marriages successful, hence they negotiate ways of making sure that their children fulfil the expectation. Both the Catholic Church and Korekore culture act as institutions whose power may form and control people in one way or another, hence the concept of governmentality provides the language and framework with which to understand the relationship between government (the Catholic Church and Korekore culture) and governed (the Korekore women). This does not suggest that there is something wrong with catechism as a process of initiating new converts into Catholicism, but it helps us to analyse what the process does to the new converts and how that will affect people's actions in the future, especially in relation to women's SRHR.

Together with social constructivism theory, governmentality helps us assess the causes and effects of the strategies that women use to navigate their SRHR. Hence, they are major theories that are helpful in answering my research question: 'How do Korekore women navigate their SRHR against the backdrop of Catholic teaching on sexuality and African cultural practices?' As it has been already highlighted, governmentality has four dimensions which are known as "the analytics of government". These four dimensions are: a) visibility b), episteme of

government, c) *techne* of government, and d) identity formation. They help us to understand more on how the theory of governmentality works in shaping the way the Korekore women navigate their SRHR.

Visibility means that the government identifies and problematizes the issues it thinks need governing. It goes on to justify why the identified issues need governing. In my study, women's sexuality is identified as one such issues. However, one must then ask why women's sexuality should need governing. To answer this question, discourse analysis comes to our aid. A discourse is a particular way of thinking about and understanding the world (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2012). Discourses therefore establish subjects and objects, determine acceptable and non-acceptable human behaviour and categorize people's actions as normal, abnormal, desirable or undesirable.

If any government is to achieve its desired goals, it must use technical means. This is what Dean (1995) refers to as the *techne of government*. This includes the means, mechanisms, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques and vocabularies that the government uses as a means to control the population. Can the *techne of government* be used to understand the avenues through which the Catholic Church imparts its teachings on sexuality? I will use this assumption to reflect upon issues such as the teaching of the catechism, the activities of women's guilds and clubs, statistics of parishioners as reflected in parish registers and so on. Foucault (1988) refers to this as pastoral power, understood as power that is exercised to care for and support the individual and society in order to save and provide a redemptive role in the novices' lives (1988). Pastoral power allegedly intrudes into the private life of the individual through various confessional practices and technologies of power. This produces submissive subjects who will eventually self-discipline. Using this line of thinking, I ask how governmentality's pastoral power has affected the way women navigate their SRHR.

Pastoral power is a concept that Foucault (2007) adopted from Judaism, where the shepherd or the pastor is God's representative and the pastorate or the flock is the Christian community; hence pastoral power is modelled on the 'shepherd-flock relationship' (Foucault 1988: 61; 2007: 125). In this relationship, the duty of the shepherd is to sacrifice himself to gather and guide his flock so that the flock becomes a multiplicity in movement. The shepherd's ultimate goal is the salvation of every soul, which makes pastoral power beneficence power. However, beneficence power is characterized by the ability to triumph, defeat and accumulate wealth. Foucault (1980) argues that pastoral power is power with a purpose for those for whom it is

exercised. For example, Kalbian (2014) suggests that the Catholic Church's teaching on contraception is deeply embedded and intimately connected to institutional power, which excludes women from decision-making while romanticizing their roles as mothers and moral stewards. In most predominantly Catholic communities such as Mt. Darwin, the Church is highly revered to the extent that people do not dare question any of its teaching, even if they feel that they are being pressured to accept it. They trust in the spiritual power of Church leaders such as the priests and religious sisters, who, in the theory of pastoral power, are their shepherds. They cannot imagine how the shepherds could ever lead them astray. Dean (2010) argues that there are complex and profound moral ties binding the shepherd to his flock. In line with the concept of salvation, the shepherd makes himself fully responsible for the flock, and the flock exercises pure obedience, a type of obedience that may compromise their freedom and therefore ultimately affect the way they exercise their agency. It seems that pastoral power does not give the flock any room for agency. I use pastoral power to understand whether the teaching of the Church and Korekore cultural practices leave any room for women's agency. For the shepherd to exercise his full responsibility on the flock, he requires in-depth knowledge of each member, what is called *the episteme of government*. As this knowledge is in line with the needs, deeds and contents of the soul of each, Foucault (2007: 184) argues that the practices of guidance, examination and obedience are linked to subjection and subjectivity.

More often than not, governmentality is applied to overt institutions such as schools, churches, hospitals and so on, but it can also be applied to institutions which are differently organized, such as African culture and religion, in their use of certain rituals. According to Victor Turner (2017), rituals use a structure, which, from a Foucauldian perspective, is a characteristic of governmentality theory (Foucault, 1977). If this is the case, it is also appropriate to use governmentality theory as a lens through which to see how Korekore culture and the Catholic Church's religion shape, regulate and control women's SRHR. Another aspect of governmentality is that governments and hegemonic structures 'govern' the thoughts and practices of the population in a way that these people internalize those structures and do not know anymore that they are actually being controlled by them. So, Korekore women and men reproduce the governing discourse by the Church and the authority as if there would be no alternative. It is a *tacit knowledge*. Governmentality in this sense becomes part of discursive processes.

I have established that governmentality can also be applied to other institutions than the state and that some governments need these mechanisms to regulate and control the population. In the same vein, both Korekore culture and the Catholic Church's *techne government* can be explained through the concept of panopticism. To understand how the panopticon works, we first need to understand its structure. The panopticon is a type of institutional building designed by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham during the eighteenth century. This building was designed to allow prisoners to be observed by a single security guard without them being able to tell whether they are being watched or not. Foucault (1977: 201) describes the panopticon as a prison with a tower at the centre and cells around the tower. The cells had two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower, and the other one on the outside, allowing light to cross the cell from one end to the other. The inmates would be placed in individual cells and would be visible from the tower. The supervisor would be placed inside the tower, from where the inmate is visible to him but cannot be seen by the inmate. Foucault (1977) regards visibility as a trap in which the inmate is the object of information but never a subject in communication. Invisibility on the part of the inmates is a guarantee of order in which any collective effect is made impossible and replaced by a collection of individualities. When the inmates are subjected to visibility, they assume responsibility and become the principle of their own subjection. In other words, Foucault (1977: 222) says that 'it is a way of making power relations function in a function and making a function through these power relations'. For Bentham (1791), it was a procedure for the subordination of bodies, a new political anatomy interested in discipline, not sovereignty. What this means more simply is that there is no longer any need for force and that power is exercised in subtle, natural ways. In other words, the government practices a kind of political competence.

For Foucault, however, the panopticon is more than a building, it is the embodiment of a set of principles which includes *pervasive power* (the tower sees into every cell and can regulate everything) and *obscure power* (the tower sees into every cell, but the prisoners cannot see into the tower). Another principle is when direct violence is replaced by *structural violence* (by just being there, the structure of the panopticon is coercive). In respect of women's sexuality, pastoral power can be understood as a form of panopticism, a process of making women subjects of their sexuality so that ultimately, they just govern themselves in a manner that benefits the power structures around them. Panopticism thus works as a means of *identity formation*. Let us think here of catechism lessons, education in Catholic schools, lessons to prepare one to become a member of a guild, marriage instruction lessons and so on. In line with

Dean's dimension of visibility, the Church uses several ways of visualizing what needs to be governed, such as children and women. According to Dean (2010), visibility entails that the government identifies and problematizes issues that need government. Visibility is closely linked to what Dean (2010) refers to as the technical aspect of government or *the techné of government*. As already mentioned, this dimension examines the means, mechanics, procedures, instruments, techniques and vocabularies that are used to govern human conduct. Using panopticism, the Church uses *schools* and catechism as its *techné of government*.

Besides creating children as docile bodies through teaching, parents are supervised as well, thus they gain knowledge (which is very vital in the governmentality concept) through the children. They acquire information about, for example, the parents' way of life, their piety, their morals and their resources. Once this knowledge has been acquired, pastoral power then uses the dimension known as *identity formation* in several teachings enshrined in the catechism of the Catholic Church. According to Dean (2010), this dimension questions what forms of persons are produced, what kinds of conduct are expected, what duties and rights they have and how these duties are ensured. Pastoral power, which is exercised in Catholic schools and catechetical lessons, uses the mechanism of the panopticon to produce the kinds of people's subjectivities that are easily controlled. According to Deleuze (1991), the four dimensions of the analytics of government aim at conditioning the population. This can be taken to mean what Pavlov (1960) refers to as classical conditioning. In my research, the concepts of pastoral power that have been mentioned above make the women naturally assume responsibility for their own surveillance. These concepts are 'the relation of the God-shepherd to the flock, the constitution of the flock, the salvation of each by means of the shepherd's individualized kindness, his beneficence, and the shepherd's duty to be devoted and to know the flock as a whole and in detail and to be ready to sacrifice himself for his flock' (Foucault 1977; 1988, 2007; also Dean, 2010).

If we see how Korekore culture is structured, we can also apply the panoptic mechanism as a way of understanding how the culture acts as a form of identity formation when it comes to women's sexuality. It operates in such a way that there are patriarchal structures at the centre controlling and regulating women's sexuality. According to Gelfand (1979: 17), at puberty girls are taught the meaning of marriage and sexuality, and this is continually repeated so that they internalize, naturalize and routinize it. In line with Dean's dimension (2010) of *the techné of government*, paternal grandmothers and aunts are used to instil in these girls a degree of docility. Their aunts and grandmothers act as supervisors who are responsible for monitoring whether

the teachings are being internalized. Another form of *techné government* that the Korekore use is the aspect of *mahumbwe* (a game that toddlers play mimicking married life). In this game, the children assume the duties of wives and husbands respectively and thus already learn those duties at a very tender age (Gelfand, 1973). It is during these *mahumbwe* that the girls already assume duties that make them subservient to the boys and the boys take on superior roles. As they grow up, these positions are instilled in them. There are several practices the Korekore carry out, which will be discussed later. Using governmentality theory's mechanism of panopticism, I investigate how these teachings have shaped, regulated and controlled women's SRHR and how these interfere with their agency.

Hyden (1992) has argued that Africa needs a new paradigm or set of paradigms to explain the continent's development processes. This has been echoed by different scholars in different ways, arguing that studies of Africa might better be analysed through African theories rather than Western theories (Hountondji, 2009; Nkrumah, 1957, Temples, 1969). By using Foucauldian theories to analyse Zimbabwean women's SRHR, I do not mean to overlook their Eurocentric effervescence, nor do I mean to sanitize and romanticize their various shortcomings. I am fully aware of these shortcomings, but I have made a deliberate decision for reasons I will explain shortly. I have considered several criticisms of Foucault: for example, Richter-Montpetit (2014) argue that Foucault's genealogy of biopower rests on an unspecified concept of 'human' where enslaved people are rendered into 'things'. Foucault (2003) suggests that, compared to disciplinary power, biopower is a lesser evil, as torture and corporal punishment became superfluous. Although that may be the case, he overlooks the fact that, when dealing with populations that are subjected to detention or incarceration, there are bound to be state-administered forms of corporal punishment, such as police beatings, rape, shock beatings and so on (Ben-Moshe et al., 2014; Davis, 2002; Gilmore, 2007). Moreover, for Foucault modern power intervenes at the level of both the individual human body, the so-called 'anatomo-politics', and the population as a biological species, or 'biopolitics'. However, it must be realized that his notion of biopolitics fails to comprehend 'the colonial global', the entwined, co-constitutive relations between social, political and economic processes in Europe and the colonies and the concomitant fundamental raciality of the modern subject.

I understand that Foucault's theories have been accused of being Euro-centric, hence using them for analysis in studies in an African context might be counter-intuitive. Indeed, these theories do disregard different contexts. Nevertheless, as the historical background of SRHR

and Catholicism in Zimbabwe is linked to colonial agendas that impose a Eurocentric view on non-Western cultures, it is plausible to use these theories. I also argue that the identity of the person does not constitute the cogency of the argument. What is important is to keep in mind the sociological features of the concepts rather than their geographical origins.

5.5 Transformative Theory

While both social constructivism and governmentality are at the centre of indirectly forming governable bodies through the process of panopticism, the concept of transformation helps us to see how the Korekore women engage with positive aspects of social constructivism and governmentality towards strategies of navigation that are sustainable. The concept can also be used to empower the women in relation to their SRHR, so that the women's agency is acknowledged and they are in a position to use it. It is derived from Mezirow's transformative learning theory, (1991) which he devised when he wanted to understand how women who had returned to school in the US had changed because of the impact of transformative learning. Transformation departs from the hypothesis that all human beings have different assumptions, expectations and beliefs that shape their world views, for example, a person's culture, society, personal experiences and so on. These are often assimilated without question, being taken for granted. Transformation therefore helps to change these taken-for-granted frames of reference (Freire, 1970).

As indicated above, several beliefs, values and perspectives have become what they are as a result of the influence of social construction and governmentality. The concept of Transformation therefore helps challenge previously uncritically assimilated beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and emotional reactions. In so doing, it results in people changing their frames of reference. In my research, for example, Korekore society treats sexuality as a discourse that cannot be discussed openly but must be left to the bedroom (Chitakure, 2016). This has been internalized by the women to the extent that most of the strategies they use to navigate their SRHR are subtle. Anything to do with sexuality openly invites stigmatization. Under such circumstances, transformation calls for a deep shift in perspective in which habits of mind become more open and permeable (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000). Freire (1970) argues that transformation involves critical conscientization. However, according to Mezirow (2000) this critical conscientization is a very painful process, especially when we realize that the process begins with an individual encountering a perspective that is at odds with his or her current perspective, resulting in one experiencing a disorientating dilemma. It is in this dilemma that

the person begins to feel angry, experiences shame and sometimes even fear. For example, while in Korekore culture payment of a bride wealth grants men exclusive sexual rights (Bourdillon, 1967; Chitakure, 2016; Kambarami, 2006), critical consciousness may help both women and men to understand that these are social constructions which can be deconstructed at some point. Critical consciousness leads to the expression of social discontent, suggesting that transformation needs radicalization. Freire suggests that the more radical a person is the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it better. When the person encounters a dilemma, he or she is called to reflect critically on these assumptions, test their validity and then decide what action to take. In a nutshell, transformation concept will be helpful in analysing the extent to which the strategies of Korekore women are transformative and sustainable.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion of social constructivism and governmentality theories as lenses with which to analyse the empirical data on the Korekore women's strategies to navigate their SRHR. I also deliberated on the concept of transformation as it should provide tools for the Korekore women to have agency to engage with strategies that are sustainable. Social constructivism is used to analyse the Korekore cultural context and the Catholic Church, as well as the meanings they give to women's SRHR through their interaction, and how these meanings have been internalized and taken for granted by the women so that they shape the strategies they use to navigate the challenges to their SRHR. The concept of governmentality theory that is known as pastoral power is used to assess the role of the Catholic Church in women's SRHR. The way in which governmentality and social constructivism influence women's sexuality results in the mechanism that is known as panopticism. What is at the centre of panopticism is creating docile bodies that can monitor themselves so that they are easily governed. Once people are made subjects, they immediately lose their agency. As already highlighted, transformation then works to provide tools that are helpful in unlocking all the assumptions that have been taken for granted so that women acquire the critical consciousness to devise strategies of navigation that are transformative and sustainable. However, these theories are not used as a block of ideas without analysing them. What the above theories demonstrate is that reality is constructed and that members of society live according to this constructed reality, which they take as a given. They live in suspension of doubt until something happens to lift that suspension of doubt. The following chapter will use the above-mentioned theories to analyse my empirical data.

Chapter Six: Experiencing and Navigating the Challenges on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the data I collected from forty-four Catholic Korekore women of Mt. Darwin district in Zimbabwe. The purpose of these data is to investigate the challenges that these women face regarding their SRHR and the strategies that they use to navigate them. It also examines the extent to which these strategies are transformative and sustainable. The study has been conducted against the backdrop of Catholic teaching on sexuality and African cultural practices. I used multiple qualitative research methods in collecting these data, including individual interviews, focus-group discussions, participant and non-participant observation, formal and informal conversations and observations, and finally training workshops. The aim of the data collection was to answer the following main double question:

1) What are Catholic Korekore women's lived sexual experiences in the context of Korekore culture and Catholic teaching? 2) What strategies do they use to navigate their SRHR?

I interviewed forty-four Korekore women, ten from the urban area of Mt. Darwin and thirty-four from the rural areas of the same district, namely Dotito, Chiunye, Mutondwe, Sohwe, Pachanza and Chiutsa. Those who live in the urban area of Mt. Darwin are mainly professionals such as teachers, nurses, bankers, police officers, shopkeepers and so on, though not many Korekore women are part of these professional groups. Most of these women are non-Korekore. This explains why only a few Korekore women were found in the urban area. Moreover, the fact that the Korekore are predominantly agriculturalists explains why a larger number were found in the rural part of the district. I also conducted four participant observations of women's guild meetings in two different centres at which the women discussed different topics in relation to their lives as Catholic women. I also had a chance to attend one traditional marriage and one kitchen party within Mt. Darwin. From the informal conversations I held with some Korekore women, a kitchen party is an opportunity for the women in the bride's family, neighbours and friends to gather and have a party which they give some advises and some presents to the bride to be. I finally carried out workshops with all the women who had previously participated in my research and some who had not had a chance to participate but still belonged to my case study.

The Mt. Darwin region is approximately 156 kilometres north of the capital, Harare, and spills over into the high plateau of the Zambezi Valley. The inhabitants are mainly Korekore. This group of women consisted of those who were married during my research and others who were single mothers and widows, as long as they have been married before. Generally, my case study dwelt on Catholic Korekore women who have experience of marriage. Their ages ranged from 18 to 81. All of them participated in individual interviews, with a few also participating in the four focus-group discussions. Four groups of twenty women each participated in a two-day workshop which I facilitated together with a private consultant who works on women's empowerment. The Shona have been mentioned as a highly patriarchal society, so for me to acquire a greater understanding of the influence of patriarchy on the violation of women's SRHR and to broaden my understanding of the data I obtained from the women, I interviewed ten men, who therefore made up about a fifth of my research participants. I also engaged with members of both non-governmental and governmental organizations working on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) to broaden my understanding of the landscape of SRHR in Zimbabwe. To understand the role of the Catholic Church in women's SRHR, I interviewed the Catholic Church leadership. This comprised two bishops, five priests and five nuns working as nurses and women advisors.

This chapter presents data from the aforementioned research participants. For ethical reasons, I have anonymized the names of the participants by using pseudonyms throughout the research. The women in my research are identified by their geographical places and their ages, for example, RWP (40) refers to 'Rural Woman Participant aged 40'. Likewise, UWP (49) refers to 'Urban Woman Participant aged 49'. I use alphabetical letters to refer to the men, the Catholic Church hierarchy and those from different organizations. The findings of this study are presented thematically.

The strategies that the women use are not homogenous. It emerged that the ways in which they navigated their sexual health differed from how they navigated their sexual rights, as with reproductive health and reproductive rights as well. Although these strategies differed, the women used them in such a way that they supported one another. These strategies ranged from resistance, resilience, reworking, docility, rebellion, quiescence, disguised compliance and feigned ignorance to invented spaces. As I indicated in the theoretical framework section, people tend to take violence to refer to acts of war, attacks and what is visible alone. By doing so they may overlook structural violence, understood as invisible pressure exerted on human beings so that they cannot fully realize their potential (Galtung, 1969: 168; Lederach, 1995;

Bourdieu 1994: 134). The strategies the women employed differed depending on factors such as their age, their geographical location, their understanding of SRHR, their economic status, the meaning of womanhood to them, the existence of patriarchal dominance and the place of religion in their lives. The women in my study either navigated or negotiated their challenging situations. Navigation requires internal juggling and is a matter of how the women enact it, whereas negotiation refers to how the women interact with people and systems that affect the violation of their rights (Selby et al., 2018). However, there is a very thin membrane between navigation and negotiation, hence these words will be used interchangeably.

6.2 Emic Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Zimbabwe

In respect of the strategies the women engage in, it was important to understand whether they do so consciously or unconsciously, so I began by attempting to grasp the meanings they place on the discourse of SRHR. This was also the key to understanding the meaning the Catholic Church attached to the discourse, as this would be helpful in examining the role of the Church in women's SRHR in Zimbabwe. It was clear that people did not have the same understandings of SRHR. The highly political historical background of SRHR makes it difficult to come up with an all-inclusive definition of the discourse. This reflects the argument of Berro Pizarossa (2018), namely that the definition largely depends on one's position, for example, as a health activist, a population scientist, a religious conservative, a social scientist and so on. However, what was agreed in the Cairo document is a working definition used by this study because it is horizontal, holistic and human rights-based, contrary to the vertical view of the population-control paradigm. The Cairo document contains the goals agreed at the International Conference for Population Development in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994. In this document, 179 nations agreed that SRHR entail the rights of all people, regardless of age, gender or any other characteristics, to make choices regarding their sexuality and reproduction, provided they respect other people's rights (ICPD, 1994; Shalev, 2000: 51; Griffin 2006: 1).

Although some NGOs refer to SRHR as just one aspect, it is necessary to emphasize that technically they should be separated into four categories, namely sexual health (a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality); sexual rights (rights to decide freely about sexuality, whether to be sexually active or asexual, who to have sex with, how and when); reproductive health (physical, mental and social well-being in relation to reproduction); and reproductive rights (the rights of all people to decide freely whether to have children or not,

the number of children to have and the methods of birth control to use). When these four aspects are put together, they form a body of human rights applicable to sexuality and reproduction. Although these four aspects may appear to be inextricably linked, however, it is important to understand right from the outset that they can be violated differently for different reasons and can also be navigated differently. For example, there are moments when the women's circumstances make it possible for them to navigate sexual health, but difficult when it comes to obtaining their sexual rights. In a bid to answer the question of the impact of the Catholic Church on SRHR, I asked the women about their knowledge of the discourse of SRHR. It sounds bizarre to have asked the women about the role of the Church, but I argue that disseminating information on SRHR is one of the goals of SRHR. As Chitando and Njoroge argued (2016), the Church has the mandate to address issues in respect of SRHR. Talking about what SRHR means to her, one participant said, "When I hear of SRHR I think of the right to do what I want with my sexuality without anybody controlling me. The big issue is on rights, but I do not know whether it works with this type of our husbands". UWP (39)

For her and other women, SRHR meant the right to do what one wants with one's sexuality. However, according to UWP (39), it is easy to talk about sexual and reproductive rights, but in practice it might not be as easy to assert them because of the nature of Korekore men. I asked her what she meant by saying '*...nevarume vedu ivava*', '*...this type of husband*'. Her response was that, in the Korekore socio-cultural context, women are subordinate to men in all circumstances. Korekore culture is highly patriarchal. In most patriarchal societies, the sexuality of married women is perceived to fall within the domain of their husbands' control, as Masenya also argues (2012). Although UWP (39) knows what SRHR is, she doubts whether in practice women would be able to assert their rights because the society has defined what female sexuality entails.

Despite doubting the practicality of SRHR, UWP (39) knew what the discourse meant. However, her meaning of SRHR could already demonstrate the strategies that she was likely to engage in. To say "*I do not know whether it works with this type of our husbands*" seemed to suggest that the only way to deal with this situation is to give in and let the man be in charge of her sexuality. The meaning of SRHR, as held by UWP (39), is a clear demonstration of the influence of both social constructivism and governmentality. Men have been portrayed as sexually strong and that sexuality is in their hands, women should not do what they like with

their sexuality (Kambarami, 2006), and women have internalized that sexuality is in the hands of men and they cannot do anything to change their situation. Foucault (1991) argues that normality is never anything external, people are the ones who guarantee it, and reproduce it through alterations. They govern themselves in the mode of governmentality, in this case, power and certain domination relations are barely perceptible, and extremely difficult to reflect on, because the women act in their production, as it were, in the ways they relate to themselves, and their own bodies. Normalization is therefore lived through everyday practices that are perceived as self-evident and natural.

There were other women who thought SRHR had practically nothing to do with them, being something that is just meant for entertainment, which they can view on television like any other television program. One woman in her early forties said:

We see these issues on the television. These are issues to do with the use of condoms and family-planning tablets, but ummm...these are complicated issues, *varume vazhinji havabvume zvakapusa zvakadaro* (many men do not agree with such foolish things).
UWP (43)

For UWP (43), her understanding of SRHR is reduced to the use of condoms and artificial family-planning methods, but she also indicated that there are multiple challenges in married couples using the condom. It is not easy for the woman to suggest using condoms. Although condoms are considered as the most effective barrier method because of their dual purpose of being both contraceptives and prophylactics (Bauni, 2003), some women do not have the courage to ask their husbands to use them, out of a fear that they may strain or break their relationships. Research has shown that there are several reasons why some men hesitate to use condoms. First and foremost, the importance of children that most African men attach to marriage leads to their not wanting to use condoms because they think that the condom might interfere with their fertility and that they might not be able to conceive in future. It is also associated with several negative comments which they hear from others that are not in their own experiences. For instance, many people say that the condom may rupture during the process of sexual intercourse, and they are also said to reduce sexual pleasure for both men and women (Baun et al., 2003). Ulin (1992) postulates that for some men, agreeing to use a condom is tantamount to confirming their infidelity, the assumption being that they would want to protect their wives from contracting sexually transmitted diseases they might have contracted themselves from other women. In line with this, Madiba and Ngwenya (2017) argue that some

women do not even dare suggest condom use to the man because the latter will accuse them of having started sleeping around. Although the condom is not the focus of this study, it is important to examine everything possible so as to understand why condom use is difficult for Korekore women, despite being one of the ways of helping enhance women's sexual health.

