

**AFRICAN TEENAGE GIRLS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF SEXUAL RISK  
IN  
THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

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# DEDICATION

## **I dedicate this dissertation to my:**

- Late Mother Maria, for always you are dearly missed.
- Late brother Fanozi, my best friend
- Beautiful baby Nompumelelo for her continuous support and encouragement.
- Lovely grand-daughter Sandiswa for being the most amazing grandchild ever.

## COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES DECLARATION

I, **THOMBI BHENGU**, declare that

1. The research reported in this paper, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This paper has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.
3. This paper does not contain any other persons' data, pictures, graphs or any other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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  - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referred.
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**THOMBI BHENGU (931310173)**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

As Supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission to be examined.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_ Dated : \_\_\_\_\_

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated black African teenage girls' understanding of sexual risk. The focus of the study was to understand the participants' deeper meanings attached to what they regard as sexual risk. I was interested in understanding why some black African girls engage in risky sexual behaviors and how sexual risk is linked to their gendered positioning. The study focused specifically on black African teenage girls aged between 16-18 years.

This study used a qualitative approach to generate data. A case study methodology was used to conduct research in one township school at KwaMashu. Data collection consisted of focus groups and individual interviews with grade ten and eleven learners who could provide the relevant information, interest and experience pertaining to the case (Leedy & Omrod, 2005).

My findings are that social constructions of femininity and masculinity play a major role in limiting girls' sexual agency for either refusing sex or practising safe sex (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 1993). The study also revealed that some girls were coerced by their boyfriends and no protection was used. Despite the challenges faced by the girls in the study, what is positive is that there was evidence that some young girls challenged the dominant gender norms. These young girls transgressed and deconstructed gender norms which hindered their sexual agency. As a result some girls exercised sexual agency by choosing to practice safe sex, in spite of all social and cultural pressures which encountered by young women. The study used the social constructionist theory in order to understand the varying meanings that the young black African teenage girls give to sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS.

The study suggests that support groups need to be in place in order to provide effective counseling for the girls who experience rape and coercion. Social workers must also be placed in schools in order to tackle such cases. The school and the community should work collaboratively to protect girls in such circumstances. The school has to ensure that workshops on gender equality are conducted for both boys and girls in order to equip them with the necessary skills so that they can be able to cope with gender issues.

**KEYWORDS: African girls, sexual risk, HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, power.**



## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In an age of globalization and the empowerment of women, it is very concerning that many young women continue to conform to the patriarchal ideal. According to Leclerc-Madlala (2001) women and young girls are usually faced with circumstances whereby they need to comply with notions of femininity that encourage women to submit to the men's sexual desires. In this sense society has been designed in a manner that often favours male sexual domination while restricting women's sexual agency. As a result, women and girls' sexual agency is compromised, thus placing women and girls at a high-risk of contracting HIV.

Global statistics show that there is a higher prevalence of HIV amongst women than in men. According to the UNAIDS Global Report (2013), on a global scale, the rate of HIV infection among women is 52% more than when compared to men in countries of low-and middle-income. Bailey (2007) notes that women and girls are susceptible to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases because of the power dynamics between genders which often subject women to sexual risk. In addition to physiological vulnerability, the women's vulnerability to HIV infection involve factors such as gender inequalities, poverty, rape, sex with older men, transactional sex, alcohol abuse and violence. Thus women and girls are usually exposed and placed at a higher-risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. These factors heighten the risk of HIV infection in women and young girls. Given this background, it becomes critical that these factors affecting women be explored further. This study aims at exploring what young Black African<sup>1</sup> teenage girls regard as sexual risk, given that there is a high prevalence of HIV amongst women.

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<sup>1</sup> The context of this study is South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal. —African” in this study therefore does not refer to girls across the entire African continent. Rather, it refers to Black girls in South Africa who are of African descent. The use of this category is adopted from the country's equity nomenclature, which presents Black as representing African, Indian, Coloured and Chinese individuals. The naming for individuals who are Black and are of African descent is Black African (or African in short). The study prioritises race as opposed to ethnicity in its focus. It is a study of African girls who are from KwaZulu-Natal.

Jewkes, Levin, and Penn-Kekana (2009) assert that imbalances in power hinder young women from negotiating safer sex with their partners. Due to the imbalance of power women often fail to insist on condom use. As a result, women and young girls are often at a risk of experiencing forced sex and sometimes rape. According to Jewkes and Abraham (2002), male control over women and the notions of male entitlement feature strongly in the dominant constructions of masculinity. Furthermore, Sathiparsad, Taylor and Vries (2010) conclude that factors that have played a tremendous role in the spread of HIV in South Africa can be linked to masculinity in South Africa.

Studies which focus on the issues of sexual power between men and women show that the dominant gender norms play a vital role in encouraging men to be more dominating in their sexual relationships with women. The issue of male domination is further addressed by Leclerc-Madlala (2001), who states that male dominance can be understood better from a cultural perspective. According to Leclerc-Madlala (2001) cultures indoctrinate women into being submissive. For Leclerc-Madlala (2001) young women are prepared for a future of muted wifehood. It is often the women's duty to show love by meeting all of her husband's needs, including his sexual needs, when, where and how he wants sex. This is supported by Mudaly (2012) who argues that young girls are often expected to remain silent when it comes to issues of sexual decision -making.

