

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Metaphors We Love By: Conceptualizations of Sex among Young People in Malawi

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Abstract

This paper explores how young people in Malawi conceptualize sex and sexual relations through an analysis of their personal narratives about these phenomena. Eleven focus group discussions were conducted with 114 youth aged 14-19 years. Participants were asked to describe behaviors, attitudes, and motivations to reduce unplanned pregnancies and the spread of HIV/AIDS, with appropriate probes to illuminate their sexual world-views. The various metaphors that emanated from the discussions suggest that young people in this study take a utilitarian approach to sex, and conceive it as a natural and routine activity of which pleasure and passion are essential components. Future research and prevention efforts (around sexuality education in particular) would do well to incorporate adolescents' language in programming as this can enhance understanding of the world of young people as well as the effectiveness of interventions addressing problems related to early sexual behavior.

Keywords: *adolescents, sexuality, language, sexuality education, rights-based approaches, Malawi, sub-Saharan Africa*

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