UWP (43) demonstrated that she understands what SRHR is as she alluded to the use of condoms, which indeed enhances sexual health. However, the problem she cited was the strategy that she and many more women could use to make the husbands agree to use condoms. What was at the centre of her argument was that marriage is important and it has to be preserved, thus insisting to use the condom will result in straining the marriage relationship which may even result in divorce. The understanding of SRHR by UWP (43) should also be understood as being influenced by the Catholic teaching on sexuality and marriage and also the Korekore culture's notion of marriage. For the Korekore society, marriage is highly revered (Bourdillon, 1991) and for the Catholic Church marriage is indeed at the centre because it helps to do away with extreme individualism (Familiaris Consortio, 3). This demonstrates how the construction of meaning by any society can impact the way people behave. In this manner, the Korekore women's ways of navigating their SRHR are highly influenced by social constructivism.

To enhance understanding of the meaning Korekore women attach to the discourse of SRHR, I interviewed a woman in her late sixties. She had been living in a rural area together with her husband and children, and both had been teachers at a local primary school almost their entire lives. Upon retirement they moved to live in the urban part of Mt. Darwin. In her opinion, she does not need to worry or think about what SRHR means because it has nothing to do with her. Although she still has a husband and she is still sexually active, she said, the issue of SRHR has nothing to do with her because she is now grown up; it is rather for the young women. She would not bother thinking about what it means. She continued:

It is for the young generation; for us grandmothers, we have nothing to do with that, we rather think about and enjoy our retirement here. UWP (69)

The argument by these elderly women showed me that for some people SRHR is only for young women, which automatically confirms what I have just argued above, that the way the women navigate their challenges will differ from one person to another, and this is greatly shaped by the meaning and importance one attaches to SRHR. Going by the two middle-aged women I interviewed, SRHR are not new to them. However, it was not immediately evident that there exists a platform where information on SRHR is disseminated to the women, although they see

and follow discussions about SRHR on different social media. Although the women did not have a technical meaning for SRHR as such, they knew what was involved and could even cite problems with the term in the African context, as when UWP (39) said ‘...*hamheno kuti zvinoshanda here nevarume vedu ava...*’ (‘...not so sure whether it works with these types of husband’). This shows that the women have an idea what it means, but that is also why they doubt its practicability in the context of their own religio-cultural traditions. Because SRHR is a relatively new phenomenon in Zimbabwe, it might have seemed common knowledge that the older generation do not entirely know what it is all about. However, data from in-depth interviews, focus-group discussions (FGDs) and workshops showed that some elderly women knew what the term meant in general, although some thought it was no longer applicable to them, saying it was only for those of reproductive age. They gave different terms to refer to SRHR, such as *zvekodzero dzemadzimai* (to do with women’s rights), *zvezvirwere zvepabonde* (to do with sexually transmitted diseases), *zvekubvisa nhumbu zvakauya nevarungu izvi* (to do with abortion, which originated with the westerners) and so on. This conception of ‘*zvekodzero dzemadzimai*’ confirms that some elderly women understood that it was to do with women’s rights. For others it boiled down to HIV/AIDS, as shown in statements such as ‘*zvezvirwere zvepabonde*’ (on sexually transmitted diseases). However, it seemed that the importance of the marriage, family and children in most African societies is also a factor making it difficult for the women to navigate their SRHR.

A woman from the urban part of Mt. Darwin said:

This is what came with your WhatsApp, that the men are refused sex, but that is what has destroyed marriages. This is for the westerners who do not value the family; for us, family is important). UWP (64)

The above response can be interpreted to mean that in some African contexts there is some resistance to the discourse of SRHR as a Western phenomenon and a threat that will destroy the family, which, as indicated above, is a key institution in most African societies. The majority of my research participants were found in the rural areas due to the economic crisis that has bedevilled Zimbabwe for more than two decades at the time of writing. This economic crisis has caused migrations across the country, resulting in an influx of people from places such as Masvingo, Chinhoyi, Mutare and many others into Mt. Darwin. Consequently, this has diluted the Korekore ethnic presence in urban Mt. Darwin. I realized that the meaning of SRHR differed between those who live in the urban area and those who live in the rural areas. Most of those

who live in the urban area have a greater influence over social media than those who live in the rural area. One widow from the rural area said:

What is that? Some of us are not worried with many things; what makes us happy is that we have done our duty perfectly well, ten children... (raising her ten fingers), now we live like queens. RWP (67)

Overall, several women from both the urban and rural parts of Mt. Darwin showed that they had acquired a knowledge of SRHR somehow. As already indicated, this reflected the fact that there was neither a platform where these issues were discussed, nor was there anyone who would supply information to them except when they go to hospital for pre- and post-natal services. On the other hand, the men I interviewed were hesitant to talk about SRHR with their spouses unless there was a reason to do so. A case in point is when their wives are pregnant: normally they are called to the hospital for HIV testing. Even though they are supposed to be tested, they normally do not comply. I asked one man from the rural area what his understanding of SRHR was, and in response, Mr. A said:

This is for women; they will see it on their own when they go to the hospital. Why should I be going to the hospital as if I am the one carrying the pregnancy?

In the same vein, Mr. H, an advanced man in his late sixties, said:

From my own perspective, this issue is a product of the advent of HIV/ AIDS, and it is about protecting oneself from sexually transmitted diseases, but that compromises our culture because we need children... *dzinonetsa nyaya dzacho idzi* (These issues are difficult.)

Although several men know about SRHR, they are not willing to participate in them because for them that compromises the meaning of marriage in Africa. The constellation of marriage is embedded in a power relationship between men and women in which the women should always be subordinate to the men (Chitakure, 2016; Kambarami, 2006). To have the men participating in women's SRHR would reflect the existence of some sense of egalitarianism between men and women. One of the men said:

I know very well that this has to do with the women doing what they like with their bodies, but I have problems with these women who run up and down like headless

chickens seeking this knowledge. They will come home saying the doctor said we need to do this and that. I hate that. *Ini ndinongoti aenda mugomo kunotsvaga makudo ngaapedzerane nawo* (whoever looks for problems should know how to solve them). (Mr. H)

In the same vein, Mr. D showed that, even though the women know what SRHR is, they are not supposed to tell men what to do in matters of sexuality, no matter how that might compromise their health or rights. This also reflected how the patriarchal nature of Korekore culture compromises women's SRHR. Masenya (2012) and others have argued that in Africa, the sexuality of married women is perceived to be under the control of their husbands.

From the Zimbabwe Catholic Church's perspective, it seems that SRHR is not something that most nuns and priests engage with in any broad sense. They tend to use religious and conservative arguments to oppose a broad range of terminology on various issues across the spectrum of SRHR, including sexual rights, LGBTQ rights and diverse types of family, gender equality, women's and girls' rights, reproductive rights, safe abortion and comprehensive education on sexuality. This is perhaps shaped by the Church's teachings on sexuality. Different dioceses in Zimbabwe, however, have several programs that respond to women's sexual health by default. For example, as of December 2017, the diocese of Chinhoyi has taken up the project of empowering women in respect of gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices (Fr. D, Chinhoyi diocese). From most of my interviews, I discovered that the real discourse of SRHR is taken to mean marriage and family. One bishop I interviewed had this to say:

The Church has the duty to present to the couple what constitutes a valid marriage. In doing so they are already speaking the language of SRHR. (Bishop A)

The fact that the Church in Zimbabwe seems not to have a clear language that describes a different way of looking at SRHR rather than marriage is a demonstration of the influence of governmentality. If understood in the dimension of visibility, governmentality emphasizes issues that need to be governed, identifies and problematizes these issues. They finally devise a language that can be used to achieve these issues. It is basically about what can be said, how and by whom (Dean, 1995).

Along the same lines, one nun I asked said:

These are issues of marriage that the Church always teaches and emphasizes that sex is more procreative than an act of pleasure. Unfortunately, these marriages do not last these days; maybe this is because young people nowadays just rush into marriage without taking time to know each other well. (Sr. B)

From the above conversations, it seems that the Church's meaning of SRHR is reduced to marriage, family and children. Neither the Catholic Church nor Korekore culture have engaged fully with the discourse of SRHR. What is important for both is the family, especially children, but not much has been done to ensure that the woman who is the springboard of the reproduction of the family achieves her SRHR.

Although the government of Zimbabwe has started implementing the goals of SRHR, it lacks the political power to implement it, as shown by the absence of any government funding in support of SRHR (Guttmacher Institute, 2014). The fact that they have not prioritized women's SRHR makes it very difficult for the women to know the discourse. One medical doctor explained that the government has no programs for adult women's SRHR, the priorities being on adolescents' SRHR.

Yes, the issue of SRHR is on the government's agenda, but to those advanced in age we cannot change anything. We are now emphasizing ASRH (Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health) for both girls and boys, thus from age 10 to 24. If we catch them young, then when they are adults, they may be safe. We cannot do anything to the aged ones. We have failed already. (Dr. C)

This is further supported by the results of research on SRHR carried out in Zimbabwe by an NGO called Progressio (Progressio, 2016). It found that in Zimbabwe SRHR are often misunderstood and, in many cases, believed not to exist, so that no one talks about them. Nevertheless, the strategies that the women in my research use are in line with SRHR. Whether they are employed consciously or unconsciously will be established by discussing them. Having deliberated on the *meaning* of SRHR from the vantage point of my research participants, I proceed to describe how the women navigate their SRHR in the midst of challenges such as economic hardship, patriarchal dominance, religious expectations, the meaning of bride wealth and the importance of children.

6.3 'Resiliencing' the Challenge of Patriarchy

Patriarchy has been called a part of African life that is deeply entrenched in the norms, values and customs of the continent (Ademiluka, 2018). The deep psychological and cultural roots of patriarchy survive as a belief system in the minds of many men and women (Masheti, 1994). This has been portrayed by some of the Korekore men I interviewed. One man in his early forties had this to say:

I do not like women who call the shots; they should wait to hear from me, since I am the head of the family, not to tell me what they hear and see from social media. Yes, I hear my wife talking about things like family planning, condoms and so on with her friends when they think I am not listening, sometimes when they are outside in the garden, but *zvinosarira ikoko, muno mumba mangu kwete* (the issue remains there, not in my house) (Mr. A)

Against such patriarchal ideas, Korekore women deploy several strategies to navigate their sexual health and rights, mostly in very subtle ways. However, what stood out with many women is that they engage in *resilience* as a coping mechanism and find ways of reworking what they cannot change. The majority of my research participants indicated that they use resilience and reworking as strategies to deal with the violence perpetuated by patriarchal structures. These two strategies are employed in multiple ways. Most of them indicated that sexual health is very difficult for them to negotiate due to the patriarchal nature of Korekore society. Many men are unwilling to participate in sexual health: for example, they do not want to use condoms, nor are they even willing to go to hospital.

Other women indicated that some men prefer women to take the pill, also reported by Miriago (2014: 30), writing about Swazi women. He argues that although women in Africa may be inclined to use contraception, culturally campaigns in support of this may reach a dead-end because this will need the approval of their male counterparts. In discussing sexual health and sexual rights among the Korekore, my participants' responses pointed to the challenges they face if they decide to navigate their sexual health openly. One participant said,

You may do what you feel you like to do with your sexuality for sure, but you know that there are always consequences. For example, if you refuse to have sex with your husband, know that he will go to other women and bring you HIV/AIDS. UWP (39)

From what UWP (39) and most women said, it seems when women want to engage in agentic strategies in connection with their sexuality – for example, when they do not feel like having sex – there are some factors that impede their decision. For example, they might know that if they refuse their husbands may start having extra-marital affairs, putting them at risk of being infected by sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, rural communities in Mt. Darwin are characterized by high rates of unemployment and poverty, which affects women to a very large extent. Most of the women in my study were unemployed and depended on their husbands for financial support. Their dependence on their husbands makes them afraid to refuse sex when they do not want it because they fear that this will result in divorce, which would have undesirable financial implications for them and their children. Thus, as Bandura argued (1997), agency and its consequences cannot be divorced, as people can only exercise their agency when they know that their actions will result in positive consequences. However, in my context, it does not mean that if the Korekore women act according to expectations and refuse to accept negative consequences, they do not have agency. Most of what they are doing is out of their own agency, but the question is, to what extent is their agency, that is these strategies transformative and sustainable?

Another woman I interviewed started laughing and then said:

Sexual rights? Do you want to say that as a married woman I can do what I like with my body? You are kidding, of course; this will just show that you have not been taught the meaning of marriage. This will be a shame to your parents. The man will just leave you or return you to your parents. RWP (75)

From these two very different conversations, it is clear that some women appear to give in to the wishes of their men in order to safeguard their marriages, and to that end they devise coping strategies. One of these strategies is resilience, which entails coping and adapting to situations that are difficult to change (Scott, 1985). It also refers to positive adaptations in the face of potentially overwhelming odds (Dent and Cameroon, 2003; Masten, 2001; Schoon and Bynner, 2003). In dealing with challenging situations, individuals' coping strategies vary. Some deploy problem-solving coping strategies, others emotion-focused coping strategies (Carver et al.,

1989). Moreover, these strategies are divided into two broad categories: adaptive and maladaptive. Some examples of maladaptive strategies include the use of alcohol or drugs to forget challenging situations, these being associated with psychopathologies. On the other hand, adaptive strategies include acting to get rid of a challenging situation, sometimes by finding others to talk to as a way of arriving at solutions collectively. One woman in her late fifties from the rural part of Mt. Darwin indicated that women have a space in which they help each other to live in challenging situations in such a manner that they themselves gain. She said in a very joking way:

As women we help each other to calculate whether it works. Yes, men are troublesome, but we know what to do, we have our tricks; that is what we tell each other when we go to fetch some firewood. RWP (59)

Some women have internalized patriarchal domination as something that cannot be changed: they do not desire to transform anything, just to devise methods of survival. Igbelina-igbokwe (2013) has argued that the 'patriarchal system is successfully perpetuated through cultural and religious socialization to the degree that most women believe that these occurrences are natural and divinely ordered.' As they engage in resilience, the women also find means of reworking their challenging situations. Reworking is another way which works as a combination of mutual assistance with resilience. It is another way in which people with less power make sense of their challenging situations and devise survival mechanisms (Scott, 1985). It is more like resilience in the same way that people realize that they cannot change their situation, but still try to live in it by making it less depressing or not at all depressing. Demonstrating how she navigated the challenges to her reproductive rights, UWP (44) said:

How can I be told to have two children? Who will look after me when I grow old? You know what? (she whispered in my ears) *unochibvarura* (you tear it off). My husband wanted me to have two children, but now I have five, I need one more.

Although Kambarami (2006) argued that women who are economically dependent are normally those who do not have the right to their reproduction and end up being forced to have more children, UWP (44) indicated that for her the issue of having more or fewer children is not so much to do with one's economic status but is rather an issue of one's ideology. This woman was a banker and was somewhat independent economically, hence the issue of having children depending on one's economic position did not apply in this case. While some women choose

to have more children, that does not mean that it is the same for all women, as there are others who feel that the patriarchal nature of Korekore society violates their SRHR. Some men do not allow their wives to seek family-planning services as a matter of choice. Even in this scenario, the women rework their situations in a way that gives them agency. For example, they secretly go and seek family-planning tablets and take them secretly without their husbands noticing it. In the workshops I held with some women, several indicated that they hide their tablets in the mealie-meal and take them secretly.

6.4 ‘Quiescencing’ the Impact of *Rooru/Lobola* (Bride wealth).

Bride wealth is practised differently across Africa. Although its practice differs, its meaning is almost the same in most African countries. It is a payment made by the groom or his family to the bride’s family as a way of uniting two families in marriage. Among the Shona, a marriage contract is essentially an agreement between two families in which the individual interests of the groom and the bride are just a subordinate element of the wider predominant interests of their respective families (Daneel, 1971). It is important to remember that the meaning of the payment of bride wealth before the colonial era shifted compared to its meaning in the post-colonial era. In the past, starting up a new family was communal in nature, hence a *roora* was paid by the family of the groom in the form of one or two cows and a few bags of maize or *rapoko*; no money transaction was involved (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013). Several scholars have argued that the payment of a bride wealth has negative impacts on women’s health and rights, as it means that married women will be treated as commodities by their husbands and his family (Chitakure, 2016). In one case among the Korekore in which no bride wealth was paid, I discovered that the groom’s family paid money, cattle and clothes, each category of gift having its own name and significance. For example, *vhuramuromo* (opening of the mouth) is meant to ask the in-laws to begin the marriage negotiations; *makandinzwanani?* (who told you I have a girl child?), *matekenyandebvu* (your wife played with my beards). Of course, these differ from region to region, but what apply to all parts of Zimbabwe are the portions known as *danga* (cattle) and *rusambo* (paid in either cattle or money). Although some portions of the bride wealth challenge women’s SRHR in one way or the other, *danga* and *rusambo* were especially detrimental. It is against the backdrop of these aspects that the women’s strategies are presented and analysed.

6.5 *Rusambo/ Rugaba*: A Challenge to Sexual Rights and Sexual Health

Among the Shona of Zimbabwe, *rusambo* or *rugaba* is the largest portion of bride wealth paid by the groom and his family to the bride's family (Chitakure, 2016). Its meaning is deeply embedded in women's sexuality. When this portion has been paid, the woman's sexual rights are automatically transferred from her to the groom and his family (Bourdillon, 1987). From that moment going forward, the woman is no longer allowed to deny her husband conjugal rights because to do so would be tantamount to divorcing him. If the man has exclusive sexual rights over the woman, it means that he can do whatever he likes with her to the extent that if she refuses to give up her conjugal rights for no apparent reason, she might be beaten up or even temporarily returned to her aunts for further tutoring. The man has every right to engage in sexual intimacy with the woman whenever he feels like it. Apart from that, the husband is allowed to have extra-marital affairs because the woman did not pay for exclusive sexual rights (Chitakure, 2016). While that remains the case, the woman has no right to negotiate safe sex, even if she suspects her husband of being HIV positive. It is the wish of most parents to have *rusambo* paid for their daughters, yet this results in violating women's sexual health and rights. The women I interviewed were divided about the significance of *rusambo* as a challenge to their SRHR. The majority argued that *rusambo* is indeed such a challenge, although it is very difficult for them to say so explicitly if they are to avoid being stigmatized. As a backdrop to this challenge, most women engage in quiescence as a way of navigating their challenges, that is, in inactivity. One woman in her early forties from the urban part of the district said:

Once *rusambo* has been paid for you, you just have to do what your husband likes. It's a shame to your parents if you deny the husband conjugal rights...but we know what to do when we do not want, you just go to the bedroom but become cold...*kuita danda chaiko, anobva angosiyana newe* (just like a log, he will just leave you). UWP (42)

Some women cited quiescence as a way of navigating their unwillingness to engage in sexual relations with their husbands when they do not want to do so. According to Gaventa (1980), quiescence can be best understood in the context of power and powerlessness, and is defined as inactivity. For Robert Dahl and Nelson Polsby (1959), quiescence can be seen in *homo-civicus*, where political action is regarded as less efficient. They further argue that quiescence usually happens when there is a misuse of power by the powerful. It is very important at this juncture to understand what might be meant by power in this context. It might be understood in the meaning of Lukes (1974), who argues that power can be taken to refer to who participates, who gains and who loses. When power is exercised to exclude certain participants, this automatically

creates quiescence. I coin the word '*quiescencing*' from Gaventa's 1980's definition to refer to the process whereby Korekore women engage in a process of inactivity during the sexual encounter and more generally. The power that has been created by the patriarchal nature of the Korekore sometimes force women to go into quiescence where their sexual rights are concerned. Patriarchal power determines how women should handle their sexuality: for example, among the Shona, when a man wants sex, the woman should be available because patriarchal power has constructed this as part of the marriage act (Kambarami, 2006). However, my research participants said that although this violates their sexual rights, they have transformed it to their own advantage. They just give in passively, adopting a passivity that will force their husbands to communicating with them. For most women this communication makes them feel valued and respected. One woman said:

If he sees that it's not exciting, he will know what to do. To be available is one thing, and to act is another. I will just be there like a log, and when that does not excite him, he will definitely talk, then we take it up from there. When he then starts to talk, he opens a way for me to say what I want and what I do not want. The problem is when you as a married woman start to refuse openly: *izvozvo zvine hondo* (that has problems). UWP (33)

Some women also told me that they can translate this quiescence into several actions that will make it very difficult for the men to engage in sexual relations with them. For instance, one woman told me that she can decide not to bath, which causes the man not to want to have sexual relations with her. Furthermore, this quiescence is not limited to sexual activities alone, it can also be practiced in relation to other things that implicitly affect the men's desire to have sexual relations. For example, several women said that they can spend the whole day in silence and acting moodily with the result that the husband is even afraid to initiate sexual relations.

When it comes to quiescence, other women use sabotage when they do not want to have sex with their husbands. For example, when they are sleeping, they can take a baby and position it in between herself and the husband. Sabotage has to do with a deliberate action which is aimed at weakening those with power (Scott, 1990). There were others who said that they may sleep in the same room as their children. Yet others said that the best way is to pretend to be sick or busy. There were several examples of how the women sabotaged their husbands. One woman said:

It's easy: you just become sick the whole month. You can even spend the whole night pretending to be busy, crocheting, he will eventually know that you are not interested, but he has no way of asking. RWP (81)

Although most women indicate that the concept of *rusambo* poses some challenges to their SRHR, others celebrate having been paid *rusambo* for them. Some indicated that this is very important because that proves you are an important woman. To be married without *rusambo* being paid for you is to be treated as a useless woman, some of these women said:

To have money paid for you means that you are valuable, not just going to the husband for free. Is it not the case that even slippery okra can be paid for? RWP (71).

Most women made a clear distinction between women and mothers. Women are more concerned with their sexual rights, whereas for mothers, when it comes to sexuality they do not make much noise about rights and are not even worried about that, as they know it is their duty to be available to satisfy their husbands' sexual needs. For them it is empowering to be a real mother, and real motherhood is embedded in providing for your husband. This reflects arguments by Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997) and Sylvia Tamale (2011) that in Africa the concept of womanhood does not exist; rather, there exists a concept of motherhood, which is not a binary but rather an empowered category.

As the *rusambo* payment is the pride of the bride's family, so is *mombe yechimanda*, a cow paid in appreciation of the woman's virginity. Both the woman and the family feel honoured, and the honour extends from the woman to the husband's family and the whole community (Abboud et al., 2015; Kamm, 2016). Bourdillon (1982) argues that among the Ndebele, a girl's virginity was important to the extent that if she was married as a non-virgin, her parents were supposed to pay the groom's parents a cow as compensation for their daughter losing her virginity. Because the bride's family wishes to have a huge amount of *rusambo* and to receive *mombe yechimanda*, they will ensure that their daughter remains a virgin and constantly perform virginity testing. Although my data shows that this exercise has been overtaken by time, some families still practice it. Since virginity testing is done to girls, it might appear not to fall within the scope of this study, but in fact most women indicated that it comes with a lot of pressure in the context of women's sexual rights. This practice strengthens male dominance and female submissiveness and has negative implications for women's social status (Chisale and Moyo, 2016). However, this is not universally the case, for some women who have married

as non-virgins limit their sexual rights. Hence virginity testing is important, as it helps girls preserve their virginity and will benefit them in the future. This was echoed by an elderly woman in her late sixties:

If you have been married as a non-virgin, you cannot ask your husband for sex, as he will treat you as a whore. RWP (67).

While some scholars think that virginity testing is a challenge to women's sexual rights (Chisale and Moyo, 2016), most elderly women from the rural areas said that it is rather a way of bargaining over these rights. One woman said:

I was married as a virgin. My husband allows me to do all that I want to do because he found me intact. It is important to be married as a virgin, but nowadays, ahhh, they are just folktales. RWP (62).

While elderly women feel it is important to be married as a virgin because it brings them some personal benefits, the younger generations feel that it has nothing to do with them benefiting in any way. It is rather for the benefit of their parents. For those between the age of twenty to forty-five, virginity tests violate their SRHR. During the workshops, one woman burst out angrily and said:

It's abuse; how can we also see that the guys are virgins? That is why I have sent my daughter to the boarding school so that she is not bothered by her aunts: *havambomuoni, achingovhara chete achienda kutaundi* (They will never see her, since as soon as she ends school, she will go to town). RWP (44)

Although there are different views of the impact of *rusambo* and *mombe yechimanda* on women's SRHR, the differences are ones of degree, otherwise most women agreed that these concepts indeed pose a challenge to their sexual health and rights specifically.

