



# Ambiguous Pleasures: Sexuality and Middle Class Self-Perceptions in Nairobi

*Rachel Spronk*

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Among both male and female young urban professionals in Nairobi, sexuality is a key to achieving a 'modern' identity. These young men and women see themselves as the avant garde of a new Africa, while they also express the recurring worry of how to combine an 'African' identity with the new lifestyles with which they are experimenting. By focusing on public debates and their preoccupations with issues of African heritage, gerontocratic power relations and conventional morality on the one hand, and personal sexual relationships, intimacy and self-perceptions on the other, this study works out the complexities of sexuality and culture in the context of modernity in an African society. It moves beyond an investigation of a health or development perspective of sexuality and instead examines desire, pleasure and eroticism, revealing new insights into the methodology and theory of the study of sexuality within the social sciences. Sexuality serves as a prism for analysing how social developments generate new notions of self in postcolonial Kenya and is a crucial component towards understanding the way people recognize and deal with modern changes in their personal lives.

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