6.6 The Importance of Children

According to the ICPD Programme Action, reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, as well as the right to achieve the highest standard of reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination or violence (ICPD, 1994; Beattie, 2014; Glasier et al., 2006; Shalev, 2000: 42). As has briefly been indicated, Korekore culture and religion have their own tenets and traditional values, which outline how women should behave in respect of reproduction. Several women said that among the Korekore what violates women's reproductive rights most is the payment of *mombe dzedanga* (cattle), which is seen as giving the men exclusive rights to control women's reproduction (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1967; Mutsvairo et al., 1996: 44). On the other hand, children are a central requirement for anyone getting married. Furthermore, it is a requirement for everybody to get married because this is a duty to the community through which continuity of the family, clan and lineage is assured. According to Mbiti (1970), anyone who fails to participate in a marriage is called a rebel, a law-breaker, abnormal and sub-human. In this way the women belong to what Foucault (1975) has called the 'social body', aspects of which they are referred to. What this means is they are expected to respond to society's expectations of them because the failure to do so has some consequences. Since marriage and procreation are the gateways to immortality, those who forego it are choosing death rather than life (Chitakure, 2016: 100; Mbiti, 1970). As if that is not enough, Shona culture has extended families rather than nuclear families. The nuclear family consists of just mother, father and children, whereas the extended family includes those related by descent and marriage (Shorter, 1974). This type of family exerts its own pressures on women's reproductive health and rights, as these are policed by everybody in the family.

Danga (cattle) is the portion of the bride wealth that is paid mostly in the form of cattle, but nowadays it can also be paid in money to the value of the number of cattle that would have been given. However, although it can be paid in money, a small portion must still be paid in cattle, depending on region, ethnic group or family group (Bourdillon, 1976). Chitakure argues that among the Shona the purpose of marriage is to create a new family unit by producing children who automatically become members of the wider genealogical group (Chitakure, 2016). Paying the portion called *danga* transfers the bride's reproductive rights to the groom and his family. Like *rusambo*, *danga* technically means that the man now has exclusive rights over the

woman's reproductive rights, and it also grants him paternal rights. His acquisition of paternal rights means that the woman cannot take any decision to use any family-planning methods because her reproductive rights are said to have been purchased by her husband. On the other hand, the woman cannot fall pregnant without her husband's direct permission. He is the one who decides how many children he wants, whether to use family-planning methods or not, and what type of family-planning methods to use. He can even decide not to have children at all if he wishes, which is very unusual among the Shona because children are very important to them. Children are also important among the Korekore and indeed most patriarchal societies in Africa. Some men take a pride in having a large number of children. The more children one has the more power one has and the more respect one has in society. Despite giving men honour, large numbers of children are also regarded as assets for future wealth. Due to the importance that is attached to children among the Korekore, if a man is sterile, his family members arrange for his brother to beget children for him secretly with his wife. This is known as *kupindira*, a reference to secret sexual relations between the sterile man's brother and his wife. Similarly, if the wife is barren, her parents should arrange to give their son-in-law another wife to bear children for him, such as the wife's sister, a cousin or a niece. Although these practices seem to have been overtaken by time, some women said that *kupindira* still occurs, though it is very difficult to know because it is done very privately. These practices, such as *kupindira*, are very challenging to women's health in this era when sexual diseases are so rampant.

During my interviews, most women indicated that paying *danga* poses many challenges to their SRHR. It was worse in the past, when men would require their wives to have children equal to the number of cattle that the man would have paid to her parents. Nowadays things have changed, perhaps due to the economic situation and the infiltration and influence of Western culture. Although it has therefore changed, the man remains in charge of the woman's reproductive rights, albeit it might be directly said. In line with this, one woman said:

My parents charged eight cattle, and I gave birth to eight children; my husband was very happy that his cattle were put to good use. RWP (69)

What RWP (69) seems to suggest is that some women take a pride in having more children. Musoka (2019) and others have found that some women in Tanzania felt that having more children increases their husbands' love of them. This is not unique to Tanzania: bearing more children as a matter of pride was also very common among my research participants.

As indicated above, the children of a marriage for which *danga* has been paid automatically belong to the husband and his family. They then assume their father's second name and totem. Even in circumstances where the husband divorces his wife and leaves her to look after the children single-handedly, they still belong to him. What is surprising is that, even if he does not materially support the children, when his daughter wants to get married, her mother has to send the son-in-law to the ex-husband to arrange the bride wealth payments (Chitakure, 2016; Chigwedere, 1982). *Danga* also gives the husband's family the right to inherit the widow in the event of the husband dying. Most women said that this is a violation of their SRHR since they are not able to ascertain the status of the man who will inherit them. However, in most places in Mt. Darwin district, this practice has been overtaken by events, although it cannot be completely ruled out because normally it is a very secretive practice. Be that as it may, most women said that wife inheritance is not something they have to worry about because nowadays they are free to appoint their sons to be their *musarapavana* (literally the person who is in charge of the family after the death of a relative, or more simply the heir) as a way of avoiding being inherited by one of her husband's brothers, who will also have conjugal rights over her. The son, conversely, will of course not have conjugal relations with his mother, but will only inherit his father's estate and look after his mother and the other siblings. In simple terms, he takes over all his father's responsibilities except the latter's conjugal rights.

On the face of it the structure of the Korekore family, which emphasizes the extended family, leads to women losing their reproductive rights and health, but more critically they have their own ways of negotiating these challenges, which make matters less challenging for them or not at all. They thus engage in "infrapolitics". These are strategies of resistance employed by subordinate groups in a manner that the superordinates do not notice. They are also known as 'weapons of the weak' or 'everyday forms of resistance' (Scott, 1985). In other words, infrapolitics is to politics what infrared is to light, a domain that encompasses acts, gestures and thoughts that are not quite political enough to be perceived as such (Scott, 1990). There are many types of infrapolitics. For example, people with less power choose false compliance when they realize that open defiance is impossible or that it entails danger, the main imperative being to keep themselves safe. Infrapolitics can be engaged with in several dimensions. Thus, women who are perceived to be powerless accept their oppression in public but question and resist it off-stage. In the context of reproductive health, most mothers and mothers-in-law encourage their daughters and daughters-in-law to use indigenous medicines for oxytocin, yet some prefer to go to the hospital to seek scientifically proven medical attention, though this still does not

mean rejecting indigenous medicines. Most women said they just accept this but secretly go to the hospital and seek prenatal services. However, there were a few cases of women indicating that they were not even allowed to deliver their first-born babies at the hospital because traditionally it is the duty of the family to attend to the birth of a first child. The women said that although this is difficult, they still have ways of dealing with such challenges: for example, they can fake illness when they know their date of delivery is approaching and go to a hospital far away from their in-laws for ‘other’ illnesses, pretending that the delivery happened by coincidence while they were there. Other ways of doing infrapolitics include gossiping with other women of the same age, from which they pick up advice. Others said that they could go as far as giving children or dogs names that communicate their discontent with their mother in-laws, names such as *Hamunyari* (You are shameless), *Muchazvirega* (You will give up) and many more.

As has already been shown, the payment of *lobola*, specifically the *danga* and *rusambo* portions, greatly challenge women’s SRHR since they lead to their automatically losing their sexual and reproductive rights. Some women would like to have fewer children than their husbands intend, while others might want to have more, but they are not given any platform for the exercise of their reproductive rights. Moreover, this structure prevents them from deciding on any means of family planning. In this quandary, most women said they engage in false compliance, which is another form of infrapolitics:

If you are told to have five children, you just say all is fine, then you go to the hospital to look for family-planning tablets, hide them in the mealie meal, and consume them privately. If he complains that you are not getting pregnant, you appear to be ignorant and actually pretend that it is troubling you as well. UWP (39)

The mealie-meal is normally stored in the kitchen, which from the Shona perspective is a space meant for women. If a man were to frequent the kitchen, he would be mocked by the women saying ‘*uchamera mazamu*’ (you will develop breasts) (Mukova and Mangena, in Chitando and Njoroge (eds.), 2016). Because some men do not want to be mocked, they avoid frequenting the kitchen, thus leaving it as a safe space for women to hide their family-planning tablets. Because of the payment of *mombe dzedanga*, the women know that they have to surrender their reproductive rights. In fact, when they agree to their parents accepting *danga* from the son-in-law, they are simply implying that they will go and bear children for the family. This is what they are taught when they grow up.

In the participatory workshops I facilitated, most women confirmed that the payment of *mombe dzedanga* (cattle) strictly means that the women were expected to have children equal to the number of cattle which their parents would have expected, which normally ranges from eight to ten depending on the family. Since the woman's parents had accepted the bride wealth, they would keep encouraging their daughter to have more children. You would hear their mothers saying '*chatokura ichi, chichiunza kuno chindicherere mvura*' (the child has grown up; send her to me so that she/he may help me with fetching some water) (RWP 39). This is a way of mothers indirectly telling their daughters that it is time to have another baby. The family can also send the mother to visit the woman and start telling stories, making the woman realize that she should have another baby, for example, '*mwana wako anoratidza kuti anoshurukirwa uyu*' (your baby seems lonely) (RWP (39)). Many women know and understand what the gesture and language mean, so they are compelled to have another child. The husband and her relatives also expect the woman to have more children, since they paid for her reproductive rights. It should also be noted that male children were more important than female children because they were expected to perpetuate the lineage (Bourdillon, 1976; Gelfand 1979; Schmidt, 1996; Chitakure, 2016). However, with the passage of time things have changed, though the meaning of *danga* is still implied. Yet research has shown that having more children results in many complicated health problems, such as grand multiparity (a condition among women who have had five or more previous pregnancies). Such women are more prone to fetal malpresentations, postpartum haemorrhage and rupture of the uterus, to mention only a few conditions (Mgaya, 2013). Apart from these health problems, Zimbabwe's economic situation, which has reached breaking point, is so bad that many women find it challenging to have more than two children. Some women indicated that to avoid being forced to have more children than they want they continue to engage in false compliance. Another way they can avoid this is to secretly have depo Provera injections so that they will not have children for a specific period of time of their choosing.

Hatipererwi nemazano: we do not run out of plans; we can do anything that makes our lives easy. How can you have eight children in this era? What do you give them? Life is difficult; if you are naive, it is you who suffer the rest of your life. *Unongobaiwa jekiseni redhepo wonyarara zvako* (You just privately have the depo Provera injection). (FGD 1)

Another form of infrapolitics that the women use is 'hidden transcripts. According to Scott (1990), these are resorted to by those with less power. When they are in public they appear acquiescent, but when they are off-stage they are quiescent. From another focus-group discussion, it emerged that some women engage in these 'hidden transcripts' through feigning, for example, claiming to have headaches, backaches or even irregular or extended menstrual periods. My research participants told me that they go so far as to use pads, tampons and cups, despite not being in their menstrual periods. Traditionally a man is not allowed to have sexual relations with a woman during her menstrual period, so automatically the man will leave her alone (Mukova and Mangena, in Chitando and Njoroge (eds.) 2016: 118). Others said they normally do this when they know they are in their fertile period. However, relying on the calendar was said to be very difficult for many women because of the ever-changing and unpredictable changes in women's bodies.

Reproductive rights are not limited to having a few children only: they have to be understood as also giving the woman the right to have more children if she wishes. A few elderly women indicated that there are some circumstances when the husband wants to have few children and yet the woman would prefer to have more. In such situations, the men may encourage their women to take family-planning pills, but here too the women engage in some form of 'hidden transcript'. In this manner, the women will pretend that they are taking the family-planning tablets but will throw them in the pit latrines where the men will never notice them. Some women even go to the lengths of roasting the tablets so that they become ineffective. One woman said:

Chirema chine mano, hahahaha, chinotamba chakabatira madziro (when you want to dance while you know you are disabled, you hold the wall for support). This proverb that means that when you know your weaknesses you devise survival strategies. UWP (48).

For the most part these techniques of resistance are a quite prosaic form of class struggles involving powerless groups (Scott, 1989). As in the situation involving quiescence, most women said false compliance is beneficial to them. They indicated that having more children provides them with security, as it is not easy for a woman with more than five children to be divorced. On the other hand, having more children is an investment for them because when the children grow up they will look after them. They said that normally children support their mothers much more than their fathers:

My husband wanted two children and, in my heart, I said I will not do that. I had seven children and now they are all working and I get everything I want. RWP (64)

In the same vein, another said:

Kutoita vana vakawanda zvinotobatsira, unoti apa ringe, apa ringe, hauzoshayiwo.
(It's helpful to have more children. If one does not support you, the others will support you. RWP (62)

While infrapolitics may be seen as just trivial coping mechanisms in line with the violation of women's reproductive health and rights, several women thought that these are very powerful ways of engaging with their challenges, being certain that these strategies will be game-changers in the future, so that they will enjoy the benefits of their infrapolitics.

6.7 Docility as infrapolitics

According to Kambarami (2006), patriarchy as an institution causes the subordination of women to the extent that they themselves do not have control over their sexuality and reproduction. In fact, they surrender their sexuality and reproduction into the hands of men. Moreover, society creates a binary opposition in which men are dominant and women subordinate. Secondly, and most importantly, the socialization of women makes most of them over-dependent on the men. As highlighted above, both Kambarami (2006) and Chitakure (2016) suggest that because of the payment of a bride wealth, most Shona women do not have any rights over their bodies at all. Most women in my research agreed that indeed there are some challenges in respect of their sexuality and reproduction. While women have been presented as downright powerless, most of them indicated that people see what women do with their naked eyes and conclude that they are oppressed – yet there is more to it than that. Apart from engaging in self-compliance, other women engage in docility, depending on their situations. Docility is also an aspect of infrapolitics and is shown in both language and action: for example, women refer to their husbands as *Shewe* (my chief). Among the Shona, chiefs are traditionally revered, their words unquestioned. When a husband is referred to as a chief, this automatically confirms his power over his wife. Men are happy to engage into this 'zero-sum' game, where they feel that the women's loss is their gain (Mukova and Mangena, in Chitando and Njoroge (eds.) 2016: 120). Etymologically the word 'docile' comes from the Latin *docilis*,

or ‘easily taught’. From a Foucauldian perspective, docility is understood from the viewpoint of body politics, which Foucault (1975) also calls ‘political anatomy’. In his notion the bodies of the powerless are turned into texts on which to inscribe dominant ways of doing things. The body is therefore supposed to be receptive and accepting of the powers that work on it. It has to be willing to be shaped, trained and manipulated. In essence, various tactics, manoeuvres, techniques and functionings are worked by those with power to create docile bodies so that they operate in a way that they wish. For the women in my study, there is a malleability in docility which helps them acquire survival skills that they would not otherwise have if there were no challenges. We might compare the docility of a virtuoso pianist who submits herself to hierarchical structures of apprenticeship in order to acquire the ability to play (Mahmood, 2001: 210; Williams, 2017). For them, the greater challenges, the more they harden themselves, though in very subtle ways. With some sense of victory, one woman said:

Marriage is not easy. Everyone of your in-laws expects you to do what they want. It begins with dressing, the way you walk, the number of children you should have, but – for that is what made me clever – I just say it’s fine and do not even make any noise, but privately I do what I want. RWP (52)

Considering Saba Mahmood’s topography of a women’s mosque movement (2001), one realizes that docility is a form of subtle resistance. Examining more closely Korekore women’s lived experiences in respect of their sexuality and reproduction, one has to be very careful not to reduce their actions to them merely perpetuating their own oppression. For the most part docility has been taken to mean subordination, yet the qualities of the word ‘docility’ as listed in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* entails the qualities of teachability which for the most part become a benefit to those who are exposed to the lesson. However, we must not overlook the fact that some teachability results in the subjectivation of individuals (Foucault, 1975). The point to bring home here is that, as a strategy that is used by people of less power, docility needs to be viewed critically.

Being docile for Korekore women entails giving in to the expectations of one’s husband and in-laws, but it does not suggest outright powerlessness. The women juggle between two different selves. With regard to the public transcript they agree with what their husbands and their in-laws want, but with regard to the hidden transcript they choose to do what they feel is safer for them, thus helping them avoid conflicts with their husbands and in-laws. This will also earn them the latter’s respect: you often hear a mother-in-law saying ‘*muroora wangu akabva*

kumba kune vanhu (literally, ‘my daughter-in-law has been instructed well and is well-mannered’). Furthermore, most women were very clear that to be submissive, docile and available to one’s husband all the time is the best remedy for staying happy in a marriage. They showed that those who wanted to go against this so-called norm would be stigmatized. Some scholars have argued that in Africa marriage entails that the women should be sexually passive and submissive with men as the initiators of sex and as those who set the conditions for the sexual encounter (Kambarami, 2006; Messer, 2004). Some of the women in my study showed that for some this is a deliberate and calculated move. Arguing along the same lines, Charvet (1982) argues that women are viewed more as sexual beings than human beings. In line with this argument, it is indeed simplistic to think that all women engage in docility as a calculated move. Some women seem to have internalized the idea of their being sexual entities rather than human beings, and to that end docility is engaged in as having no option than just to give in. This was said by several of the discussants in the focus-group discussions. They spoke one after the other and argued that women need to be under their husbands’ control, especially when it comes to sexual matters. From the focus-group discussions, one very young woman in her early twenties said:

You refuse him sex, yet you forget that you were paid specifically for that, not for food. Sex is for the man, *munda wake, rega ausakure* (*it is his field, let him weed it*). FGD (2)

In the same vein, another woman said:

When you do not want to be under your husband, you are just a woman (*mukadzi*) but not a lady (*mudzimai*). *Varume havadi vakadzi vanoda madzimai* (men do not want women, but prefer ladies). FGD (4)

My research participants thus distinguished women from ladies. For them a woman is such by virtue of her biological make up, whereas the idea of a lady conjures up a refined woman with attributes such as dressing well, impeccable manners and an eloquent style of speech. Ladies are marked by their deportment. For some women, real womanhood is embedded in being able to provide men with sex, and since sexuality is normally paid for, they should make sure that they have everything that results in the men’s sexual satisfaction. It is the duty of the aunts and maternal grandmothers to take good care of girls as they grow up so that when they get married they can satisfy their husbands sexually. The women cited labia minora elongation and virginity

testing as two ways among others whereby the Korekore ensure that girls are prepared for their marriage. Labia minora elongation is a process of pulling the inner lips of the female genitalia with the help of a variety of herbs, oils and creams (Martinez Pe´rez, Toma’s Aznar, and Bagnol, 2013: 156). Some Korekore girls go for virginity testing every year to show that they are still virgins so that, marrying as virgins, they will attract a huge amount of *rusambo*. As already highlighted, virgins fetch more *rusambo* (Chitakure, 2016), and Bourdillon (1987) states that, in the past, only virgins had *rusambo* paid for them. Although this practice is dying out, Korekore women stated that it is still very important to be married as a virgin and that it is to the women’s disadvantage to be married if she is not a virgin. Most women indicated that, while they may seem to have the freedom to do what they like with their bodies, to act in this fashion will bring shame on them for the rest of their lives. One very old woman from the rural areas emphasized the importance of virginity:

Unotofanira kuputira humhandara hwako kuti ugoenda wakazara nemuviri wemurume wako (you are supposed to keep your virginity intact so that you will get married as a full virgin). *Ukaroorwa usiri mhandara murume wako anogara achingokutuka achiti ndakakuwana uri gaba rakaboorwa kare* (if you are married as a non-virgin, your husband will always scold you, saying I found you as an empty tin with a hole). *Muviri wako ndewemurume wako, unotofanira kuuchengetera murume wako wakazara* (your body is for your husband; you are supposed to keep it intact for your husband). RWP (81)

In a society where sexuality is highly controlled by men, the process of enlarging the labia is a conscious move. Like the *zar* practices of Muslim women in Cairo, Egypt (Boddy, 1989), it is a kind of counter-hegemonic process. Most women stated that every girl must undergo labia minora elongation, which they referred to as ‘laces’, ‘curtains’, ‘dolls’ or ‘ears’. Their own experiences told them that if a woman did not have this done, men would treat her as just half a woman, lacking the essentials of what it takes to be in a marriage. Some women are even returned to their parents to have the labia enlarged. They said it is best to have it done before puberty because it is less painful. To the argument that women should sexually satisfy men, one woman said:

Unotofanira kuona kuti uri pasuru kwayo (you have to see to it that you are the best parcel). Some men tell you that they want the laces, whereas others do not, but you can see from their behaviour that they expect you to have them. You will

have to act as an adult and correct the mistake. *Murume wose anozvida nyangwe akasataura* (every man likes it, even though he will not say it). RWP (57)

Another young woman from a rural area confirmed that the laces are very important, as she took pains to explain how she suffered to have it done when she was already married:

You can choose to do what you like with your body, but know that you are digging your own grave. I did what I liked, but sooner rather than later, I had problems. My husband told me point blank that I was like a baby, and he said he did not want to marry a baby. Therefore, I had to look for friends who helped me to get the laces done. Now my husband and I are very happy, we do not have any problems at all. I wish that the girls who are still growing would just stick to our culture and get the laces done: they will see the benefits when they get married. RWP (18)

Although some women see these expectations on them as challenges, they enact docility, give in and do what is expected of them. They perform a balancing act in which they try to determine what is beneficial to them. Most of them indicated that to go against their culture may look like having freedom, but it is important to realize that freedom will enslave them in the future. In most cases freedom has its own consequences, hence RWP (18)'s statement can help us explain the meaning of freedom. There is a distinction between negative and positive freedom. Positive freedom is the capacity to realize an autonomous will that is fashioned according to the dictates of self-interest, while negative freedom entails the absence of external obstacles to self-guided choice and action, whether imposed by the state, corporations or private individuals (Mahmood, 2002). It is noteworthy, however, that for the individual to be deemed free, her actions must be the consequences of her own will, rather than of customs, traditions or any form of coercion.

While docility can be interpreted as women simply perpetuating their oppression, some of the women I interviewed showed that it is a strategy they use, one they see as empowering them. Most women from both the urban and rural parts of Mt. Darwin agreed that labia elongation is part of women's sexuality and is a requirement if one is to count as a good wife. However, very few women from the urban area, mostly the working classes, did not seem to care about labia elongation or virginity testing. UWP (39) said:

Hazvina basa zvoise izvo sister (That is not a problem), *ndozvisina kana nebasa rose* (That is not a problem at all: what does it disturb? I will still have children without those

laces, and how can we talk of virginity testing in this era? I will not have my daughter being bothered for nothing. This is why I send her to the boarding school so that her aunts and grandmothers do not confuse her. UWP (43)

It seems that most of those who rebel against the challenge of these practices are a minority of urban, young, working-class women. The majority of women in my study stated that although the process of enlarging labia is done at a very tender age, when they do not know what it means they just do it because it scares them not to have done so. Now they are grown up, they realize that, despite role of the practice in enhancing men's sexual gratification, it also has advantages for the women themselves in respect of aesthetics and their sexual gratification. They confirmed that when men play with their labia, it also gives them sexual pleasure. Besides, they indicated that the laces are also helpful for their health, as they cover the women's genitals. Finally they help them in reproducing, as they hold and give warmth to the male penis during sexual intercourse, thus increasing men's fertility rates. One woman from the urban area of my case study said:

Laces are needed, sister, they protect our womanhood from dirt, and they make our sexual life pleasurable. Womanhood is embedded in this. *Ndohumai chaihwo vakoma* (that is real motherhood, my sister). RWP (32)

The issue of the importance of labia elongation was also confirmed by the men I had a chance to mix with during their Catholic Men's Association (CMA) barbecues, which they hold at the end of every month. It is from platforms such as these that Catholic men from this parish meet to discuss their social lives without their wives. Most of them, except for a few, indicated that they are taught as small boys that a real woman should have the operation done and that real men should have the courage to return the woman to her parents if she doesn't do so. One laughed and said:

Tinotodzidziswa nanasekuru vedu kuti mukadzi chaiye akaita sei (we are taught by our uncles what a real wife looks like). My uncle used to say, 'when you go into a shop and buy your property, you will expect it to be of good quality and to serve you the purpose which you bought it for. If it does not give you satisfaction, you can as well think of returning it to the shop and getting another one'. *Hatidi kuroora vana vacheche isu, tinoda madzimai azere* (We do not want to marry babies, we want to marry full women). It is the duty of the aunts to prepare these women before they get married. (Mr. H)

A common view with most of my participants was that they cannot openly exercise their power in accordance with their sexuality. Others argued that they actually do not have the power to do so. This resonates with what has been said by most scholars on the meaning of Shona sexuality, namely that it is in the hands of men (Kambarami, 2006; Bourdillon, 1967; Chitakure, 2016). In these circumstances some women said that they could only rework the situations that challenged them. Other women, however, said they could go to the other extreme by rebelling.

6.7 Reworking and Rebelling Against Challenges to Sexual Health

Reworking is yet another type of infrapolitics which happens in a situation where people with less power realize that they have nothing with which to change their oppression and start to create conditions that are workable and viable for them (Scott, 1985). This is therefore a form of subtle resistance that is not very different from docility, though reworking has a hidden element of giving in, whereas with docility the women do not give in at all, although they appear as if they are doing so. One of the women in my research said:

There is not much you can do with these men if they say they do not want to do anything or they want to do something. That's that. Actually, you cannot even discuss protected sex, as you will be accused of promiscuity yourself. *Kutongotsvaga nzira dzekurarama nadzo uri mumba mako imomo.* (You just have to find ways of surviving within your marriage). RWP (60)

Although several women indicated that they use docility and reworking as weapons to negotiate their sexual health, a few told me that they rebel against this oppression. This is when they are strongly convinced that their husbands are having extramarital affairs. In this manner, they move from what others have referred to as being subsidiaries or appendices to being revolutionaries (Peletz, 2012). 'Subsidiary' has overtones of women being owned and controlled, while an 'appendix' indicates that women are no more than supplements. Those who resort to rebellion as a strategy mostly do so by opting out of the marriage. However, this is not very common among the Korekore because divorce by women is highly unacceptable. This is because in some cases, when the women divorce, their parents will have to repay the bride wealth (Chitakure, 2016: 35; Schmidt, 1996). Moreover, when women divorce men, they risk becoming outcasts of both their own family and that of her husband. This stigma of single

mothers by both Korekore culture and even the Church restricts the chances of the women divorcing. Not only that, I gathered from the women I interviewed that among the Korekore, if it is you who wants the divorce, you risk losing all your property because these cases are dealt with by the traditional courts, which normally consists of the chiefs or sometimes the village heads. Even under those circumstances, some women choose to rebel, although only as a very last resort. In explaining how they rebel, one interviewee said:

I personally will not live to die because I want my parents to be happy. I have decided to divorce because my husband was a womanizer, but after that I had a very hard time from the in-laws, my parents, the women from the Church; even my parish priest was against my divorce, but I am happy. *Handiraramiri munhu ini* (I do not live for anybody). I always tell myself that I am the master of my life... Why should I die of HIV/AIDS? (She angrily shrugged her shoulders). *'Handidi zvekufa ndakasvinura sister'* (I do not want to die awake). UWP (39)

It seems easy for those who are economically independent to rebel against male oppression but very difficult for those who are economically dependent. As Chitakure points out (2016), the wretched economic situation in Zimbabwe makes life more challenging for unemployed women, some of whom are compelled to rely on their gainfully employed husbands for sustenance. Thus, many abused women stay with their abusers because they know that they cannot survive financially by themselves.

Another form of rebellion is transgression, or the process of overstepping a boundary (Foucault, 1963). This happens when the women's sexual rights are violated, for example, when they feel that they want to be sexually intimate with their husbands and the husbands might not feel like it or might not even notice, since the women cannot express themselves openly. However, this is not used by many women but only a few. In many African contexts, the Korekore included, expressions of female sexuality are silenced and rendered taboo (Van Schalkwyk, 2018; Kambarami, 2006). A proper and respectable woman should not approach men, she should control her sexual lust. To approach a man or to show him that she is interested risks her being stereotyped as a whore. In some parts of South Africa, the community may go so far as to use some medication as a way of reducing a woman's sexual feelings because it is considered abnormal (Van Schalkwyk, 2018; Mutsvairo et al., 1996: 56). Virility is a characteristic expected in men, not women. The patriarchal nature of some African societies constructs women's bodies as subordinate, always available to satisfy men's sexuality (I do not mean to

generalize here). This may be regarded as a violation of women's sexual rights that stipulate that everybody, regardless of age, gender or race, should have the right to his or her sexuality, including sexual choices and sexual gratification, without anybody controlling him or her (Petchesky, 1998).

Transgression is a strategy that women view as workable when they feel that their desire for sexual intimacy is being violated. In the context of analysing prison sex, transgression is defined as an act of breaking the rules and defying the normative structures that are imposed by the society, the state and other institutions (Smith, 2006: 18). When women initiate sex, this is an expression of power, since in the African context, this has traditionally been regarded as the act of men. Sex becomes a tool for women to thwart and control men within the confines of the dynamics of gender power. One of the few to use the strategy of transgression said:

If you want to see how powerless the men are, just initiate sexual relations yourself. He becomes powerless, and even outside sexual relations he knows that you can control him. *Unongomuka chibhebenenga, zvinoshanda manje izvozvo* (You just become wild; that works). UWP (33)

Although transgression is used when women are denied sexual gratification, a different strategy is used when women do not feel like having sex themselves, although the man is willing. As explained earlier, unlike the few young women who use transgression, several elderly women negotiate the violation of their sexual rights by resorting to quiescence. As explained above, quiescence entails inactivity.

6.8 Resisting Catholic Teaching Through Disguised Compliance

The women in my study indicated that there is indeed a clash between the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality and Korekore cultural expectations and demands on women's sexuality and reproduction. It is this clash that the women find challenging to their SRHR. As indicated earlier, among the Korekore, the payment of *danga* and *rusambo* gives men exclusive sexual and reproductive rights over their wives (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1967). The latter cannot take any sort of decisions regarding their sexuality and reproduction, yet the Church emphasizes families being able to practice natural family planning. For natural family planning to be successfully implemented, the woman is supposed to know her menstrual cycle and know when she is fertile and infertile, so that the couple can agree to abstain from sexual relations during

the woman's fertile period. Most women indicated that most men do not want to be told when they can have sexual relations, as this implies they have been made powerless by the women. This indeed represents a clash, one that poses some challenges for women. Most of the women I interviewed indicated that the Church's teaching on sexuality does not seem to prioritize women's problems in respect of maternal health and HIV/AIDS.

They also felt that the Church's prohibition on the use of artificial family planning is unrealistic and obsolete. One participant commented, '*Ndezvenguva yanambuya Nehanda kwete iyezvino kwazara zvirwere, hazvichashandi izvi*' (UWP 43), 'it was practical during the old era, [but] not currently, where there is the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases'. The Church is categorical that couples should not use artificial family-planning methods because that offends against the primary goal of marriage, which is procreation and the education of children. These artificial contraceptives include the oral contraceptive pill, condoms, contraceptive implants, injectable substances, intrauterine devices and tubal ligation. Couples should rather resort to natural family-planning methods, especially periodic abstinence (Pope Pius XI, 1930; Pope Paul VI, 1968). Several women alluded to the challenges that this teaching poses to them. Some said that they did not even know what is meant by periodic abstinence, let alone how it is done. Others who did know said it was very challenging, since it is during that time that most men wish to be intimate with their wives, this being when it is exciting for them. We should also be aware that it is this same woman whose sexual and reproductive rights have been transferred to the husband by virtue of bride wealth payments, since she cannot suggest periodic abstinence herself.

The women also argued that the Church in Zimbabwe in general and in Chinhoyi diocese in particular does not have a platform for educating women in how to use natural family planning. As the ICPD (1994) stipulates, one of the goals of SRHR is that everybody is given enough information to make free decisions regarding their sexuality and reproduction. For Galtung, this position on the part of the Church constitutes violence to women. Some might not immediately see how this is violence, but as Galtung (1969: 168) has argued, 'violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below potential realizations'. In line with Galtung's definition of violence, when the Catholic Church fails to give women enough information about its teaching on sexuality or prescribes and enforces what seems inapplicable to the women's sexuality, that can be understood as violence. This view was echoed by several participants. One said,

Papa nanafata ivava havatombozivi upenyu hwatinorarama (the Pope and these priests do not know how we live our lives). How can they talk of timing when my husband likes sex every day? *Hazvishandi* (It does not work). This destroys our marriages. RWP (57)

The failure of the Catholic Church to act as custodians of information on the Catholic teaching on sexuality was further confirmed by some of the clergy I interviewed:

The Church has not been able to move according to the signs of the times; the Church is stuck, and as a result we end up creating ‘pseudo’ Christians. We have not given enough education to the Christians, for example, on birth control. I also blame the people themselves; they have just received the teaching passively without challenging its applicability. (Fr. A)

Making a similar argument, one bishop said:

The Church in Zimbabwe has least focused on the issue of sexuality, but has paid more attention to political issues and issues of justice, but maybe there is more that needs to be done. (Bishop A)

The influence of governmentality can be seen in the way the Church prioritises some issues over others. The choice to “*pay more attention to political issues*” over women’s SRHR demonstrates one of the four dimensions of governmentality which is referred to as *visibility* (Dean, 2010). As it has been highlighted, with visibility the government identifies and problematizes the issues it thinks need governing. When some of the Church leadership in Zimbabwe say they are not paying attention to women’s SRHR, one might argue that it is not being governed so women can do what they desire with their sexuality. To argue like this will be to overlook what I have argued previously that there are some micro-processes that can be created through language and activities. These panoptimize women in their sexuality so that they end up losing their power. Most priests indicated that the Church in Zimbabwe needs to respond to what Pope John Paul II emphasized in his address to the African Catholic bishops. He said that the Church should revisit some African customs and practices which deprive women of their rights and due respect. According to the Pope, the bishops were supposed to do some soul-searching to identify cultural practices that are detrimental to women’s well-being (John Paul II, 2000; Chitakure 2016). That is not to say that no women in Zimbabwe knew about the

teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality. Some knew them from reading about them, others from conversations they had had in their various meetings. It should be emphasized at this juncture that there were some women with whom it did not make sense to talk about any challenges in line with the teaching of the Catholic Church in their SRHR, let alone strategies, because of their ignorance of the Church's teaching. For those who were aware of this teaching, they indicated that they resort to resistance. However, they do so in covert ways, using some aspects of reworking in resisting this teaching. In realizing that they will never be able to change their situations, they start to create conditions that are workable and viable for them (Scott, 1985). For example, where the Church refers to the use of natural family planning as 'responsible parenthood', the women reinterpret responsible parenthood to mean 'taking care of themselves'. Most of them said being responsible means using contraception. One woman said:

Munofunga kuti vanafata vangauya vokuudzai zvamunofanira kuita mubhedhuru menyū? Tinotofanira kuziva zvekuita nehupenyu hwedu. (Do you expect the priests to come and tell you what to do in your bedroom? We need to be responsible with our lives). Iyezvino sister munhu wose anoshandisa mapiritsi ekuronga mhuri, ndiko kuva responsible kwacho (Nowadays everybody uses birth control pills, that is being responsible). Kana zvichinzi kushandisa mapiritsi rutadzo, ibva mukadzi wose achaenda kugehena, hachizi chitadzo, ichi, chitadzo chitsvene (If it is a sin to use family-planning tablets, then every woman will go to hell. In fact, it is not even a sin, this is a holy sin). FGD (2)

Another form of resistance the women cited is disguised compliance. This has been interpreted as a hidden form of resistance (Frankel, 2014). Disguising their compliance, women pretend to be loyal to the Church while using any type of artificial contraception they desire to protect themselves. They use the public transcript as a way to affirm what the Church says, so when they are onstage, they say exactly what they know the priests and some Church leaders want to hear, but when they are offstage, they create a different self (Scott, 1991; Meyer, 2018). Although several women are of the opinion that the Church inflicts violence on their sexual health, others, especially the elderly, did not have much to say because they were ignorant of the Church's teaching. What seemed important for most elderly women was the importance of marriage and family, as they were taught when they were preparing for their Church marriages. For them, a real and good woman should always do what her husband likes. They distinguished

proper women from fake women by the way one behaves. However, what surprised me is that the same women with whom I had individual interviews made different statements in individual interviews from during participant observation. When they were with other women in Church groups, they would not say anything about the teachings of the Church being violent. I suggest that they feared being stigmatized by other women as rebelling against the Church. However, this needs more critical interpretation.

As already indicated, the Catholic Church maintains that couples should not use artificial contraception because it is against the fifth commandment ('Thou shalt not kill') (Pope Pius XI, 1930; Pope Paul VI, 1968). According to Rhonheimer (2010), the Church regards artificial contraception as having negative consequences, as its use leads society to become insensitive to life. It also distorts the meaning of marriage, whose goal is motherhood, and it turns women into subjects of men's pleasure, to be discarded when they no longer give them pleasure. On the other hand, most of the nuns I interviewed who work in the medical health field argued that, despite going against God's commandment, the use of artificial contraception is detrimental to women's health. However, they appreciated that using natural family-planning methods is equally complicated for the women. One nun, who is also a medical doctor, said:

I think it is important that people should plan their families, but the problem is that most of this contraception which they want to use are steroids. Most of these contain high levels of testosterone and may cause high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol levels, liver damage, heart failure, acne, baldness, as well as aggressive and violent behaviour. Natural methods are the safest of all, although it is very difficult. They can use breastfeeding as child spacing method, they can also use timing, but then it can be even more complicated. When we say, 'watch your temperature', the women always say, 'I do not know how to use a thermometer, and I do not even have one'. Most of the women here have never been to form four; most of them stopped their education with primary education. (Sr. Dr. B)

Despite the fact that Catholic teaching on sexuality forbids the use of artificial family-planning methods, some Catholic hospitals provide such services. My experience of one Catholic hospital where I was conducting interviews confirmed that women indeed resist the Church's teaching on artificial family-planning methods. For many it is very difficult not to use family-planning services. Moreover, some Catholic hospitals also provide such services. For example, when I finished my interviews at this same Catholic hospital, the matron, a Catholic woman of

53 years, took me around the hospital. I saw condoms displayed in nearly every ward and every toilet. I was curious as to why the Catholic Church would allow their hospitals to display these condoms, despite its teaching not allowing their use. When I asked the nurse who was guiding me whether the condoms were meant to be used by non-Catholic patients only, she replied:

Ahhh sister, *ndezevekungonyora mumabhuku echechi izvi, hapana anombozvitevedzera* (it is just written in Church books, but no one practices it). I am a staunch Catholic myself, but I will never follow that. Look here (she whispered), when the # women in this parish have their meetings, they sometimes invite me to talk about women's health, specifically issues to do with cervical cancer. If the priest is there, I do not talk about artificial family planning, but if he is not there we forget about natural family planning because it is useless. I say everything about accessing family-planning services and leave it to them to decide. (Nurse B)

The presence of artificial contraception like condoms in Catholic hospitals proved what my research participant told me, namely that nowadays everybody uses them. The women too indicated that the priests themselves are divided over the Church's teaching on contraception. They told me that most priests do not even talk about it. In an informal conversation with one priest, he told me that he would not bother about talking about issues of contraception. 'I think people are more interested in bread and butter issues than anything else, I personally believe in practical theology' (Fr. B). He referred to preaching on contraception as 'misusing the pulpit'. However, some elderly priests sometimes preach about it. Several women said that there was once a priest in their parish who would tell the women almost every Sunday that they are murdering every day. One woman said:

It was always painful to be told that we are killing every Sunday because we are using birth control pills, yet there is more killing in having more children whom you will not be able to support. I stopped attending mass here. *Kana vari sababa B vaiparidza svondo yoga yoga kuti madzimai muri kuuraya, sei pasina kana mumwe ane pamuviri?* If it is Fr. B, he will preach every Sunday that the women are murderers – why is no one is pregnant? *Zvaindirwadza saka ndakabva ndamboregera kuuya kuchechi, Ndakafara pandakanzwa kuti fata vaenda ndipo pandakazodzokawo kuchechi* (It was very painful for me, [so] I stopped coming to the Church. I was happy when I heard that the priest had been transferred, and that is when I returned to the Church). RWP (32)

As already highlighted, the women use several forms of resistance, which can be likened to 'everyday forms of resistance' or 'weapons of the weak' (Scott, 1985). Scott defines resistance as any acts which the members of a subordinate class engage in either to mitigate or deny claims made by the superordinate class. Similarly, Van Schalkwyk defines resistance as a process through which women become conscious of their less powerful position in relation to men. They then challenge the givenness of situational power relations (Van Schalkwyk, 2018: 35; Ewick and Silbey, 2003). As already indicated, Scott (1990) refers to this as 'hidden transcripts', this being another way in which subordinates employ strategies of resistance that are unnoticed by their superiors. In this case, the powerful also have their hidden transcripts. For the powerful, this occurs when they acknowledge that they do not always have power, so they too devise strategies to maintain their power indirectly. The space in which subordinates and their superiors meet is the 'public transcript'. The public transcripts and hidden transcripts of both subordinates and their superiors are important in evaluating the power dynamics that exist between the women, their culture and the Catholic Church as institutions. Put differently, Katz (2004) calls this 'non-militant resistance', where resistance is informal, overt and concerned with immediate de facto gains. Those resisting have no formal coordination, no formal leaders, no manifestoes, no dues, no name and no banners (Scott, 1985: 36). Scott uses the phrase 'everyday forms of resistance' in the context of the peasants of Sedaka in Malaysia and shows how they resisted social domination by the status quo when the government retrenched several peasants from rice-farming because they had introduced a combine harvester to replace human labour. As a result the peasants felt oppressed, but as the weaker group they could not express their discontent openly, so they devised certain strategies to resist their domination, namely resistance, resilience and reworking. Scott's works (1985; 1990; 1998; 2009; 2012; 2017), are key to my deeper analysis of the strategies Korekore women use to navigate their oppression. Although these works are used in different contexts, they are useful as lenses through which to analyse Korekore women since they concern groups with less power. I return to this theme in more detail in the following chapter.

While some women use disguised compliance as a form of resistance, others use polite submission or deference. This is when they exercise obedience in the public transcript so as to reaffirm the power of the powerful by demonstrating their powerless power. For several women, the teaching of the Church is highly patriarchal. They do not have any power to change things, so they devise methods of survival or rather coping mechanisms. Some women regretted

that the Church hierarchy is too patriarchal as that causes it to be deaf and blind to women's experiences of birth pains and maternal problems. One woman angrily noted:

The Popes and priests are men, and they know nothing about women's lives. For me there is no problem: I just listen to what Fr. B preaches, I receive holy communion, and when mass is over I go to my home and consume my family planning tablets and life goes on. *Ndikaita vana zana ndinovapei? Unongotambura woga nyika igokuseka futi. Unongoita zvinhu zvako muchinyararire* (If you have many children, what do you feed them with? You will be struggling while society mocks you: just do your things secretly). UWP (40)

Polite submission is connected with power: it reflects, regulates and in the end stabilizes, being a strategy that plays a decisive role in diluting power (Gudrun, 1999). In the women's opinion, they need to agree with what the priests teach them and must appear to support them. For example, some women told me that when they arrange talks to teach about sexuality (although in rare cases) they participate, but when they go back to their daily lives they do what they see fit. Most women indicated that while this resistance is done covertly, they have their hidden spaces where they discuss these things and try to help each other. They avoid sensitive platforms like the guild meetings. When they are on these platforms, they commit what Scott (1985) refers to as false compliance, but in their own private circles they gossip and help each other. William (2017: 527) refers to this phenomenon as 'invented spaces'. Although invented spaces have been seen as spaces occupied by the grassroots in confronting the status quo (Miraftab, 2014), the Korekore's invented space has nothing to do with challenging those with power. If that were the case, the ensuing question would be, to what extent are the strategies that the women engage in transformative and sustainable? This discussion will be picked up in the following chapter.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Korekore women face several challenges regarding their SRHR. These challenges range from economic hardship, patriarchal dominance, religious expectations and the meaning of bride wealth to the importance of having children. To respond these challenges, the women have several strategies that they use as a way of navigating. These strategies range from resistance, resilience, reworking, docility, rebellion, quiescence, false compliance, hidden transcripts and feigned ignorance to invented spaces. These strategies are not to be treated as mutually exclusive, but rather as mutual assistance to achieve the goal of

women's everyday forms of survival. Most women agree that, although there are several factors that violate their SRHR, they all reflect the patriarchal nature of both the Catholic Church and Korekore culture. While I have elaborated on the strategies that women use to navigate their SRHR, which are pressured by the teaching of the Church on sexuality and African cultural practices and expectations, I do not claim to have exhausted all the strategies. The question to ask is, do these strategies indicate that Korekore women have the power to influence their SRHR? Simply put, are these strategies transformative? I argue that although women engage in these strategies, they have not managed to do anything that influences the power structures behind their SRHR, hence these strategies remain just coping mechanisms. However, there is an important analytical distinction between power and influence, power being institutional and embedded in political, economic and religious organizations, whereas influence is not institutionalized. The next chapter analyses these strategies through the lenses of social constructivism, governmentality and agency to assess the extent to which they are transformative and sustainable.

Chapter Seven: The ‘Panopticism’ of Women: An Analysis of the Strategies to Navigate the Tensions Regarding Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

7.1 Introduction

‘When life gives us a lemon, we make lemonade’ This saying sums up most of the strategies Korekore women use to navigate the challenges they face to their SRHR. The data collected from the women proved that the long-standing notion among several scholars (Pizzarossa, 2018; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1994; Noonan, 1986; Madu, 2014; Genilo, 2014) that African cultural practices and the Catholic Church’s teaching on sexuality present certain challenges to women’s SRHR can be sustained to a great extent. It is to these challenges that they respond by using different strategies such as resilience, resistance, reworking, docility and rebellion. However, one question that needs to be asked is ‘To what extent are these strategies transformative and sustainable?’ Answering this question is the task of this chapter. I will do this by analysing the above-mentioned strategies that the women engage in. While most women seem to be very happy in those situations and argue that they know how to work within them, there are many realities that need to be unpacked. The data I collected from my research participants pointed to the influence of social constructivism (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) and governmentality (Foucault, 1975) as predominant, hence I resort to using these theories to analyse these strategies. A preliminary analysis of these strategies indicated that combining these two theoretical frameworks creates women as docile bodies who are ever-ready to monitor their own sexuality without realizing it. Yet this is at their own expense and to the benefit of those who have more power than they. This subjectivation is what I refer to as the ‘panopticism’ of women’s sexuality. I use this concept to analyse the choice of strategies used by women and to assess the extent to which they are transformative and sustainable. In essence, this chapter seeks to answer the following two questions:

- a. What strategies do women use to navigate their SRHR against the backdrop of the Catholic Church’s teaching on sexuality and African cultural practices?
- b. To what extent are these strategies transformative and sustainable?

This chapter proceeds by demonstrating how sexuality has been socially constructed by different agents of socialization, such as the family, the school, one’s peers, religion and the

government. How the women respond to these social constructs as realities affects their response to the challenges they face to their SRHR. In this chapter, I also demonstrate how Korekore culture and the Church's teaching on sexuality govern women's sexuality.

7.2 The Social Construction of Women's Sexuality: The Case of Culture

The strategies that Korekore women use in the process of navigating their SRHR might be explained better through the lenses of social constructivism and governmentality. I will turn to governmentality later. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), society is created by humans and human interaction through habitualization. Habitualization refers to an action that is repeated frequently and becomes a pattern which can be performed again in future in the same manner and with the same economical effort. People accept it as it is. Society therefore becomes a 'habit' or, more simply, 'habitus'. In other words, as Gergen (1985) argues, social constructivism is also premised on the idea that human life is shaped by social and interpersonal relationships. However, we need to understand that this theory is very broad, hence in this thesis I zero down to the three steps in the construction of reality suggested by Berger and Luckmann (1966) to understand how Korekore women's realities regarding sexuality have been created and how women have internalized them in such a manner that it affects the way in which they navigate their SRHR. These three steps are externalization, objectivation and internalization. That is, Korekore society has externalized the reality about women's sexuality and in the process turned women into objects of this process of externalization. Moreover, the women have themselves internalized these constructs as if they were hard essences. I shall return to this later. I also use two of Gergen's 'four' hypotheses of social constructivism. For Gergen (1999), humanity's worlds are constructed discursively, meaning that the way we understand ourselves and the world around us is not required by what exists. Taking this into my own research, Korekore women's sexuality is not natural but constructed in time and space, hence it is susceptible to change. This hypothesis helps us understand why Korekore women's strategies of navigation vary from age to age and from location to location. The other hypothesis which is of interest to my project is that social constructions have a history. Certain behaviours are accepted as right, good and ideal by tradition in one era, but might not be so in another era.

A critical analysis of Korekore women's lived experiences helps us to understand the ways in which they themselves experience and understand their worlds as real and meaningful. Investigating the strategies that Korekore women in Mt. Darwin use to navigate their SRHR,

the major findings showed that most of these strategies are just coping mechanisms which have done nothing to address and transform the institutions and structures that are at the centre of violating their SRHR. Being transformative entails causing a marked change, usually for the better (Lederach, 2003). Most women echoed statements that in one way or another point to the following statement: *‘when life gives us a lemon, we make lemonade’*. This statement prompts one to ask whether the strategies women engage in can change their situations. Although some women are happy with their situation and think that they are not completely stuck with the challenges they pose, I argue that the power structures around their sexuality have made them believe that everything is alright as it is. This statement, as echoed by most women, is directly or indirectly one of a number of factors leading me to argue that their position is the result of some kind of panopticism. If we were to analyse the above statement, one would wonder whether lemonade is really the best drink the women would wish to have. However, whether or not this is the case must be left to the individual’s taste, but generally lemonade will not be regarded as the best drink. What it means is simply that the women have been made to be content with subordinate positions, which, I argue, is the result of social constructivism, which I discussed in Chapter five. Although most women think that the strategies they use make them agentic in respect of their SRHR, social pressures and expectations lead these strategies into a dead end and ultimately do not transform anything. Apart from the women’s strategies being shaped by the social construction of women’s sexuality in Korekore culture, I realized from their answers that the teaching of the Church on sexuality, which can be interpreted through the lens of governmentality, also shape how the women navigate their SRHR. I therefore now turn to how governmentality and social constructivism shape how the women respond to the challenges to their SRHR. It seems there is a thin membrane between these two strategies.

7.3 Socialization and Governing Women’s Sexuality: The Impact of Religion

I have already shown how Korekore culture has externalized women’s sexuality through its patriarchal systems. It is to these social constructions the women respond, as if they were natural realities, and this shapes the strategies they use in navigating the challenges to their SRHR. A preliminary analysis of the strategies used by these women in light of these challenges in relation to the teachings of the Church on sexuality helped me choose governmentality and social constructivism as theoretical frameworks through which to understand these strategies better. Going beyond what one sees at face value, these strategies showed that both Korekore culture and the teachings of the Church on sexuality create women as docile bodies through the

process of panopticism. Although panopticism has already been explained earlier on, I explain again its structure here so that we understand how this is helpful in understanding its influence on the choice of the strategies that the Korekore women choose to navigate their SRHR. The panopticon was an architectural design for a prison devised and published by Jeremy Bentham in 1791. This design took the form of a ring with a tower at the centre. Each cell had two windows, one opening on to the inside of the central tower and the other allowing light to pass through the whole cell. The idea was to allow the inspector to see all the inmates from the tower without them seeing the inspector. The inmates could not see each other either. However, they would know that they could be watched at any moment and hence would behave ‘as if’ they were being watched. In this case, the idea that they are being watched is internalized by the inmates. In internalizing it, they are turned into docile bodies, which are very easy to control, as they discipline themselves. Foucault used this to explain a new way of governing people that emphasizes self-discipline, known as governmentality. Elsewhere, governmentality is defined as how people think about governing or simply about mentalities of government (Miller and Rose 1990). Foucault further explains this as ‘conduct of conduct’, that is, a way of regulating and controlling behaviour. He does not limit government to politics only but argues that it is also used in philosophical, religious, medical and pedagogical institutions and so on, ranging from governing oneself to governing others.

Panopticism can also be used elsewhere, for example, in schools, churches, hospitals and so on, hence I use it here to understand how religion and culture create women as docile bodies in respect of their sexuality. There are several assumptions about panopticism, but two are of interest to my argument: the ‘total invisibility of the inspector’, and the ‘universal visibility of the inmates’. For Foucault (1975) these assumptions involve two sides of power, that is, ‘power over the inmates’ and ‘power over oneself’. Government is an art, hence it requires craft, imagination, shrewd fashioning, tactics and intuition (Dean, 2010). This art of government is portrayed through four dimensions which I also discovered as being at play in shaping the way the women in my study navigate their SRHR. These four dimensions are: *visibility* (ways of visualizing which fields to be governed); *technical aspects of government* (means, mechanisms, technologies and vocabularies used to govern); *episteme of government* (forms of thought, knowledges and expertise needed to govern); and *finally identity formation* (ways of acting on conduct to elicit various identifications for various reasons) (Dean, 1995). In collecting data, I discovered that two of these dimensions (visibility and identity formation) make it easy to understand women’s strategies more appropriately; hence, the following section explains this

art of government in relation to women's sexuality. However, all four dimensions work very close together in the process of making subjects easily governable, in this case, the women's sexuality.

7.4 Conceptualizing Visibility

There are three types of visibility, namely social recognition, media and control (Tazzioli and Walters 2016). I engage with visibility in the sense of control to understand how Catholic teaching on sexuality and Korekore culture regulate and control women's SRHR. In simple terms, the visible/invisible dyad is key in understanding Korekore women's choices of strategies of navigation. For Dean (1995), visibility entails ways of visualizing fields that need to be governed, which is done in multiple ways, for instance, through a drawing, a flow chart, a pie chart and so on. Knowledge is essential for any government to be successful in governing its people, and this knowledge is obtained through statistics. It is through statistics that the United Nations and the governments of industrialized countries became aware of the rapidly rising population growth rates and concluded that this posed a threat to the world economy, hence the need to control populations. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, there was a lot of pressure from these groups to force the Catholic Church to relax its teaching on birth control so as to control population growth by allowing people to use artificial family planning (Wilde, 2007). The church too uses statistics to obtain knowledge about those they intend to govern, for example, parish baptism registers, marriage registers and so on. These registers help the Church monitor and regulate whatever it wishes. Visibility asks a simple question: what needs to be visualized, what should not be visualized, and how it should be done. It must be understood that it is in line with the goals it needs to achieve, which has been called the teleology of government (Foucault, 1975). A good example is the issue of birth control: while several industrialized states are threatened by rapid growth rates that threaten the economy, the Church thrives when there is a huge population, being influenced by its ideology that the family is important. And just as the family is important to the Church, so is it important in Korekore culture. This is why both the Church's teachings on sexuality and Korekore culture emphasize people having more children. Under these ideological influences, one cannot see how the Church and Korekore culture can choose to support having few children. The Church thrives on a large population, like African culture in general and Korekore culture in particular. In this regard, Bourdillon (1976) has argued that for the Shona, the larger one's family the richer one is. Since the family is important both among Catholics and in Korekore culture, both externalize

these ideologies and socialize women so that they in turn internalize these values and make them their own.

Apart from maintaining population figures, the Church is in the same position as Korekore culture in terms of the language it uses, which in a way makes women the subjects of their own sexuality. Although this is not directly linked to the dogmatic teaching of the Church on sexuality and is also context-specific, it points to visibility as a form of control whereby women are made to monitor themselves. As Korekore culture has a language to celebrate girls who are married as virgins, indirectly the Church too has the same language. For example, there is a vast difference between a girl who is married and weds in the Church as a 'girl' and a girl who is married and weds in Church after giving birth or just lives with her husband as husband and wife. Primarily, the joy that is expressed over one who is married as a 'girl' might be ten times different from one who weds after giving birth. One often hears statements such as '*aita muchato mutsvene chaiwo*', or 'she had a real holy marriage'.

Secondly, the difference in the dress worn in the two circumstances creates another gap: a girl who weds as a girl is supposed to be dressed in a white dress with a veil over her face to indicate wholeness, whereas one who marries after living with her husband wears a cream wedding dress and is not allowed to cover her face. Moreover, the wedding gown of the 'girl' should have a long tail, as opposed to the lack of a tail for a girl marrying after living with her husband (Bourdillon, 1976). This is just one example of the aspect of visibility that results in girls monitoring their sexuality. You even hear women say, '*ndakaita muchato mutsvene ini*, I had a white wedding'. Without making any value judgement here, I simply want to show that this kind of language seems to make for variations in how the women respond to their challenges. For example, those who had a '*muchato mutsvene*' are normally stuck in marriages which no longer work simply because they do not want to let go of their ostensibly hard-earned marriage. It can be argued that this notion of maintaining virginity in church weddings is just as Korekore culture maintains virginity as a value that brings harmony; thus the concept of visibility is used by both the Church and Korekore culture in controlling and regulating women's sexuality. However, this is not to ignore the concept of inculturation, which shapes the manner in which most practices are done in the Church. This might seem to have nothing to do with how women navigate their SRHR, but all these and other factors contribute in a very big way, as I shall demonstrate later. As already indicated, panoptical regimes of visibility involve asymmetric power relations, that is, seeing without being seen. Visibility is an object of powerlessness,

whereas invisibility is about strengthening one's power (Tazzioli and Walters 2016). The discourse of SRHR itself could be analysed through the lens of panopticism. As already mentioned, the historical background to the discourse of SRHR can be taken as a product of 'civilization', where the population growth rate is seen as a threat to economic development, hence it must be controlled, regulated and governed. For the UN to achieve the goal of SRHR in Zimbabwe, it uses many funds to spearhead programs to help control the rise in the global population. It advertises its programs and offers family-planning services free of charge. Like the inspector in the central tower of the panopticon, invisibility is also ensured in these programs, the real motives of which are hidden to their clients. Nonetheless they achieve their desired goals of making the people, especially the women, internalize the importance of family-planning services so that nearly everyone takes up one or other type of modern family planning.

The women I interviewed confirmed that nowadays nearly everyone uses such services. The way most of them spoke showed that they have internalized the use of family planning as if it had been their own choice to do so. For example, most women said *'tinotoita zvatinoda, mapiritsi ndiwo atinotoshandisa, ungasachembera nekubara?* 'We do what we want, tablets are what we use, wouldn't we get old by giving birth?' (RWP 46). In this way, they feel they have control over or are in charge of their SRHR, yet they do not know that they have been turned into the subjects of these programmes by those in power so that they monitor themselves and can therefore be governed easily. I do not mean to suggest that women should not use their desired family-planning methods. Rather, I simply want to demonstrate how the concept of visibility is used to render some individuals subjects, in this case these women, without them even realizing. The structure of the panopticon also explains visibility: the inspector is invisible and works to achieve the inmates' total visibility. Contextually, the UN uses several strategies such as research to assess women's universal visibility. This is not an argument against women achieving their SRHR, nor am I against the UN's support for women's SRHR. Rather, my aim is to demonstrate how the panopticon concept of visibility can be used to understand how the women's sexuality can be monitored so that they end up being docile in a disempowering way. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines 'docility' as having multiple meanings, such as the quality of teachability, a readiness and willingness to receive instruction, an ability to be taught or submissiveness to training. The meaning of docility as something created by panopticism connotes submissiveness, but most of the women in my study think that docility is power, and they keep on navigating by being docile, among other ways. In most women's perspectives docility is agentic, as it allows them to act, albeit in subtle ways. Although not all agency is

transformative, this research asks whether this docility can lead to transformations of the situations that pose a challenge to them and whether it is also sustainable in light of their SRHR.

Shona culture also uses the concepts of the panopticon and visibility in monitoring women's sexuality. I have demonstrated that women are taught from childhood how they should behave with their sexuality, for example, in line with their femininity. Women grow up knowing that a real woman should get married as a virgin and that this will lead them into abstaining from sexual relations. Practices such as the stretching of the labia minora, which the women in my study told me that every girl is supposed to undergo, are performed because failure to do so will lead to divorce when one is married. What can be deduced from the preceding argument is that women's sexuality exists for the purposes of men's pleasure. It should be suppressed and only be expressed when men dictate the pace of relations. SRHR and Shona culture both use the panopticon concept to instil discipline to which women automatically become docile, but they do so in different ways and with different expectations. While SRHR expects women to be free and to be able to express their sexuality as they wish (ICPD, 1994), Shona culture expects that women should not be self-expressive when it comes to their sexuality. It should be their male counterparts, for instance, who determine when to have sex and how, when to have children, how many and whether to use contraceptives, which type, or whether to use them at all. Panopticism also results in women becoming docile when they get married. This is because in Shona culture, when a woman gets married, she is treated like a novice in matters of sexuality, hence her need to be docile so that she can be taught (Chitakure 2016, Kambarami 2006).

Social constructivism places the emphasis on the creation of meaning by a group of people as they interact (Pfadenhauer & Knoblauch, 2018; Fosnot 2005). In this way, the individual engages in an active role in creating reality while being guided directly or indirectly by the prevalent discourses in his or her own society. While sexuality in most African contexts is viewed as natural, social constructivism debunks the idea that sexuality is natural and argues that it is rather a construct that emerges through social, cultural, historical and religious interactions (Lock and Strong, 2010; Hoffman, 1990). In my fieldwork I assumed that the Catholic Church and Korekore culture have socially created meanings of women's sexuality which the women themselves have internalized as essences. Their navigation is greatly influenced by the meanings they have given to their sexuality. Both religion and culture construct the rules, beliefs, values and notions of acceptable behaviour that underlie the discourse of sexuality (Goettsche, 1989). There are several forms of constructivism, but I

choose to dwell on how the reality of women's sexuality has been created through categories, texts and language. Among the Korekore, women's sexuality is defined through the machismo that is prevalent in Zimbabwean society (Chitakure 2016; Kambarami, 2006). With this ideology, men are allowed to be sexually open, dominant and powerful, which defines masculinity (Burgos and Diaz Perez 1968). Since society defines masculinity as machismo, the men conform to this expectation and define women's sexuality as something that should be suppressed. The strategies the women in my study use to navigate their SRHR have been shaped by this macho ideology.

As already indicated, Zimbabwean society is highly patriarchal, resulting in the meaning of female sexuality being a patriarchal product as well (Khumalo and Garbus, 2002). Women learn and internalize the meaning of sexuality from a tender age, and there are many institutions that socialize these women, namely the family, religion, education and society at large. Another complexity is added by the fact that Shona society has also been influenced by western values, thus putting the women in a dilemma regarding their sexuality, that is, whether they should go by western values or stick with their own cultural values. The Kenyan Kikuyu proverb '*Njogu igiri ikihurana, nyeki niyo yumagira*', or 'when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers', explains how women are suffering as a result of the conflict between Shona and the western values. The encounter between SRHR and Shona culture turns women into a zone of contestation. From a very tender age, girls are socialized to view themselves more as subordinate housekeepers to their male counterparts than as physically strong protectors and breadwinners. This is done, for example, through a game known as *mahumbwe* (mock marriage) in which girls are given dolls and kitchen utensils and boys are given cars, axes and cows, among other things. Moreover, young girls are taught so-called feminine qualities such as gentleness, passivity and submission so that they will please their male providers. This socialization is carried on throughout puberty and adolescence up until adulthood. This suggests that what is central to Shona female sexuality is marriage, making it the desired destiny for most women (Kambarami, 2006). Within the marriage constellation, female sexuality is defined as being in the hands of men. Once *roora* (bride wealth) has been paid for the woman, this automatically results in her losing her sexual and reproductive rights. A case in point is the payment of *rusambo* (the central portion of bride wealth paid in cash or cattle). Once this has been paid, the woman is expected to give in to the sexual demands of the man and satisfy his desires because that is enshrined in the marriage 'contract' (Messer, 2004). Women are not allowed to insist on safe sex measures being taken, as it is the man who controls the sexual

encounter (Leclerc-Madhala, 2000). This social construction of sexuality shapes the way women navigate their SRHR.

The socialization of women regarding their sexuality does not end with the family but also extends to the education system. Some of the textbooks used in Zimbabwe portray women as the weaker sex compared to their male counterparts, who are portrayed as strong. One textbook used in the first class in elementary school is a good example of how the education system in Zimbabwe defines sexuality. It has pictures showing the father driving a car and the mother breastfeeding, and it says '*Ona baba vanotyaira mota kuenda kubasa*' (look at father driving his car to work), '*ona mai vanoyamwisa Tarisai ari kuchema*' ('look at mother breastfeeding Tarisai, who is crying') (Ngwaru, 1967). This automatically socializes girls into believing that their destiny is to get married and have children, while the men should go to work and provide for them. Marriage is a sacred institution among the Korekore that every woman is supposed to enter into. As already indicated, those who choose not to get married are given names: for example, they are called *vane chitsinha* ('a boy or a girl without an interest in heterosexual relationships or marriage and who remains unmarried') (Gelfand, 1957). On another note, women who decide to postpone marriage because they want to pursue their education to higher levels are stigmatized and may be called 'unmarriageable' (Chirimuuta, 2006; Kambarami, 2006). This kind of socialization is internalized by the women so that when they grow up there is nobody to tell them what they should do, they just monitor themselves and behave according to the dictates of their culture. Language also constructs women's sexuality. For example, some phrases are constantly repeated in Korekore society, such as *hazvibvumidzwi* (it's not allowed), *zvinoyera* (it's sacred), *unoita munyama* (misfortune will befall you) and many more. Phrases such as these act as the watchtower at the centre of the panopticon prison and continue to monitor women's sexuality. I have demonstrated how African culture acts as a panopticon, but that is not the only factor that shapes women's responses. How religion acts as panopticism is worth investigating.

In Africa in general and in Zimbabwe in particular, religion permeates all aspects of human life, making it difficult to separate religion from culture. To this end, religion is not spared in defining women's sexuality among the Shona. However, my own research treats culture and African religion as inseparable, meaning that the religion I discuss is Christianity, and specifically Catholicism. If, for example, we take the content of Christianity, the story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:4-3:24) portrays Eve as emerging from Adam's rib, which has been taken

as an indication of women's subordination. Through Catholic catechism, women are drawn into a formative and regulating process, for example, the Church's teaching on Mary as the mother of all humanity (CCC, 963). This teaching has been manipulated by several patriarchal societies such as the Korekore to create the ideology called marianismo, based on Mary as the model for all Catholic women (Nieves-Falcan, 1972). Since my research participants are all Catholics, marianismo is at the centre of how the women among them navigate their SRHR. In trying to emulate Mary, several women join different guilds such as the Marian, the St Anne's and the Sacred Heart guilds. Although some guilds, like the second and third, are not specifically Marian in spirit, the women try to find a link with Mary. For example, St Anne's finds a connection to being the mother of Mary, so they call themselves Mary's mothers. This is the same as those who belong to the Sacred Heart, who also say that, since Jesus is the son of Mary, they are daughters of Mary.

Analysing the above through the lens of panopticism, it is clear that the Catholic teaching on Mariology has also been internalized by the women, greatly shaping the way in which they behave, so that they still navigate their SRHR. Arguably marianismo leads women to become docile, obedient, passive, quiet and sexually available. This was said times without number during the participant observation I conducted with the women during their guild meetings. Statements that reflected how they linked their strategies to marianismo included, for example, *'semudzimai waMaria kana waAnna unofanira kuzviisa pasi pomurume wako*, 'As a member of St Annes/ St Mary you are supposed to be submissive'. Some said *'Tinofanira kugona kuti ngazviitwe sekuda kwenyu samai Mariya*, 'We are supposed to be able to say, let your will be done as Mary did.' For these women, emulating Mary helps them to see themselves as model women, hence the strategies they use to navigate their SRHR are shaped by marianismo. Like African culture, the Church also constructs women's sexuality as creating a suppressed category. What I established through my research participants is that the strategies women use to navigate their SRHR can be interpreted through the theory of governmentality, especially the concepts of panopticism and of the social constructivism of language, texts and categories, among other things. In the following sections I will analyse these strategies.

7.5 Resistance entangled in the construction of meanings

I have established that the teachings of the Church on sexuality and some Korekore cultural practices stifle women's SRHR, a situation to which they respond with different strategies, most

of which are pursued by the women themselves as giving them power. Moen (2013) argues that resistance can be exercised only when the situation allows it. For him, the greater the degree of loose coupling, the greater the chances to resist. The teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality are clearly written down in Church documents, specifically *Casti Conubii* (1930) and *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Since this is written in black and white, this might mean that in terms of women's sexuality there is nothing to be regarded as 'loose coupling', thus making it difficult for the women to resist this teaching. However, most of my research participants told me that the Church in Zimbabwe has not done much to impart its teachings to the faithful, allowing them to resist this teaching. However, we should be aware that they engage in subtle resistance, the question then being, why do they choose to resist covertly? This will be shown later. The statement by Bishop A that "the Church in Zimbabwe has not paid serious attention to issues of sexuality but has rather paid more attention to issues to do with politics and social justice" may make one conclude that it is easy for the women to engage in resistance as a strategy because the Church is relaxed. I argue that this is too simplistic. Although the Church in Zimbabwe has not pressed its teaching on sexuality hard, certain micro-processes can be created through language and activities that panoptinize women in their sexuality so that they end up losing their power. As this has been asserted by Foucault (1976), panopticism is the general principle of a new political anatomy that does not emphasize relations of sovereignty but relations of discipline. Its goal is to induce a sense of conscious visibility such that women cannot openly resist anything to do with their sexuality. Instead of resisting openly, they choose covert resistance. As already indicated, the fact that both the Church and Korekore culture see marriage and children as very important has been internalized by the women, making it part of them. Although the Church in Zimbabwe generally and in Mt. Darwin in particular does not force women to do anything with their sexuality, these ideologies are deep-seated in women's lives, so that they find it very difficult to resist openly in case they are regarded as misfits by both society and the Church.

If Moen's view of resistance is anything to go by, what Bishop A said supports the idea that the 'loose coupling' of Catholic teaching on sexuality in Zimbabwe allows the women some sense of resistance. According to Bishop A, a theologian, the Church in Zimbabwe has not paid serious attention to issues of SRHR, concentrating instead more on issues of politics and justice. I take this as an example of 'loose coupling' regarding the Church's teachings on sexuality, that is, that it is more theoretical than practical, making it easier for the women to resist, although they do not do so openly. The Church emphasizes that marriage and the family are at the heart

of sexuality, hence procreation and the education of children are a high priority in marriage. In the same vein, couples should not use artificial contraception but rather follow the natural cycle (CCC 1001; *Gaudium et Spes*; Code of Canon Law 1013), though this greatly depends on the woman's knowledge of her fertile and infertile periods. For several women, this teaching discriminates against their SRHR, as it relies on 'natural law theory' because in the Korekore context women do not normally dictate the pace when it comes to sexual relations. Apart from that, some women indicated that it is difficult for them to know when their fertile and infertile periods occur. On another note, most women said that this was difficult because some men might want to have sexual relations every day. The lack of biological knowledge on the part of the women makes the Church's teachings impractical for Korekore women. While several women acknowledged that there are some advantages in using natural family-planning methods, for them the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages. In this a situation they use resistance to negotiate their SRHR. Scott (1985) has argued that, while for the most part weaker groups do not seem to resist violence, they have ways they employ in the form of what he calls 'everyday forms of resistance'. As long as there is power, resistance is bound to occur (Foucault, 1980). One woman said:

'Murume wangu aida kuti ndiite vana vanonwe achiti ndizvo zvinodihwa nechechi kuti tibarane tiwande, ini pandakangobara wechitatu ndakabva ndatosungwa chibereko asingazive (my husband wanted to have seven children, as he argued that that is what the Church expects). UWP 49.

What UWP 49 and other women said indicated a kind of covert resistance, which Scott (1985) refers to as false compliance. This is used by weaker groups as a prosaic first resort in situations where women see that open defiance is impossible, since it will invite some form of punishment. Most women said they agreed with their husbands to avoid the consequences that arise when women go against their husbands' wishes. Korekore society deprives women of power over their reproductive rights. Through the payment of *danga*, society gives the man exclusive reproductive rights, and if the woman goes against this, she risks divorce (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1967; Kambarami, 2006). Given this complication, most Korekore women argued that false compliance is the best option. For instance, they pretend that they do not have any problems in having more children, yet they secretly make use of family-planning services, preferring methods that are easily visible to their husbands, for example, Depo-Provera injections. Conversely, false compliance is also used when the women themselves want to have

more children than their husbands are willing to have. They agree to use the type of family-planning method they have decided on with their husbands, but when they are off-stage they ignore this, as a result ending up having the number of children they desire themselves. However, it must not be forgotten that having more children threatens women's sexual and reproductive health: for example, health experts have established that grand multipara women suffer health problems such as postpartum haemorrhage, uterine rupture and so on (Berzircioglu et al., 2013). While having more children is detrimental to a woman's sexual and reproductive health, some indicated that these problems cannot be compared to the benefits they will have when their children grow up, as the latter will look after them. Many scholars have argued that children are important to Africans (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1967; Gelfand, 1957). In this manner, it may be argued that the women violate their own reproductive health and rights, but there is a need to consider the influence of the concept of panopticism in this whole matter, which influences women to internalize the idea that children are important. It is clear from this assessment that covert resistance does not help in transforming the challenges to women's SRHR.

Another way in which the women engage in covert resistance is through feigned ignorance. From the interviews I held with some Catholic priests and nuns, it emerged that the Church generally assumes that women use natural family planning, especially when they see them participating in a few of the forums and programs that deliberate on these issues, for example, social programs run by the women's guilds. I argue that if the Church does not just turn a blind eye to this, it is being naive and simplistic. The whole discourse is complex and needs critical engagement. For instance, the Church seems to be unaware of the fact that women engage in what is called feigned ignorance. Feigned ignorance suggests pretending that one does not have knowledge (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007). While some scholars have argued that ignorance and epistemology are diametrically opposed (Tuana, 2004), I argue that in the Korekore context, the way the women engage in feigned ignorance as a way of navigating their SRHR in line with Catholic teaching shows that it consists of calculated epistemic consciousness. This reflects the argument of Gwaltney (1993: 240) that those without power live two lives, one for themselves, which benefits them, the other for others, while Bailey (2007) refers to this as strategic ignorance. In this manner, feigned ignorance and strategic ignorance are two sides of the same coin. When women are faced with challenges from the teachings of the Church on sexuality and their cultural expectations, they use feigned ignorance and strategic ignorance interchangeably. It does not matter whether they have knowledge of this teaching or not. Most

women I interviewed had very basic knowledge of the teachings of the Church. They reduced the teaching to mean not using artificial contraception alone, as if that is all there is to this teaching. When these women deal with priests who support the use of natural family planning, they pretend they do not know anything about how to use natural family planning while indirectly resisting this teaching. They cannot resist openly because in the context of Korekore religion Catholicism is highly esteemed to the extent that to go against the priest is tantamount to rebelling against God. However, the colonial mentality that influenced the Korekore through the introduction of Christianity by the missionaries, in which a superior/inferior binary was created between the white missionaries and the Africans, should not be overlooked. Schmidt (1996: 1) argues that 'it is difficult to understand the present or hope to resolve the current problems of women if we do not understand the historical and cultural context from which they emerged, we need to understand the structure of a given society, its history, political and economic systems or ideologies'. The legacy of colonization continues to have an impact that must be acknowledged if effective solutions to today's problems are to be found.

Strategic ignorance is a form of knowing that uses dominant misconceptions as a basis for active creative responses to oppression (Bailey, 2007). Subordinate groups can express ignorance as a way of gaining information, sabotaging work, avoiding harm or preserving a sense of self. As a way of making their husbands feel they are in control, some women said they pretend not to know. One woman said:

Unotoita zvako serema uchimubvunza zvose zvose nezvaunoziva, anobva afara, kuzoitwa zvaunoda hakunetsi unongoti ndanga ndisingatombozvizi, ndine hurombo, yatopera nyaya yacho (You just behave like a fool and ask him everything, he becomes happy and it will be easy to do whatever you like in the face of ignorance. If he asks why you act in a manner that he might not expect, you just say sorry, and it's over). RWP (63)

This type of strategy is adopted when women are faced with pressure from their culture, specifically from their husbands. What causes them to engage in strategic ignorance is the way they are expected to behave in a marriage. Korekore society regards husbands as superior, which is why they are referred to as '*baba*, father'. What needs to be understood is that, while ignorance is taken to be an epistemic gap that needs to be filled, for Korekore women it helps them navigate their SRHR without being suspected of threatening those with power. According to Bailey (2009), strategic ignorance demands that those without power play dumb as a way of gaining knowledge. They should present themselves as they are, not in order to protect the other

aspects of themselves that are important. What is at the core of strategic ignorance is being aware of what one is choosing, that is, to be aware of one's ignorance, hence I call this 'knowledgeable ignorance'. Several women stated that this sort of resistance is beneficial to them, but when it comes to SRHR one needs to be critical. I argue that although it cannot be entirely disputed that this strategy empowers them, there is a sense in which powerful social structures have made women believe that they cannot openly defy the structures that challenge them, and in so doing they do not change anything in their lives. Patriarchal systems continue to dominate them.

However, this does not mean that all individuals of lesser status engage in subtle resistance: some engage in open resistance, like the women of Nigeria who responded by force to colonial taxation and market policies (Caroll, 1989: 8). Other examples of women's open resistance come from South Korea (Karl and Cheung, 1983: 91-97), Malaysia (Ong, 1997: 195-213), Bolivia (Nash, 1975: 261-270) and Jamaica (Wieringa, 1975: 18). Among the Korekore too, there are some who engage in open resistance, which I suggest calling rebellion. In the next section I describe how some women engage in open resistance.

7.6 Rebellion as Resistance?

Another aspect of resistance that the women engage in is rebellion. This is a strategy used by few women, mostly those who are educated and are economically independent. This recalls Chitakure's argument (2016) that women who are financially stable and do not rely on their husbands for survival find it easy to walk out of marriages. It is this act of women divorcing their husbands that I refer to as resisting through rebellion because in Korekore culture women are not expected to divorce their husbands. Women who use rebellion as a strategy argued that it was very much a last resort, the only way they could enhance their sexual health, having realized that their husbands are promiscuous and that as a consequence they risk contracting sexually transmitted diseases. This sort of rebellion is not collective, unlike that referred to by Julia Wells (1983). In Wells's case, South African women mobilized other women to sign a petition and protest against the pass law. The pass law was introduced by the Afrikaners in 1952. It was aimed at ensuring a reliable supply of cheap, docile African labour for the gold and diamond mines (Johannesburg Native Affairs Report 1958). Since among the Korekore sexuality is a private and individual affair, it is difficult to engage in collective strategies of fighting their oppression: rebellion can be engaged in when a group of people are suffering

from the same oppression and when this oppression is visible to many people. The privatization of sexuality can be understood better from the Foucauldian perspective of power. Foucault argues that when it comes to sexuality, there is no outside of power, as power is everywhere. It actually thrives on camouflage and secrecy (1976). Both the Catholic Church and Korekore culture regard sexuality as a private matter. For the Church it is sacred, hence it should be revered (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968), while for the Korekore it is a taboo subject that should be left to the bedroom (Kambarami, 2006). If you choose to talk about it in the open, you are regarded as a loose person. Women have internalized the privatization of sexuality, hence that influences the way they rebel. Apart from their fear of being stigmatized as rebels, they also risk being treated as morally loose, hence they choose to rebel as individuals, not as groups. A good example is how Zimbabwe treated women who rebelled against their marriages after the Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing in 1995. Most women who rebelled against their husbands were stigmatized as ‘Beijing Women’. Some women told me that they fear being called that. However, one woman said the challenges she faced from her husband in respect of her SRHR had no other solution than for her to opt out of the marriage:

Ndakabuda ini! Unoronga nyaya yako woga, ukada kuita zvekuisa vamwe munyaya dzako vanokuti hayo ‘maBeijing’ (I opted out). You just rebel on your own without mobilizing others. If you think of involving others, you are called ‘the Beijing’). UWP (44)

The way people rebel is also based on the meaning they give to so-called oppression, which is context-specific. For example, South African women rebelled against the pass law because they interpreted it as insulting female dignity and motherhood. For South African women, as is the case in a number of African examples, motherhood is a very important category which nobody should insult. This is explained more succinctly by the Nigerian Yoruba proverb, *‘Iya ni wura baba ni dingi’* or ‘The mother is gold and the father is the mirror’. In other words, you cannot insult your mother, as it is believed that there is no other deity like the mother who is worthy of worship: *‘Orisa bi iya ko si iya la ba ma a bo’* (Makinde, 2004: 165). It is the same among the Shona of Zimbabwe. If you disobey your mother misfortune will befall you, known as *kutanda botso*. Analysing the concept of motherhood from a social constructivist point of view, I argue that language is performative and has practical consequences for people as it triggers action, hence the saying ‘language is not transparent’ (Burr, 2003; Dulcan, 2009). If the way people speak and write about things (discourses) results in action, then language and power are

intimately linked (Burr, 2003). While motherhood has been revered and leads some women into rebelling when it has been insulted, sexuality has been socially constructed so as to benefit men. Women try to live up to this social expectation, hence a few rebel. According to Kambarami (2006), women are expected to be sexually passive and submissive to their husbands, with men being the initiators of sex and also setting the conditions for the sexual encounter.

As Bandura (2017: 130) suggests, the way people act is a product of their reflexive thought processes. They know that there are always consequences accompanying their actions, known as unintended consequences (Giddens, 1984) or unanticipated consequences (Merton, 1936). Rebellion is often resorted to by few women because it is associated with undesirable consequences. For example, as already noted, women who rebel by divorcing their husbands are often stigmatized as ‘Beijing women’. While the Beijing conference is regarded as a significant turning point in the global agenda for gender equality, in Zimbabwe it has been interpreted as disturbing the stability of marriages. To avoid being stigmatized as ‘Beijing women’, women try not to rebel or do so in subtle ways. In the same context, a woman who deviates from the norm can also be called ‘*marara emukadzi*’ or dirty woman, meaning that she is a ‘useless woman’ (Manyonganise, 2015: 2). This stigmatization leads women to give in to their oppression and not rebel. Moreover, Shona society has other ways that seem to empower women and that they too internalize, but at the expense of their rights. For example, the common Shona expression ‘*musha mukadzi*’ provides women with some sense of being empowered such that most of them do not bother rebelling against the violation of their rights. Like subtle resistance, rebellion too is greatly shaped by how sexuality is socially constructed and governed. While some women choose to navigate through subtle resistance and others choose to rebel, there is yet another camp which prefers to engage in docility as a way of navigating what challenges them. In dealing with this type of navigation, we are faced with a problem of the extent to which it transforms their challenges.

7.7 Is Docility Powerless Power?

Another form of covert resistance is docility. Korekore women engage in several actions that resemble being docile, prompting me to ask whether these strategies are transformative and agentic. I understand that in theory agency and being transformative do not mean exactly the same thing, but in my research, I take agency to consist in transforming conflicts over SRHR.

As I stated earlier, conflict transformation entails envisioning and responding to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities to create processes of constructive change that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships (Lederach, 2003: 14). The patriarchal nature of Korekore culture holds that sexuality is in the hands of men, thus women are supposed to be passive and submissive. Taking a closer look at humility and self-knowledge as the roots of docility, the women said that they influence their own sexuality for a change. The women said that when they are humble, it makes men treat them as harmless and hence to relax and leave them to do what they like.

According to Foucault (1979: 136), the notion of docility involves a person being subjected, used, transformed and improved. I have invented the phrase ‘powerless power’ to refer to trivial survival mechanisms which a group with less power uses but which are not transformative. Docility for the most part has been taken to mean subordination and the abandonment of agency. It has also been taken to suggest a lethargic and submissive person who blindly submits to power structures (Bezuidenhout Louis et al., 2018). While what looks like docility is powerless power, the women in my study argued that it is a strategy that gives them agency. If docility has the qualities of teachability and readiness, then it is inextricably linked to prudence. They are closely linked because of their situational aspect, which allows people to know when to follow the rules and procedures and when to deviate from them (Bezuidenhout, 2018: 74). The women also described docility as an integral part of prudence. When you are taught, you learn how to interpret and how you should act. This is why women often make the following statement: ‘When life gives me lemons, I make lemonade and find someone with vodka and have a party’, though the question to ask is actually ‘If there is a choice, is lemonade the best drink to choose to have for a party’ or, as the expression goes, if they could, would they wish for something of their own choice?

While SRHR implies or states that individuals and couples exercise control over their reproductive capabilities and have a satisfying and safe sex life (Richards, 2015: 344), the women indicated that they are not passive recipients in this whole situation. Using docility as a strategy, they are able to choose what they want from what they do not want. Docility is related to prudence, which is the virtue of realism and a willingness to know the truth (Bezuidenhout, 2018: 74). Several women in my research indicated that they use their prudence in accessing their SRHR. One said:

Haungoiti mukumbazvose tsapo yebenzi, unosarudza zvinoenderana newe uye zvisingakukuvadzisi (You do not just take everything, you choose what fits you and what is harmless). RWP (39)

Some forms of artificial family planning are detrimental to women's health, and for women to use them without considering how they affect their health is a sign of imprudence. Under such circumstances, some use their sense of prudence to choose what fits them and what is beneficial to them: for example, they choose family-planning methods that have fewer side effects. In connection with this, most women argued that docility involves a conscious transformation and a two-way process that is premised on how one stage influences future stages. It is an active process. Where at first glance it seems as if, by being docile, the women have given up, they themselves said that is being too simplistic. Most of the women I spoke to indicated that docility can be a way of empowering oneself if one knows how to manipulate the power structures around one. They explained that silence surpasses everything, but that does not mean that to be silent is to be foolish. All they need to do is plan properly how to engage with silence in ways that do not offend those with power over their SRHR, that is, their husbands and their families.

Women cited several examples to show that docility can be powerful: for example, having more children might mean that the women's reproductive health and rights are being violated, yet for them it is a game-changer. Once you have children, you earn the title 'mother', motherhood being a highly esteemed category among Africans (Oyewumi, 1997). On the one hand, women have been stereotyped as oppressed (de Beauvoir, 1949; Dally, 1968). On the other hand, in Africa, women as a category are not always powerless, disadvantaged, controlled and defined by men (Oyewumi, 1997). Moreover, having more children is a great investment, as children will look after their mothers when they grow up. A Shona proverb expresses this aptly: '*chirere mangwana chigokurerawo*', or 'when you bring up your children well, they will look after you in the future'.

Finally, docility places cognition, knowledge and decision-making at the forefront of how individuals adapt, learn, discover and achieve their desired goals. Some scholars have argued that some African cultural practices, such as the payment of bride wealth, constitute violence (Chitakure, 2016). For the women to be docile because they have been paid for might be seen as inactivity and perpetuating their subordination. The women I interviewed said that to have

been paid for means you are valuable and are worth being paid for. This is confirmed by Bourdillon (1967), who argues that the payment of a bride wealth is tantamount to saying 'Here is a woman who is worthy being paid for'. When you have been paid for, your in-laws give you respect, unlike when nothing has been paid for you. This looks as if you are imposing yourself on their son, in which case they might not respect you. Coupled with humility from the women's side, the respect that in-laws give their sisters-in-law helps her act in the way she thinks will empower her. In this manner, docility becomes empowering. When men control the sexual encounter, some treat it as violating women's SRHR, in relation to which women should not be docile. The women indicated that, when it comes to sexual encounters, it is feminine to be docile and let the men dictate the pace. The women indicated that motherhood is also embedded in being able to satisfy their husbands sexually. When they are docile in relation to sexual activities, they do not feel oppressed, but rather are responding to what motherhood means. Those who navigate through docility said that this is transformative, as it helps the couple live in happiness. In this manner, docility results in what Mahmood (2001) refers to as continuity and stability. Moreover, when men are sexually satisfied, they do not go off looking for extra-marital affairs, thus reducing the extent to which they risk contracting sexually transmitted diseases. However, one needs to ask whether docility is really power and whether continuity and stability are really transformative or just a negative form of peace. I therefore argue that docility is powerless power. Although it helps women in one way or another not to face the consequences of their actions, it does not in any way change the situations they find themselves in, especially the epistemic bedrock of sexuality, and it is therefore not sustainable. If we were to consider, for example, the aspects they allude to as empowering, one would realize that their actions have been greatly shaped by the power structures and the episteme underlying their sexuality. For example, some women said that to have more children is beneficial to them since it provides them with some kind of security. A woman who has more children will never be divorced. This idea obviously stems from a cultural perspective that deems marriage very important, to the extent that everything women do is designed to make sure that they remain married. Society does not respect women who are not married. One point made by some women was that docility means being feminine, which, however, does not seem to hold much water. As Kambarami (2006) and Chitakure (2016) have argued, Shona society defines femininity as involving the subordination of women. What we need to ask, therefore, is who is defining what femininity is? The answer is patriarchal power structures. The women therefore conform to what their patriarchal society expects them to do. Although I do not dispute entirely that docility

gives a degree of power to women, I argue that this is really powerless power, which at the end does not transform the challenges to their SRHR, hence the need for a transformative docility.

7.8 Understanding Resilience as Resistance

While resilience has been seen as passive, as a trivial coping mechanism used by less powerful groups (Haas 2002; Reid 2012), the women in my study drew my attention to a more critical reading of this strategy from the perspective of the grassroots and the indigenous because resilience means different things in different contexts. In line with studies of discourses of gender equality, resilience refers to positive adaptations in the face of devastating odds (Dent and Cameroon 2003). It further entails the capacity of individuals to pursue coping mechanisms in a culturally meaningful way (Ungar, 2015). Similarly, Chandler (2012: 17) defines it as ‘the capacity to positively or successfully adapt to external problems or threats’. According to Milliken (2013: 1), resilience is a system of self-help. If we are to base our analysis on these definitions, resilience indeed appears to be passive rather than active. However, women’s resilience differs from context to context since notions of gender are culturally specific (Krieger, 2003). When faced with sexual violence under the apartheid regime, South African women used resilience by investing in their education so that they could have a bright future (Krieger, 2003). This type of resilience in my view is not passive but rather transformative and sustainable. In a Palestinian example, women used resilience to navigate the challenges posed to them by the Israeli occupation (Ryan, 2015). This resilience is technically known as *sumud*, an Arabic word meaning ‘steadfastness’ or ‘resilience’ (Halper, 2006; Khalili, 2007). Using *sumud*, the women stayed in the occupied territory despite the hardships that were posed by the Israeli occupation. Not only did they stay, they also asserted Palestinian culture and identity in response to Zionist claims positing Israelis as the sole legitimate inhabitants of the land (Ryan, 2015: 299). Although there are several ways in which Palestinian women express their *sumud*, three in particular are similar to how Korekore women engage with resilience in light of the challenges in their SRHR, namely ways of adapting, coping and staying in. However, the question of whether these types of resilience help them change their challenging situations remains moot.

Although most women suggested that coping and staying in or endurance may seem to be transformative as characteristics of resilience, other factors seem to derail this process, sometimes turning it into a passive strategy rather than an active one. For example, some

Korekore women draw the strength to be resilient from the positive meanings given to gender, overlooking the fact that these are social constructs. Instead the women take these as essences: for example, they are regarded as nurturers and carers in relationships (Jordan, 2013). Some women take pride in being called such and go out of their way to provide ‘care’ to their husbands, which spills over into their sexuality. For example, when their husbands want to have sex and they themselves do not want to they give in because they are ‘carers’. Through the process of governmentality, culture has made them think that to fail to provide one’s husband with sex when he wants it means failing to care or falling short of proper motherhood. Most elderly women indicated that as women they need to make themselves available to their husbands as much as possible, and not only that but even being able to read unspoken languages indicating that the husband wants to be cared for. Some women argued that a ‘normal mother’ needs to be able to read what her husband likes, even if he does not specify it, no matter what time of day it might be, even in the afternoon, when you are tired from the field – that is real motherhood. It is the nature of governmentality to lead people into naturalizing their unpleasant situations (Foucault, 1975). In this case, women regard giving in to sex as normal, even when they do not want it themselves.

On the other hand, gender stereotyping can also turn resilience into just a coping strategy without any way of transforming the challenges to women. This happens when the women are made to believe that the situation in which they find themselves regarding their sexuality is normal and is as it should be (Freire, 1970; Dean, 2010). This lack of critical consciousness even makes them afraid of freeing themselves. As already mentioned, the concept of governmentality connotes a certain discourse that institutions use to create subjects. For example, the language the Korekore use to refer to ‘ideal women’ is another factor which sometimes makes women’s resilience just a trivial coping mechanism. As I have already indicated, in aiming to be regarded as ‘ideal women’, women end up indirectly violating their SRHR. *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy that places the emphasis on being human through other people (Mugumbate and Nyanguru, 2013: 82). This concept, in Mbiti’s (1969: 108) words, says, ‘I am because we are, since we are therefore, I am’. Although *ubuntu* has been associated with reclaiming the dignity of people of African descent from the dehumanizing effects of colonialism, I agree with Manyonganise (2005) that glorifying the concept of *ubuntu* without critical analysis has mostly been done by men enjoying the patriarchal dividend. Through the process of panopticism, women have been made to internalize the *ubuntu* philosophy without any analysis, causing some of them to resort to resilience as a strategy when challenges arise

because of its appeal in emphasizing being one with the others. To do like everyone else enhances the spirit of *ubuntu*, and one can identify oneself with the whole community, making ‘the I am because we are’ central. If we analyse *ubuntu* philosophy through the women’s lens (Ellis-Williams, 2003: 109), there has been a noticeable failure to realize how this concept intersects with gender, particularly its ambivalence in the lives of African women (Manyonganise, 2015: 3). For example, *ubuntu* emphasizes the notion of *mukadzi chaiye* (real woman) (ibid.). When women’s rights have been violated, they become resilient in wanting to be real women. In light of *ubuntu* philosophy, the Shona have constructed how an ideal woman should behave, for instance, *haafuguri hapwa* (does not divulge secrets), *haanyime murume bonde* (does not refuse her husband sex), and does not use a condom even if she knows that her husband is promiscuous, to mention only a few (Machingura, 2012: 50). It is this social construction of the ideal woman that some women internalize, which makes resilience somewhat less transformative. Seen through the lens of the panopticon, women are not forced to be resilient, they make all the efforts themselves to make sure that they are resilient. This is further enhanced by the emotional support they receive from their female relatives: their mothers, aunts or sisters. From my research participants I learnt the words and phrases that female relatives use to enhance resilience, for example, *ndozvinoita varume vose* (that is what all men do), *varume ipwere* (men are children), *imba inoda kushinga* (marriage needs one to be brave), and many others. This type of language supports women’s non-transformative resilience in the face of challenging situations.

Shona proverbs also play a pivotal role in enhancing women’s choice of resilience as one of the strategies with which to navigate their SRHR, for example, *chakafukidza dzimba matenga*, or ‘the secrets of the family should remain untold’. Just like the concept of *ubuntu*, Shona proverbs like these result from the patriarchal dividend. Manyonganise has argued (2005) that in such cases abusive partners continue with their abusive behaviour under the cover such that the general public will never know about it, which is also the reason why some men were against the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 because it exposed their abusive acts. In line with this, Mpofu (1983) argues that ‘it is nauseating to notice that the issues which have always been private matters as enshrined in the Shona proverb ‘*chakafukidza dzimba matenga*’, especially marital issues, have been pushed into the public [domain]’. Be that as it may, most women claimed that resilience is agentic, although this might be done in subtle ways. As Freire (1971) has argued, women do not aspire to come out of these oppressive situations because the action

demands responsibility. In light of their SRHR, this type of resilience falls short of the expectations of the theory of transformation.

Although resilience might not appear explicitly in the same way as resistance, for most women, viewed through the lens of infrapolitics, it is indeed the same as resistance. Infrapolitics refers to the politics of disguise and anonymity that is performed in public but designed to have a double meaning. These are ways in which the weak take revenge without telling their masters that they are doing so, as summed up by an Ethiopian proverb cited by Scott: ‘when the great lord passes, the peasant bows deeply and silently farts’ (Scott, 1990). This suggests that resistance and resilience are not mutually exclusive. This can be understood better if it is placed beside the notion of *sumud*. As indicated earlier, *sumud* is a form of resistance used by Palestinian women to cope with their daily hardships under Israeli occupation. This tactic allows them to maintain their honour and dignity, leading Ryan (2015) to describe it as ‘resilient resistance’. The way Korekore women engage with resilience must be interpreted as a duality, from both above and below. When they engage in it from below, it means that the women are acting wilfully as individuals, while when they engage in it from above it means that this resilience is imposed on them by the conditions around them. When resilience is state-centric, it means that the power structures around the powerless impose it on the population with an agenda. (Ryan, 2015). Dean calls this ‘the teleology of government’ (2010). When we examine the teachings of the Church on sexuality, its teleology is that, if women abide by its teaching, they will attain salvation. In the same manner, Korekore culture as an institution aims at creating ideal women through the self-governing of their sexuality. However, this postulate should not go unanalysed. We need to realize that resilience is not static by nature since it is a response to a shock that is unpredictable: it does not take a homogenous form, as both resistance and resilience can be shaped by conditions of subjugation (Scott, 1985). Although these two institutions do not directly influence Korekore women’s resilience, they influence their choice of resilience.

When Chandler (2014) discusses resilience in the context of neoliberalism, the aim of which is to encourage individuals and communities to be self-reliant, a nuanced trajectory in understanding Korekore women’s use of resilience is needed. Like the Palestinian women’s use of *sumud*, Korekore women also use coping, adaptation and endurance as tactics of resilience. One way that Korekore women engage in coping is by normalizing the situations that challenge them, for example, when their SRHR are violated. Some women indicated that there are times

when they are not willing to have sex, even though their husbands want to. Although they end up giving in to the demands of their husbands, instead of treating this as a violation of their sexual rights, they take it as normal. There were many comments by several women indicating that it is vital for married women to remind themselves that their core role is being married. The ‘core business’ of marriage for most of them is to make themselves sexually available to their husbands unconditionally. This seems like a violation of their SRHR, yet the women normalize it. Moreover, they also normalize men’s sexuality as if they cannot survive without having a woman for sex. This was expressed by many women noting that ‘men cannot survive without sex’.

To be resilient by normalizing challenging situations might be interpreted as women having been shaped by several factors. For example, in Shona society, women are not allowed to deny men sex (Kambarami, 2006; Chitakure, 2016; Manyonganise, 2015). Women take this as normal and therefore make sure they are available. By normalizing their situation, they try to ensure that the situation does not break them. For most women, this can go as far as transgression, which renders this encounter empowering to them. Transgression is when women do what is against the norm, for example, by initiating sex themselves. A good example is what Smith (2006: 7) writes about female prisoners in South Africa. When they have sex with the correctional staff, they thwart and control them. For Korekore women, initiating sex is tantamount to challenging men and hence controlling their power. When they do that, they become powerful themselves, at the same time making the men powerless – hence for the women resilience becomes empowering. They alluded to behaviour such as doing what the men do not expect them to do.

Coping is another form of resilience connected with reproduction, consisting of women coping with the demands of having more children, for example, yet given the chance, they may want to have fewer children. While people may interpret this form of resilience as perpetuating their oppression, for them it is indeed empowering. Human rights activists have interpreted having more children as a sign of the violation of reproductive rights (*Human Rights Monitor*, February 2001), yet for Korekore women, having more children is a way of empowering themselves, as they invest in having more children. As has been argued already, among the Shona, most children naturally look after their mothers more than their fathers. The women in my research told me that most children feel they want to thank their mothers for all the care they would have given them from the time they were in the womb until they grow up. The women also know

that this is the case, and they were often heard saying: '*ndichagarika manje manje, vana vangu vari kutokura*' ('I will be rich soon, as my children grow up'). Statements such as these lead to consideration of another tactic of resilience, that is, 'staying in' or 'perseverance' in the language of Palestinian women (Ryan, 2015).

For Palestinian women, staying in is a matter of making life livable under the challenging situation of the Israeli occupation, yet it also has strong connotations of challenging the status quo. In this case *sumud* becomes an act defying power, as the women show that they are not afraid even if the Israeli authorities destroy their homes: they resist leaving through the tactic of staying in, turning resilience into a sign of resistance. Given the challenges to them of the Catholic Church's teaching on sexuality and Korekore cultural practices, women use the tactic of staying in. Some of the challenges that Korekore women face have to do with gender-based violence. Some of my research participants indicated that sometimes they discover that their husbands are having extra-marital affairs, and for fear of compromising their sexual health they ask their husbands to use condoms, only to end up being beaten up. In light of these challenges, the best option might be for the woman to leave the marriage, but most women indicated that they would 'stay in'. This is very common among Zimbabwean women. The concept of staying in among Zimbabweans can be explained better through a song called *Handiende* ('I will not go'), composed by a Zimbabwean artist called Steve Makoni. The words of the song explains resilience succinctly:

'Ndogarira vana vangu, ndofira vana vangu, kuenda handiende, kana vari mainini, ngavauye tinogara tose, meaning 'I will stay for my children, I will die for my children, I will not go; if it is the second wife, let her come, we will stay together'.

Just as coping is enhanced by the importance given to children among the Korekore, so is staying in. Korekore culture emphasizes the importance of children to the extent that when a woman fails to have any, she may run the risk of being divorced, or her parents may end up giving their son-in-law another wife to bear children for him (Chitakure, 2016; Mawere and Mawere, 2010). In respect of staying in, most women argued that as a strategy resilience is a form of resistance because they remain in situations that appear challenging, and this is a way of challenging the status quo.

Nevertheless, some scholars have argued that resilience cannot be called resistance because it is not collectively organized. However, I argue that if we are to understand it as an example of Scott's (1990) notion of infrapolitics, it may be considered resistance. As I mentioned earlier, infrapolitics is a way in which subordinates employ strategies of resistance that go unnoticed by their superiors. The strategies that are employed by subordinate groups may not suit state-centric notions of resistance, but that does not mean that resistance is not being engaged in. The strategies that the peasants of Sedaka employed may help us to understand resilience better. The introduction of a combine harvester cost them their jobs, as well as entailing a loss of dignity and status in the community (Scott, 1990). Resilience here is expressed as a 'war of words', that is, as a refusal to accept change. For example, people would gossip about how wrong the rich were by altering social relations in the village. Although the poor relied on the rich landowners for labour and assistance, they adapted to a new way of life by adopting different ways of survival, all these strategies resulting in resilient resistance (1985: 240). In another context, Gillom (2002: 106) argues that individuals may engage in collective resistance that may not be formally organized. This happens when they engage in similar tactics with similar aims, producing similar impacts. The fact that resistance is based on the shared experiences of subordinate groups makes it collective. From the perspective of Korekore women's lived experiences, one could plausibly conclude that resilience is a kind of resistance, but I argue that, just like subtle resistance, it does not produce much that can transform women's challenging experiences in relation to their SRHR, nor is it sustainable.

7.9.1 Reworking through Quiescence

When the situation does not allow women to navigate violations of their SRHR through resilience, rebellion or docility, some resort to reworking, that is, creating conditions that are workable when people find themselves in a quandary (Scott, 1990). This reworking can also be taken to mean resistance. However, like resilience and docility, it is done in covert ways. In the context of the peasants in Sedaka, Scott (1990) refers to reworking as done through hidden transcripts. This simply means that the powerless devise methods of acting off stage, where they go unnoticed by the powerful. In other words, the space of the hidden transcript allows acts of resistance to be imagined, planned and implemented, making reworking also resistance. Korekore women rework their challenging situations through quiescence, defined as silent agreement in conditions of glaring inequality (Gaventa, 1980: 3). This quiescence is greatly

shaped by the power situation, which Gaventa goes on to argue influences, shapes or determines conceptions, possibilities and strategies in conflicts (1980: 13).

The Korekore context is highly patriarchal, and the women act according to patriarchal expectations. This recalls an argument of Anthony Giddens (1984), namely that the way people act is greatly influenced by the structure, as the structure creates rules for acting; hence the structure-agency dichotomy must be factored into understanding the strategies of powerless groups. In the same manner, Gaventa (1990) argues that the power situation determines the nature of the participation of the powerless. Regarding quiescence, Kennammer (1990) argues that this is exercised when people view themselves as part of a deviant minority and then pursue a downward course of silence to avoid social isolation. I will discuss silence as a strategy of reworking a little later. This argument seems to suggest that the experiences of powerless groups are homogenous, yet that is not the case, as every context is different from every other. While patriarchal power is interpreted as oppressive in some contexts, there is a sense in which Korekore women expect and prefer men to be powerful because for them it represents ideal men, marriage to whom gives them power. Men who do not show they have any power are viewed as women, being called '*vakadzi chaivo*' ('real women'). What this means is simply that women should be powerless, men powerful. Women too prefer to be weak because weakness is associated with femininity (Kambarami, 2016). A woman who is strong and powerful is stereotyped as a man, being seen by society as not a real woman: '*haasi mukadzi, murume uyu*', 'She is not a woman, she is a man'. There are situations where being regarded as a man is associated with being masculine. and women consider that positive, but in this case, to say '*haasi mukadzi*' is to make a negative comment depicting a woman as unfeminine. Be that as it may, in the Korekore context, quiescence is a unique strategy employed by the women which needs to be understood from their perspective. If this understood through the lens of governmentality (Foucault, 1976; Dean, 1995; 2010), the way women try to rework their challenges is a process of self-governing. It is also a response to the mentalities of government, in which patriarchy devises vocabularies, discourses, philosophies, knowledge and theories about women's sexuality, which women often do not ask about but just take for granted.

Among the Korekore, quiescence within the hidden transcript is expressed in various ways, such as feigned ignorance, jokes, rumours, songs and so on. The women said showing quiescence does not mean a lack of power, nor agreement with challenging situations. While this is what most women think, it should be realized that the process of panopticism has led

them to believe that they have power simply in responding to enhancing the control of powerful structures over their sex lives. Gaventa (1980) suggests that quiescence is an indication of apathy, unpreparedness, or a lack of experience or skill. Similarly, Scott (1990) argues that hidden transcripts entail passive resistance. Because those with power try to suffocate the voices of the powerless so that they do not become involved in changing their situations, most women are very alert to the importance of differentiating their actions between onstage and offstage. For example, in light of their own culture's violation of reproductive rights, if they do not want to have more children even though their husbands and families wish to do so, they engage secretly in family planning and do so in a pose of feigned ignorance. With feigned ignorance, they pretend to want to have more children but appear to be failing to do so and pretending that it worries them, as it is beyond their control. Why do women choose to use feigned ignorance? Women are aware that in Korekore culture, the concept of *roora* (bride wealth), especially the *danga* (cattle) payment, does not allow them to do what they like with their reproduction (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon 1967; Kambarami 2016). Under such circumstances, they know that it is very dangerous to rebel openly, hence they accept what society expects of them. They use several statements within their public transcripts, such as '*ko kana ukasaita vana vanodiwa nemurume wako ungagoti wakaroorerwei?*' ('If you do not bear as many children as your husband likes, what will be the purpose of your getting married?') (UWP 44). The public transcript contains a self-portrait of the weak, who are depicted as obedient, deferential (polite submission) and sheepish, represented by laughing, showing concern and listening attentively (Scott, 1990).

On the other hand, when their sexual rights are violated, they engage in false compliance. With this strategy they pretend to be available to their husbands, but in the hidden transcript devise ways of making it difficult for the men to engage them in sexual relations. For example, they pretend that they are in their menstrual cycles. It should be understood that the self-portrayed in the public transcript is not to be taken as authentic of the women. In the public transcript, the women utter statements such as '*hauna kuroorerwa kudya sadzaka*' ('You have not been married to eat *sadz*a') (RWP 67), *sadz*a being a staple food in Zimbabwe. Statements such as these and others make the men feel that they indeed have exclusive sexual rights over their women, yet the women have not lost their rights at all. In other works, this phenomenon is referred to as 'theatrical performance' (Goffman 1967), which suggests that individuals act as both performers and the audience. When women act as performers, they try to argue in line with their understanding of the situation, while when they act as the audience, they try to

accommodate the wishes of the dominant regarding them. Such interactions do not reach genuine agreement but merely a ‘veneer of consensus’ (Goffman, 1967). The women have internalized the fact that marriage is an empowered category (Bourdillon, 1967), hence they act to maintain their marriages. This is important to the extent that the women remember the day, date, time, place and even the weather on the day they were married. One elderly woman with a very glowing and excited smile said:

Ndakabvisirwa uri musi wesvondo, 20 Chivabvu 1958 nenguva na6 manheru. Musi iwoyo kwakanaya zvakananyanya, kuratidza kuti kana denga rakanga rafarira kuroorwa kwangu, zvaiera kunayirwa nemvura musi waunoorwa mufunge! I was paid for on Sunday 20th of May 1958, at 1800 hours, and that day it rained heavily to show that God had blessed the union. It was sacred if it rained on the day of your marriage. (RWP 78)

Although what happens in the hidden transcripts has been taken to mean trivial coping mechanisms, for most women these discourses and practices contain significant implications of resistance against the powerful. Scott (1990) has argued in line with what most women said, namely the necessity of not missing the immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt – hence in Scott’s view reworking is some form of power. However, to what extent can the work sustain reworking? I argue that the way women rework their challenging situations through quiescence and feigned ignorance is just a temporary measure. To this end, I also argue that some kind of training is necessary for the women so that they can cultivate a critical consciousness that allows them to devise strategies that are transformative and sustainable.

7.9.2 The Noise of Silence

For most women, quiescence and silence go hand in hand. In reworking the situations that challenge them through quiescence, the women view silence as a form of communication, and most of them said it was powerful. They engage with what is known as pragmatic silence, which Singh (1990) characterizes as a form of objection which is instrumental. Similarly, Bruneau (1973: 17) argues that there is no such thing as absolute silence, as something is always happening that makes a sound. In this section, I analyse the extent to which the notion of silence as a way of asserting power is transformative. Most women said that when they are silent it does not mean that they are powerless or that they have run out of strategies. In contradiction to what has been said by Mungoshi (1983), namely *Kunyarara hakusi kutaure*, or ‘to be silent

is not to talk, women say *Kunyarara kutauro*, ‘to be silent is to speak’. Muldoon (1996: 283) supports this by arguing that under normal circumstances absolute silence does not exist. Among the Korekore, women use silence as a language expressing strong passions such as anger, love, fear and surprise.

For Korekore women, silence makes a great impact since it is difficult for men to guess what their silence might mean. For the most part men think that to be silent is a sign of confirmation and endorsement. Several women argued that, when it comes to SRHR, to regard silence as endorsement or confirmation is too simplistic. The women have two identities, one of which they use in the public transcript and the other in the hidden transcript. It is within the hidden transcript that the women said they asserted their power, though most people think that what they see in the public transcript is the women’s real selves. For example, in the public transcript the women make jokes and laugh about their challenging situations, and the power of language comes into play, as the women have a language of their own that they use to rework their oppression. A good example is when their sexual health is compromised by their husbands when the latter engage in extra-marital affairs. Most women said they just keep silent because they know that their men will come back home. Elderly women indicated that what keeps them silent is that they know that young ladies, the so-called ‘*small houses*’, a reference to extra-marital affairs, do not have what it takes to be married women.

These sorts of conversation are common in spaces where the women are by themselves, in what have been called ‘invented spaces’ (William, 2017: 527), in which, they gossip about their sex lives and try to help each other. Instead of becoming stressed because their sexual health is threatened, they make fun of it. However, that does not mean that they do not realize that their sexual health is endangered. Rather, it is a way of living with a situation they have little or no power to change.

Most of the answers I received when I asked women how they deal with the challenges their husbands posed to their SRHR were: *hapana*, ‘Nothing’, *ungagodii hako?* ‘What you do?’ *unongonyarara*, ‘You just keep quiet’. I was wondering whether these answers could be interpreted to mean that the women really cannot do anything about these challenges until one woman, a former teacher, said: ‘*Kunyarara kwamai hakusi kunyarara, vanhu vakafunga kuti*

kana takanyarara takanyarara vanozvinyepera', or 'A woman's silence is not silence: if people interpret our silence as real silence, they are missing the point' (RWP 69).

From what RWP 69 says, it appears that silence can speak volumes, thus I decided to call this 'the noise of silence'. In a way this can be explained in the common phrase that 'still waters run deep', indicating what silence can achieve in challenging situations for women. When they use interactive silence, the women said that it helps them transform the violence against them: for example, when a woman who is always talkative and sociable suddenly falls mute, she is inflicting the most powerful punishment that can be levied against her husband. Many men find it difficult to stand silence, as they say it is threatening: they would prefer women who talk rather than those who just remain silent (Yiannis, 1998). Most women indicated that this silence disempowers the dominant and empowers the powerless. This is advantageous for the women, as it facilitates decision-making. Moreover, silence should not be taken to mean just the absence of a voice (acoustic silence) but non-participation. For example, laughing while someone is expected to react to a challenging situation is a kind of silence. This has been reported by several women as a strategy they use to navigate the pressure exerted on their reproductive rights by their mothers-in-law. When they want their daughters-in-law to have another child, mothers-in-law use statements like '*chatokura ichi, chava kutumika kuchitoro*', or 'She/he has grown up and can be sent to the shops now'. In this way they use silence in the form of laughter, yet no action follows. Although this produces sound, it is a form of silence since the meaning of the laugh remains concealed and is known to her only. The daughter-in-law does not reject the idea openly but retains her reproductive rights. Thus, for the women this silence is noise and becomes agentic.

It should be understood that women's decisions to rework through silence are influenced by certain socio-cultural norms, hence like many other strategies these decisions are influenced by social constructivism: for example, among the Korekore a woman who goes around divulging secrets about her marriage is stigmatized as '*asina chipfuva or anofugura hapwa*', meaning that she does not keep secrets. In a way this seems to encourage the culture of silence that Marguerrita et al. (2007: 110) argue increases the vulnerability of the powerless. However, for Korekore women silence makes the loudest noise of all, as it helps them achieve their desired goals without anybody interfering with their plans. Nonetheless it is very difficult to argue that silence can change women's challenging situations to any great extent. I argue that this strategy is not sustainable since their situations may not change in any meaningful way.

7.9.3 Towards Transformative and Sustainable Navigation of SRHR

Resistance, resilience, rebellion, reworking and docility are some of the ways in which Korekore women navigate the challenges to their SRHR. In my research, this is what I refer to as ‘strategies of navigation’, which just refers to the way they respond to these challenges. However, the women engage with these strategies in very covert ways. Scott (1985) has referred to this as ‘weapons of the weak’ or ‘hidden transcripts’ (1990). The question that remains to be answered and that takes the conceptual reflection forward is how transformative and sustainable are these ‘weapons of the weak’ or ‘hidden transcripts’ in the light of African culture and the teachings of the Catholic Church? For Scott (1985), ‘weapons of the weak’ refers to how those with less power respond to their oppression in a way that is invisible to their oppressors, while similarly ‘hidden transcripts’ (1990) refers to forms of resistance and dissent that are kept out of the sight of those in power and that may only come to the surface during a quarrel. Scott calls this ‘orthopraxy’, which has to do with following the hegemonies that define the women’s social situations. These types of response are what Scott refers to as ‘everyday forms of resistance’. He further argues that, by focusing on organized rebellions and collective actions as a way of solving conflicts, political scientists have often missed subtle but powerful forms of resistance. Scott’s reference to ‘weapons of the weak’ as powerful forms of resistance might be sustained to a lesser extent, however. Although it should be understood that these weapons of the weak are a starting point for action for those without power as a way of registering discontent, they do not speak to how the epistemic foundations, mentalities and rationalities of violence can be transformed to address disciplinary power, thus giving agency to the less powerful. To this end, it is crucial to reflect on the transformative responses of the powerless, in this case Korekore women’s responses to the challenges to their SRHR.

Transformative responses consider such challenges to be caused by particular systemic discourses, narratives, ideas and ideologies, which need to be transformed as a way of addressing disciplinary power (Tarusarira, 2019). To say something is transformative means that it is causing a metamorphosis in the form of structure, a change in the nature of a thing into another substance: in essence, it is about radical change (Michael and Cranton, 2014). On the other hand, the Brundtland World Commission Report (1987) defines sustainability as a

development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In light of Korekore women's SRHR, sustainability is about responding in a way that yields long-term results. It is more about solving today's problems in a manner that will benefit future generations. The responses need not just be retrospective but also futuristic and should rupture the negative discourses, narratives, ideas and ideologies that lead these institutions to regard engaging in some forms of violence as right and proper (Tarusarira, 2019). Transformation therefore considers the logic behind the act of violation.

Most Korekore women argued that the teachings of the Church on sexuality, especially on the issue of natural family planning, are indeed a challenge to their SRHR and also that the pressure is doubled when they are coupled with Korekore cultural expectations regarding their sexuality. I wish to re-emphasize this pressure at this point. Just to recall, for the Catholic Church, women are expected to use natural family planning when they decide to plan their families (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968). We need to understand that natural family planning should only be used if it is absolutely necessary, otherwise women are supposed to bear children as far as their nature allows. On the other hand, several Korekore cultural practices, such as the payment of bride wealth and many others, give the man exclusive sexual and reproductive rights over the woman so that he can have sexual relations whenever he sees fit and can also determine the number of children he wants (Chitakure, 2016; Bourdillon, 1967; Kambarami, 2006). The women therefore cannot suggest using natural family-planning methods because they do not have any say over their sexuality. What this means, quite simply, is that if the man wants many children, the woman has to agree without question, and if he wants only a few, so be it. Because of the power structures underlying their sexuality, the women cannot engage in overt resistance. Moen (2013) has argued that resistance can only be exercised when the situation allows it. Yet the problem in most cases has to do with compromising the women's health.

The women in my study have often said that they choose to respond in very hidden ways that do not have any consequences for them, hence the statement, 'When life gives us lemon, we make lemonade'. As long as they can somehow survive, it is fine with them: it is not really about getting the best for themselves. I argue that this way of responding does not change their challenging situations in any way, because until the Catholic Church and Korekore society realize that women are experiencing challenges, no action will be taken to address them. Transformation theory seeks to illuminate conditions that are implicit and that are taken as

givens, while recognizing that they are constructions. Mezirow (1991) argued that it is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain it that determines their action. However, when it comes to dealing with issues of sexuality in both Korekore society and the Catholic Church, we need to acknowledge that such issues are not for public discussion. Some traditions and customs sanction women and deny them any space to express how they feel about their sexuality (Makombe, 2015). Even if they experience violence in their relationships, they are not ready to talk about it. In some cases, when women have been beaten up by their husbands overnight and their faces are swollen as a result, for example, you hear them saying that they have a toothache. Rodwell Makombe (2015) has argued that there are some traditions that sanction women and deny them the space to give expression to their sex lives and experiences. Transformative responses call for the realization of a variety of unquestioned assumptions and shared cultural convictions, including codes, norms, roles and social practices which are communicated through language and which result in the action someone takes (Kroth and Cranton, 2014). Once the women begin to realize that so many values and beliefs have been constructed at a certain point in time, they are able to realize that they are bound to be deconstructed and reconstructed. This is the beginning of transformative navigation. At this stage the previously uncritically assimilated beliefs, attitudes and assumptions are questioned and become more explicit. Freire (1970) argues that this process of conscientization enables people to undergo an awakening experience that allows them to engage in pre-constructed biases, concepts and assumptions and to expose the meanings of the world they live in. This process of critical reflection is nonetheless not easy, as one risks being regarded as rebelling against the norm. Mezirow (1991) argues that the process of transformation creates a disorienting dilemma. This is a time when one begins to realize that there are so many things that do not fit with one's previous experiences. When one enters into this dilemma, the possibility is that one becomes frustrated and angry and sometimes experiences a lot of fear. It is worth noting that the few Korekore women who engaged in open rebellion, such as those who have divorced, had begun to reflect critically and realized how their rights were being infringed, as well as understanding that they could do so much with their lives without any male figure like a husband. Statements such as '*ndofirei*', 'Why should I die?', are an indication that they have reached an awakened stage. I do not mean to make any value judgement here about the way some women rebel by getting divorced, I simply intend to demonstrate what the process of transformation does.

When people realize that their rights are being violated, Govier and Wilhelm (2002) argue that they are justified in expressing their discontent. In the same manner, Murphy (2003) argues that discontent, anger and resentment when people have been wronged are proof that people care about themselves. Similarly, Wolterstorff (2006) notes that to express one's feelings is a good thing in the victim's life, while failure to do so means that people are unaware of their worth and unaware that they are being treated unfairly.

In most patriarchal societies such as the Korekore, the women prefer to deal with conflict situations in very subtle ways to avoid the consequences. What is common in these societies is that they do not aim to change the situations that challenge them in a radical way. As long as women can live with however little satisfaction, they are alright with it. For example, if they do not see bombings and shootings, they conclude that there is no violence, as structural violence is not something they consider a challenge. This uncritical and simplistic navigation does not contribute to the sustainable agency of their SRHR. Freire (1970) argues that there is a need to train disadvantaged people so that they become masters of their own destiny. This became evident while I was collecting data, when I used transformation-training workshop to collect some data. One woman in her early forties said *workshop iyi yatibatsira, ini handina kumboziva kuti munhu akaroorwa ane kodzerowo dzekuramba bonde kana asingadi, kashini unongoitavo zvekuti hapana chekuita kunyangwe uchirwara...*, or 'This workshop was so helpful, I never knew that it is possible for a married person to refuse sex if she is not willing; for the most part you just do it because there is nothing to do even if you are not feeling well' (UWP 42). In the same workshop, another woman echoed almost the same sentiments. She said *nyangwe baba vakasakugutsa pabonde haugoni kutura nekuti baba ndibaba...* or 'Even if your husband does not satisfy you, you cannot say anything because a husband is a husband' (UWP 33). While some beliefs go unquestioned in Korekore society, transformation theory focuses on empowering women. While it is important for any society to uphold its beliefs and values in the manner that it itself understands, it is also important to grasp the particular epistemologies and logics that justify the violation of women's SRHR and to realize that as long as these dynamics are not dealt with in a transformative way, the violence will continue to infinity, hence the need to uproot the logics behind this violation. Engaging in covert strategies as a way of navigating violence against oneself does not result in transformation.

Patricia Cranton (2005) argues that transformation has to do with breaking a cycle, hence if women act in transformative ways, they will definitely break the grip of violence on their

SRHR. The teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality are not something that the Zimbabwean Catholic Church as an institution forces women to follow, nor does it have programs to teach women about sexuality, yet the women still resist in covert ways: for example, when they feel they do not want to have more children, they privately visit a hospital on their own and take up the family-planning services of their choice. The same applies to Korekore cultural expectations: when women are expected to have more or less children than they wish to have, they agree to what is expected of them, but when they are in their private spaces, they do what is good for themselves. This might be something they can live with, but from a transformative perspective Tarusarira (2019) argues that not uprooting the logics behind any act of violence engenders agency that is unsustainable.

7.10 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Catholic teaching on sexuality and African cultural practices place women in a dilemma regarding their SRHR, to which they respond with several strategies, namely resistance, resilience, reworking, rebellion and docility. The manner in which women engage with these strategies to navigate their SRHR is greatly shaped by notions of social constructivism and governmentality. Simply put, how the Catholic Church and African culture have given meaning to, governed, regulated and controlled women's sexuality determines how the women navigate their SRHR. While all these groups function under the same discursive regime or governmentality, the women's responses differ significantly from other groups' responses. I understood the women's different understanding of SRHR to be a strategy to cope with the pressure and to find ways to navigate their agency. Because of the influences of governmentality and social constructivism, women have been created as docile bodies who can govern themselves in respect of their sexuality, thus responding to the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality and the expectations of Korekore culture. Due to the fact that women have been created as powerless, the way they respond to the challenges to their sexuality is less transformative and sustainable. Hence I have argued in favour of their adopting a transformative form of navigation of their SRHR to help them in changing the systems that are at the heart of the challenges to them, resulting in their achieving agency.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

In this study, I have investigated the strategies that Korekore women use to navigate their SRHR against the backdrop of Catholic teaching on sexuality and Korekore cultural practices. I took navigation to refer to the several ways in which women respond to the challenges to their SRHR. I have argued that the discourse of SRHR among the Korekore cannot be read as a mathematical puzzle. It is a complicated matter, given that it is dealt with differently from one context to another and that responses to it are shaped by different factors, religious, cultural, political and economic. Against this background I have employed a hermeneutical and discursive approach using Korekore women's lived experiences, that is, their everyday experiences in light of their SRHR and the knowledge that can be gleaned from these experiences. In analysing Korekore women's responses to the challenges to their SRHR, I discovered that social constructivism and governmentality are frameworks that shape the way these women respond and that this has resulted in these strategies becoming less transformative and sustainable.

While the concept of *ubuntu* has been eulogized by many scholars for its emphasis on being human through other humans, its ambivalence regarding women's lives in Africa has often been overlooked. The women in my study have demonstrated that many cultural traditions that inform their sexuality are shaped by *ubuntu* philosophy and limit their transformative responses with respect to their SRHR. An action is deemed right or wrong based on how it is related to corporate existence, hence the saying '*muntu ngumuntu ngabantu*', 'I am because we are, since we are therefore, I am' (Mbiti, 1969: 108). I do not intend to portray the concept of *ubuntu* in a negative light, but rather to demonstrate that its communitarian aspect has made women respond to their challenges to their SRHR in ways they believe suit the community, lest they be treated as social misfits. It is on that basis that I have deployed social constructivism theory, which illuminates understanding of how discourses are created, in order to grasp how the meaning of sexuality as a discourse has been created and how the women interact and interface with these meanings.

In the same manner, I have treated the Catholic Church as a social institution, not as a confessional institution, and to that end social constructivism theory has facilitated understanding of how it also creates meanings regarding women's sexuality. Furthermore, I took the concept of panopticism from governmentality theory in order to examine how both the Church and African culture shape, regulate and control women's sexuality. To answer the major

question of the thesis – How do Korekore women in Zimbabwe navigate their SRHR when at the intersection of Catholic teaching and African cultural practices? – and the sub-questions, I carried out in-depth interviews, both participant and non-participant observation and focus-group discussions with Korekore women for a period of ten months. Alongside these methods, I also used training for transformation workshops as another method of collecting data. I also held interviews with Catholic Church leaders, health practitioners, traditional leaders and some employees of non-governmental organizations who work in the area of sexual and reproductive health (SRH). This was in a bid to answer the subsidiary questions of this thesis:

- a. How does the historical background of the Catholic Church influence women's SRHR in Zimbabwe?
- b. What are the factors that influence women's SRHR?
- c. What are women's lived experiences of SRHR in the context of African religion and Catholicism?
- d. What strategies do the women use to navigate violations of their SRHR, and to what extent are these strategies transformative and sustainable?

This thesis therefore makes a major contribution to the study of religion and the discourse of SRHR using the example of Catholic Korekore women in Zimbabwe. It has shown how religion and culture can formulate discourses that, from an interpretivist point of view, believers take as givens and accordingly follow their dictates. The research has demonstrated the power that religious doctrines (written or unwritten), institutions and leaders possess in determining how people deal with issues in the public sphere, here with SRHR. The discourse of SRHR has provided the background against which to study the function of religion in people's lives. Through its use, this thesis has shown how public discourses are framed by religious institutions and how this can be entrapping. Deploying the social constructivist approach was useful in identifying the potential for changing institutionalized religious mentalities and rationalities. This paves the way to interrogating the potential to transform the underlying cultural archive that informs people's behaviour, in this case by women regarding their SRHR.

I have argued here that a comprehensive understanding of the SRHR discourse cannot be realized without considering the historical and socio-cultural contexts of both the Catholic Church and Korekore culture. This is because the way people act in any crisis is embedded in

the values, beliefs and attitudes that are shaped by their situations. Hence to talk of the strategies that the women engage in without paying critical attention to the discourses that are created by their cultural and religious contexts is to miss the essentials. Placing SRHR within a historical trajectory, human rights activists (Pizzarossa, 2018; Mattar, 2006; Hartmann, 2016) have argued that the Catholic Church and African culture are central to the violation of women's SRHR. This thesis has emphasized the need to understand that in dealing with issues around sexuality, there is no 'one-size fits all' analysis. My interviews with Korekore women revealed that the meanings they gave to SRHR vary according to their different individual experiences. In all our discussions with the women, we referred to SRHR as *zvepabonde* (to do with intimacy), *zvekubara* (to do with giving birth), *zvekodzero* (to do with rights) and *zvehutano* (related to health issues). In general, the women understood this to mean rights to choose family-planning services, to have the number of children they want and to sexual autonomy. Most of the Catholic Church representatives I interviewed had a different reading of SRHR, referring this discourse instead to the centrality of family and marriage.

The expression '*when life gives us lemon, we make lemonade*' that several women alluded to illustrated that the Catholic church and African cultural practices indeed place women in a dilemma regarding their SRHR. Faced with such complications, they devise several strategies to navigate this challenge. This chapter briefly summarizes the findings of my research regarding the central question of this thesis: 'How do Korekore women in Zimbabwe navigate their SRHR at the intersection of Catholic teaching and African culture?' The chapter also outlines the implications of this study in the field of SRHR, as well as evaluating the extent to which the strategies the women use to navigate their SRHR are transformative and sustainable.

This thesis has aimed to interrogate the strategies that Korekore women use to navigate their SRHR, which, it is argued, are violated by the Catholic Church's teaching on sexuality and African cultural practices. The research findings suggest that both the teachings of the Church and Korekore cultural practices stifle women's SRHR, in response to which the women employ several strategies to negotiate the pressure. An analysis of these strategies showed that most of them are less transformative and less sustainable. One major strategy that arose out of the women's navigation is resistance, which the women express in the form of multiple other strategies, such as resilience, reworking, docility and rebellion. However, this resistance is engaged in very covertly due to the influence of systemic and long-held cultural and religious ideologies, epistemologies, assumptions and values which see women's sexuality as being

regulated, controlled and shaped. Foucault (1975) refers to this as disciplinary power. Because the women have uncritically and simplistically internalized these cultural and religious constructions as objective, this limits the extent to which their responses to the challenges to their SRHR are transformative and sustainable.

SRHR has become a topical debate at international level since its adoption as part of the UDHR in 1995. In answering the question of how the historical background of the Catholic Church shapes the discourse on women's SRHR in Zimbabwe, I discovered that the Church in the country has not paid serious attention to women's SRHR, as was evident among many clergy I asked. Most of them indicated that the Church in Zimbabwe has invested more in issues of politics and justice and less in women's SRHR. This oversight is partly a result of the women themselves not being granted the conditions that allow them to claim their rights and engage with Church leaders in stating what is helpful for them in respect of their SRHR. This resonates with what Schmidt (2012) has argued, namely that in the dawn of Catholicism, missionaries defined women's sexuality as needing to be tutored by men. My research reflects the fact that this notion has been maintained by the present-day Catholic Church, this being a reason why women's SRHR has not been prioritized. Instead of addressing women's SRHR, the Church has devoted its time, resources and energy to what it refers to as 'real problems', such as politics, justice and peace. To say that women's SRHR are not 'real problems' might be a result of the Church's and Korekore culture's failure to understand women's lived experiences with respect to their SRHR. From my interviews, one priest said that the women have not taken any action to bring such problems to their priests, they have just treated the Church's teaching as a block of ideas that has fallen from heaven without any critical engagement. Although scholars such as Girard, (1982) and Flood and Pleases (2006) have argued that the violation of women's SRHR is embedded in religious traditions, these traditions can be analysed in a transformative manner.

Similarly, Pizzarossa (2018: 7) has argued that 'the Church poses a threat to the universality of human rights and represents the political use of religion, culture and tradition to deprive women...' Although this argument can be sustained, my study has established that the Church's violations in this respect may not be deliberate but rather violations through ignorance of the discourse. However, culpable ignorance of the discourse can be taken as negligence, which others have seen as the perpetuation of violence on women's SRHR. Shaw (2006) and Chitando and Njoroge (2016) have argued that every religious institution has a responsibility to support

the implementation of SRHR rather than ignoring them, yet they have fatal consequences for the women. Contrary to the above scholarly arguments, some of the priests I interviewed indicated that, although the Church in Zimbabwe might lack technical expertise in the discourse of SRHR, they are indirectly implementing the goals of SRHR. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the Catholic Church runs a large number of hospitals, most of which provide women with comprehensive family-planning services, although they are aware that the Holy See emphasizes natural family-planning services. A close analysis has demonstrated that in this way the Church is implementing the goals of SRHR, if only indirectly. However, it should be understood that the priests are not ready to go the extra mile, for example, by using the pulpit to address these issues and to teach women regarding SRHR, because to do so would be to go against the teachings of the Church. As Father A argued, to use the pulpit to address issues around SRHR is to misuse the pulpit.

Further exploration of the influence of the Catholic Church over women's SRHR has also shown that violation of these rights, particularly in Zimbabwe, should not be read ahistorically. We cannot understand the present or hope to solve women's current problems if we do not grasp the historical contexts within which these problems emerged. The coming of Christianity, specifically Catholicism in Zimbabwe, defined women's sexuality as in need of civilization. My research found that women who give birth in a Catholic hospital are not granted rights to their sexual health. A right in my context means enabling somebody to do whatever she or he likes. In this case, if the Church were to grant women their rights to sexual and reproductive health, they should allow them access to whatever type of medical treatment they need. Among the Korekore, most women prefer to use indigenous medicines for their sexual and reproductive health, which most Catholic hospitals do not permit, especially for women who have come to the hospital to be delivered of a child. Some go so far as to refer to these medicines as diabolical, as McLaughlin noted (1996) when she reported Fr Richartz (a Jesuit priest) beating a local herbalist and breaking his medicine containers. Before they are admitted to hospital, women are inspected to make sure that they do not have any indigenous medicines with them.

In exploring the factors that affect women's SRHR, my findings indicate that although there are several, economic, religious and political, the dominant and most influential factors are socio-cultural. However, these factors overlap with each other. Chitakure (2016) has argued that the economy is a major factor influencing violence against women's sexuality. He further contends that most women stay with abusive husbands because they fear losing their economic

security. In this research, I have demonstrated that although that might be the case in some contexts, among Korekore women, this has been overtaken by events. Nowadays, most women are involved in entrepreneurship, and given Zimbabwe's current economic crisis, these women are economically better positioned than men who are formally employed. The so-called 'parallel markets' have overtaken formal employment. However, we need to understand that even though women may be economically independent nowadays, this independence should not be treated simplistically because among the Korekore, men are in charge of women's productive capacities, meaning that all they earn belongs to the husband (Bourdillon, 1967).

The major factor influencing the women's SRHR is socio-cultural, this mostly being manifested in the concept of bride wealth payments and the importance of having children, among other things. For the most part these factors affect the way women navigate their SRHR. For example, when a bride wealth has been paid, the women cannot easily quit their marriage, even though sometimes they realize that their SRHR are being violated. Doing that will result in their families having to pay back the bride wealth. In addition, if a woman decides to quit her marriage, society treats her as an outcast, although this should be problematized. Research findings have also demonstrated that Korekore society treats children as central to every marriage. Moreover, for the women themselves, having children means that the marriage contract becomes permanent so that the women cannot quit easily. Secondly and most importantly, for some women it is to their own benefit, as this is an investment. Similarly, Korekore social arrangements, which are highly patriarchal, also have a major influence on women's SRHR. This is in tandem with what Kambarami (2006) has emphasized, namely that female sexuality is largely in the hands of men. This patriarchal set up also has an influence on the political system of Zimbabwe, as many Zimbabwean laws follow cultural customs that directly form part of a patriarchal system in which most women only occupy subordinate positions. For instance, I have argued that socio-cultural expectations regarding the meaning of bride wealth and the importance of children impact negatively on women's SRHR.

I am aware that several studies of women's rights and women's subordination have deployed feminist theory, which helps bring out the contradictory discourses about women's roles, their hidden oppression and how they should fight, conform to or collude in their oppression. However, I deliberately chose to depart from feminist theory because of its Euro-American centrism and consequent failure to capture some of the dynamics of Korekore society, and it seems to solve problems by creating other problems, whether by being reactionary, radical or

revolutionary. Instead, I deployed social constructivism and the concept of governmentality known as panopticism as frameworks to guide the strategies used by Korekore women in their navigation of SRHR.

Panopticism as a system of modern government creates docile bodies which end up monitoring themselves (Foucault, 1975). In this way, individuals perpetuate their own oppression, as they make it easy for the powerful to govern them without difficulty. In my research, I have argued that Catholic teaching and Korekore culture are at the centre of creating women as docile bodies, resulting in the latter losing their agency. When they do not have agency, they tend to use strategies that for them are just means of coping and do not change any of the systems that perpetuate what challenges them. For most of them, they have power when they can do what they feel best with their sexuality. For example, when their husbands prefer to have few children and they themselves feel they want to have more, they agree with their husbands but make sure they do whatever they can to make the family-planning tablets they are using ineffective. Some said that they roast them so that they do not achieve their intended goal. I also argued that docility as a strategy used by the less powerful like the women in my study is 'powerless power' as it does not achieve any goal. I also discovered that strategies such as docility are influenced by patriarchal structures that have created meanings regarding women's sexuality which work to make women second-class citizens in light of their SRHR. The women act in ways that perpetuate this power without even realizing it. While scholars such as Scott (1985; 1991), Mahmood (2001) and Ryan (2015) have argued that subtle ways of responding to challenging situations like docility are powerful, I have argued that they lack the transformative element that should be helpful in sustaining the lives of less powerful people like Korekore women. Indeed, this does not apply to all of these women, as for some it resulted in them having power. For most of them, however, their docility robbed them of their power.

It also emerged that women find it easy to resist the teachings of the Catholic Church because of what Giddens (1995) refers to as 'loose coupling'. As I explained earlier, 'loose coupling' refers to a situation in which there are no tough regulations but rather a somewhat *laissez-faire* structure that allows people to do whatever they feel like doing without any negative consequences. In the context of the Catholic Church, this refers to the Church's failure to impose stringent rules on women in line with the Church's teaching on sexuality. Since the Church in Zimbabwe (at least in the parish where I carried out my research) does not teach or provide information on the wider Church's teachings on sexuality, the women find it easy to

resist through feigned and strategic ignorance. However, this is just an example of covert resistance that does not change anything in respect of the challenges they face. It is therefore less transformative and sustainable.

Studies of discourses of gender equality have taken resilience to refer to the individual capacity to devise coping mechanisms. Milliken (2013: 1) has called this a system of self-help, thus treating the process of resilience as passive rather than active. In this study I have demonstrated that Korekore women use resilience in three ways: adapting, coping and staying in. In light of the violations of their SRHR by the Catholic Church and their culture, they adapt to these challenges, cope with them and stay in through normalization. When they take this situation to be normal and move on with their lives, they consider that this challenges the powerful structures that control them. Most women indicated that to be resilient means to strong and that in this sense it is a challenge, especially to the men. However, as Milliken has suggested (2013), this is just an act of self-help, a trivial coping strategy which lacks a futuristic dimension. In short, it is not sustainable at all. It is known that most actors aim at creating resilient communities, for example, projects carried out by Cesvi in Italy, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank and so on. Although resilience in this case is transformative, my study has shown that it is not resilient among Korekore women when it is engaged with as a way of responding to the challenges to their SRHR. I have argued that resilience among the Korekore is greatly shaped by patriarchal systems that affect the power of the women to act. For example, while the concept of *ubuntu* has been celebrated by many as a process reclaiming the dignity of black people from the dehumanizing effects of colonialism, my research findings have demonstrated that for the most part this has been glorified by men enjoying a patriarchal dividend which suppresses women's rights in the name of a communitarian spirit. In the spirit of *ubuntu*, most women are supposed to reflect on their actions, whether or not they are confirmed by the community, even though their actions might not go down well with it. This happens when women become resilient because that is what the community expects. I often heard statements such as '*munhu womukadzi anotirira*', 'A woman has to be resilient'. Resilience among the Korekore defines real womanhood. Most women end up staying even with abusive husbands because they want to perpetuate the community spirit.

Most of the strategies the women use demonstrate that the agency of the powerless is a result of the interplay between the agent and society. As individuals are products of society, their choices and decisions are defined in terms of social norms and values, as Giddens (1995) has

argued. The patriarchal nature of Korekore society influences the way the women engage in resistance, docility and resilience. However, a few women openly go against social norms and engage in rebellion as a way of navigating their SRHR. My study has shown that those few who rebel are normally working-class women who are exposed to both western and African lifestyles. The way they rebel is by quitting their marriages. It must be understood that although this rebellion seems agentic, the women risk stigmatization, hence only a few engage in it.

There are instances where women are viewed as having lost hope in their SRHR. Scholars who write on subalterns have demonstrated that these groups continue devising multiple ways of fighting against their oppression. Scott (1985) has written on peasants as a weak group and has demonstrated that when they cannot change the situations that challenge them, they engage in a process of reworking them. My study has observed that Korekore women too have instances where they are aware that they cannot change anything in line with their SRHR. It is then that they also engage in reworking through their silence and quiescence. In trying to capture how women rework their challenging situations, I have referred to it as 'the noise of silence'. Most women said that just by deciding not to act in any way, they are actually challenging the power structures around them, hence they argued that to be silent is to make a noise. While those with power assume that silence is a sign of endorsement and confirmation, Korekore women demonstrate that there is no such thing as absolute silence. While they are silent, they are asserting their power. However, in asking whether silence can really be transformative, I discovered that it does not change any of the challenges they face. Due to the less transformative and lower degree of sustainability of most of the strategies that Korekore women engage with in navigating their SRHR, I have argued for a transformative navigation of SRHR. This navigation is helpful as it calls on the women to acquire a critical consciousness to help them critically analyse particular discourses, narratives, ideas, assumptions and ideologies that justify the violation of women's SRHR. I have argued that, as long as these challenges are not dealt with in a transformative way, the violence against women's SRHR will exist to infinity. To this end, the concept of transformation is essential, as it helps to break the cycle of violation.

As with the majority of studies, the present study is also subject to limitations, hence its results should be interpreted in light of them. Among these limitations are the sampling, the lack of prior research and the self-reporting of data. In respect to the sampling, it was very difficult to determine who the actual Korekore were because some women in their sixties stated that they had been married around sixteen and had lived more with Korekore culture than the

circumstances of their birth would indicate. Hence, they should be regarded as belonging to the Korekore ethnic group, as the culture they understand best is Korekore rather than their own. In some cases, they even lied to me about their belonging to the Korekore, at the end of the interview revealing that they just wanted to be a part of my research. Although it was been greatly to my advantage to realize how relevant my research was to most women, there is a sense in which this might have compromised my results, as they are not all interpreted from an entirely Korekore perspective. However, all the women spoke the same local language (Shona), and there are no differences when it comes to sexuality between the different Shona sub-groups. On another note, practically no research has been carried on the intersection of SRHR, the Catholic Church's teaching on sexuality and Korekore cultural practices, hence obtaining evidence to support my conclusions may prove challenging. On the other hand, due to the fact that the topic was highly sensitive, my respondents might not have answered as truthfully as they should have done, and sensitive as it was, it was very difficult to verify their information.

Finally, understanding the role of the Catholic Church in women's SRHR was important in this research so as to assess violations of this discourse. This information could have been obtained from Catholic bishops, priests and nuns who work as medical nurses. However, sample profiling was a problem, as it proved difficult to obtain substantial data from the nuns. Most of the nuns who work in Catholic mission hospitals were reluctant to talk openly about the Church and SRHR. Most sisters were very uncomfortable talking about this discourse and displayed a lot of fear. It seems the fear was a result of a lack of knowledge of the discourse on SRHR, as well as reflecting the idea that the Church is infallible and should not be questioned. Unlike the priests, who were free and open, the sisters were closed. This may be interpreted to mean that the privatization of women's sexuality affects even those who are outside marriage, a process of socialization that has shaped all women.

This study has established that the discourse of SRHR has not received much prominence among the Korekore in particular or among rural Zimbabweans in general. To this end, I recommend that all stakeholders, the Church, the government and traditional leaders, should come up with programs to help capacitate everyone on SRHR. On another note, the fact that the women navigate their rights covertly suggests that power relations between men and women are asymmetrical. This is probably caused by the payment of a bride wealth, which seems to justify male domination over women. It might be helpful to women's SRHR to have

communities deconstruct the meanings that have long been attached to the concept of bride wealth and to construct new meanings that do not create women as the 'other'.

In essence, this study has shown that Korekore women use resistance, resilience, reworking, rebellion and docility as strategies to navigate their SRHR when they are violated by the Catholic Church's teaching on sexuality and Korekore cultural practices. The way women engage with these strategies has demonstrated that they do not give women the agency to transform their conflicts over SRHR. To that end, all stakeholders need to come up with transformative education of all humanity because of SRHR. This should even include having sex education from elementary school so that the problem is addressed early in both male and female processes of development as they grow up. Both genders will then realize that everybody has a right to his or her SRHR without necessarily violating any of the rights of others.

However, as women's SRHR cannot be dealt with in isolation from men's SRHR, I propose that further research is needed on men's SRHR. Finally, I understand that the discourse of SRHR entails a broad spectrum of the rights of individuals in respect of family-planning services, abortion, reproduction, sexual identities and so on. It is important to restate that the scope of my study was limited to women's navigation of violations to their sexuality and reproduction alone.

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Korekore Women

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3. RWP (61), Sohwe, Mt Darwin, 8 May 2018
4. RWP (62), Sohwe, Mt Darwin, 8 May 2018
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6. UWP (33), Section 3, Mt Darwin, 14 May 2018
7. UWP (63), Section 3, Mt Darwin, 14 May 2018
8. RWP (79), Dotito, Mt Darwin, 11 May 2018
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22. RWP (38), Chiunye, Mt Darwin, 27 May 2018
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24. RWP (39), Chitsato, Mt Darwin, 12 June 2018
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26. RWP (67), Chitsato, Mt Darwin, 12 June 2018
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30. UWP (33), Section 1, Mt Darwin, 17 June 2018
31. UWP (39), Section 1, Mt Darwin, 17 June 2018
32. RWP (44), Dapi, Mt Darwin, 3 June 2018
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35. RWP (23), Mutondwe, Mt Darwin, 22 June 2018
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39. UWP (37) Section 2, Mt Darwin, 27 June 2018
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Korekore Men

1. Mr A (43), Dotito, Mt Darwin 3 July 2018
2. Mr. B (63), Dotito, Mt Darwin, 3 July 2018
3. Mr C (43), Dotito, Mt Darwin, 3 July 2018
4. Mr. D (44), Dotito, Mt Darwin, 3 July 2018
5. Mr. E (47), Mutondwe, Mt Darwin, 7 July 2018
6. Mr. F (45), Mutondwe, Mt Darwin, 7 July 2018
7. Mr. G (42), Mutondwe, Mt Darwin, 7 July 2018
8. Mr. H (60), Mutondwe, Mt Darwin, 7 July 2018
9. Mr. I (45), Section 2, Mt Darwin, 9 July 2018
10. Mr. J (70), Section 2, Mt Darwin, 9 July 2018

NGOs

1. Mr. A (Official at Population Services Zimbabwe), Harare, 11 July 2018
2. Ms. B (Communications Officer, Population Services Zimbabwe), Harare, 11 July 2018

Governmental Organizations

1. Mr. B (Programs Officer, Ministry of Gender and Women Affairs), Mt Darwin 10 July 2018
2. Dr. B (Cancer Researcher, Ministry of Health and Child Welfare)

Church Representatives

1. Bishop A (Moral Theologian) Chinhoyi, 12 July 2018
2. Fr. B (African Theologian), St Alberts, 10 July 2018
3. Fr. C (A Parish Priest), Mt Darwin, 16 July 2018
4. Fr. D (An Assistant Parish Priest), Mt Darwin, 16 July 2018
5. Sr. A (A nun and a nurse), Harare, 19 July 2018
6. Sr. B (Women Coordinator), Chinhoyi, 2 August 2018
7. Sr. C (Women coordinator), Harare, 16 August 2018

Health Sector

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2. Dr. B (Gynaecologist), Mt Darwin, 22 August 2018
3. Sr. C (Nurse and Midwife), Mt Darwin, 22 August 2018
4. Sr. D (Nurse and Midwife), Mt Darwin, 22 August 2018

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Appendices

Interview Guide

Research Participants under study (Korekore Women)

- 1) Can you describe how your normal day goes?
- 2) How do you understand SRHR?
- 3) In your own view, how do the Korekore view the concept of bride wealth mean to the rights of the women
- 4) Do women have any right to their sexuality or their reproduction when they are married?
- 5) If for whatever reason they do not like sex or they no longer feel like having children, what do they do so that the husband does not force them?
- 6) So many writers have argued that the concept of children is central among most parts of African societies, what happens if a couple fails to have children
- 7) Are there any Korekore cultural practices or rituals that are performed to prepare a girl to be a good wife in terms of her sexuality
- 8) How do you see the teaching of the Church concerning the use of contraception on women's health and reproduction?
- 9) *(For those who were not born non-Catholics)* Do you see any change between the time that you were a non-Catholic and now in terms of the position of women with their sexuality?
- 10) As a Catholic Woman, what would you wish the Church to change on its teaching on sexual health and sexual rights and the Korekore cultural practices in line with women's SRHR?

Expert Interviews

(Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs))

1. Would you tell me your experiences and your work as a midwife?
2. What are the challenges that you come across in this job?
3. Do you have any connection with the hospital?
4. Is the practice of Traditional birth attendants still relevant nowadays

Catholic Church Leadership (Bishops, Priests & Nuns)

- 1) Being a Catholic Priest/nun, can you describe the role of the Catholic Church in women's sexual health, reproductive health, sexual rights, reproductive rights?
- 2) As a moral theologian, can you explain the teaching of the Catholic Church on contraception
- 3) In your own view, has there been any clashes between the Catholic Church and African culture in terms of women's sexual health, reproductive health, sexual rights and reproductive rights?
- 4) Does the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe, specifically Chinhoyi Diocese, have any programs to teach women on its teaching regarding sexuality?
- 5) With your experience as a religious nun working with women, what are the factors that affect women's sexual health, reproductive health, sexual rights and reproductive health?
- 6) What has been the role of the Catholic Church in enhancing Sexual Health, rights and reproductive health and rights in Chinhoyi Diocese?
- 7) Could there be any recommendations that you can suggest that the Church can do to enhance women's SRHR?
- 8) Would you tell me your experience of working with women since you started up to now?
- 9) What are the challenges that women have to battle with in line with their sexuality and reproduction?
- 10) With your working with women, what comments on the Church's position against the use of condoms in the light of health problems that women have to experience?
- 11) What would you recommend to be changed on the Church's teaching on the use of contraceptives if you are to take into consideration, several health challenges that the women have to battle with?

(Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs))

- 1) Let's start by having you describe what your organization does?
- 2) What are the organization's main goal?
- 3) What are the strategies the organization use to achieve those goals?
- 4) Would you explain to me the historical background of your organization and how it works?
- 5) How would you describe your connection with the: a)? government, b) Churches? c). traditional leaders?
- 6) Can you tell me your experiences with Women' SRHR?
- 7) Can you describe how you personally came to be involved with this organization?
- 8) If you were involved from the beginning, can you describe how this Organization was formed.

Health Sector (Midwives at hospitals)

- 1) What have been your experiences in light with women's SRHR as midwives nurse since you started this job?
- 2) What are the common health problems associated with sexuality and reproduction and how does the health ministry address these challenges?
- 3) Do you have any programs as the health ministry that help women to sustain their SRHR?
- 4) What is the general attitude of women towards the attainment of sexual health, and reproductive health?
- 5) What is the current situation in connection with women's use of traditional medicines and Western medicines in sexuality and reproduction?

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