Mudaly (2012) further argues that young women face tremendous social pressures because they are expected to demonstrate that they lack knowledge in sexual matters. This according to Reddy and Dunne (2007) further places women at disadvantage when it comes to negotiating sex. Furthermore, Reddy and Dunne (2007) argue that women's inability to be active participants in sexual matters with their partners, further poses challenges for these women and young girls when it comes to taking precautions against pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases and in negotiating safe sex. Moreover, Currie (2007) argues that women who are assertive when it comes to sexual matters are often labeled as promiscuous. This is indicative of the social constructions of what it means to be men or women when engaging in sexual behaviors.

Studies indicate that there is strong link between sexually risky behaviours and poverty. Ackermann and de Klerk (2002) argue that when women are exposed to poverty, they are placed

at a risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases because they do not have as much sexual negotiation powers as men do. This according to Ackermann and de Klerk (2002) contributes to increasing sexual risk and threatens the well-being of women and young girls.

Hallman (2005) argues that weak financial circumstances often drive women and girls into age-disparate sex for potential economic gain. Hallman (2005) views the low socio economic status encountered by women as playing a critical role in hampering women's ability to protect themselves, placing them at a risk of contracting HIV. Along the same lines, Campbell (2002) has argued that a compromised economic status for women further places women under threat because they feel afraid to negotiate the use of a condom, especially in cases where a man is financially supporting them. As a result, a man claims that he is entitled to have sex because he provides for the woman. In such circumstances condom use is often very rare. Furthermore, Campbell (2002) asserts that issues of poverty further force women and young girls to be locked into relationships that create a sense of dependency for women and young girls.

Moreover, Jewkes and Morrell (2012) note that gender inequalities that exist between men and women give men power over women and young girls. This power, according to Jewkes and Morrell (2012), is further exerted in cases where sex is used for material rewards and gain. This view is further supported by Longfield, (2004) who argues that studies show that women almost never insist on safe sex practices, because they fear jeopardizing their economic goals.

Alcohol consumption is perceived as another factor that contributes to the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. According to Barteo and Perko (2003), there is a strong link between the conjunction of alcohol and unsafe sex. In this case by 'conjunction' I mean whereby a girl or a boy drinks alcohol and has sex. Combining alcohol and sex is one of the main factors that have been consistently linked to increased sexual risk for women and girls. According to Abbey (2002) studies show that alcohol consumption prior to intercourse is often linked to poor decision making when it comes to sexual negotiations. This argument is also supported by Copper (2002), who argues that alcohol consumption increases the risk of engaging in unprotected behaviours.

Ngubane (2010) argues that culture plays a critical role in contributing to reinforce the power domination and control of men over women and young girls. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) further argue that gender power inequity in relationships can contribute to intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence occurs when men exercise power and control over women and young girls. Ngubane (2010) further argues that this places women at a high-risk of HIV infection. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) further argue that on the issue of culture, violence is not perceived as taboo when it is directed towards women and young girls, but rather violence towards a partner is perceived as a symbol of love. This is consistent with the study conducted by Kaufman, Shefer Crawford, Simbayi and Kalichman (2008), which found that sexual violence against women and young girls, was perceived as a norm. In this regard Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) highlight that women and young girls who lack power in their relationship are at the highest risk for HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Clearly, based on this evidence, many young women are still vulnerable to HIV and AIDS infection, and often engage in risky sexual behaviours. This study therefore seeks to explore what Black African teenage girls understand as sexual risk in the context of HIV AND AIDS. The study also seeks to understand what is considered as sexual risk by these African teenage girls. Bhana and Anderson (2013) suggest that in order to reduce sexual risk among women and young girls, efforts aimed at reducing sexual risk must work towards shifting the dominance of masculinity over women and young girls. In this chapter I explore the motivation and need for the study, the main objectives and research questions for the study, the methodology of the study as well as the significance of the study. I also outline the structure of the chapters. The next section explores the reasons for conducting this study.

## **1.2 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

The purpose of conducting this research study is to explore what Black African teenage girls understand as sexual risk. Studies indicate that young girls learn from the actions of their parents and other socialization processes which seek to promote patriarchy. Leclerc-Madlala (2001) argues that young African girls' cultures teach them to be submissive. A man is expected to initiate sex, and a woman has to show respect by not talking about sexual matters. Moreover, a

man has to know more about sex. Leclerc-Madlala (2001) study revealed that in a Zulu culture the role of women is defined in part by their sexual engagement, which often places some women in vulnerable and submissive positions. Marston and King (2006) confirm that social factors also play a significant role in putting pressure on women not to identify themselves as sexual beings because of fear of being labeled “loose” or promiscuous.

My motivation in conducting this research is based on my observations as a teacher. As a teacher I have become a mother-figure for many young African teenage girls who have lost their parents to HIV. This prompted me to want to investigate the social constructions of sex that places women at risk. Research shows that pregnancy and HIV infections are quite high among young school girls between the ages of 16 -18. For this reason, the participants in this study are between the ages of 16-18, an age group that is important if a broader social impact is to be achieved in challenging the HIV and AIDS problem in South Africa. Research also shows that Black African girls are at a significantly higher risk of contracting HIV than other girls in South Africa, hence my study’s focus on these girls.

I am also motivated to understand the role that gender plays in assigning different roles for men and women when it comes to issues of sex and negotiation. I hope that this study might contribute to an increasing body of knowledge on African female sexuality.

### **1.3 NEED FOR THE STUDY**

I believe this study is important and needed as it can contribute to the existing body of knowledge of female sexuality. The study can also contribute to existing HIV school subject like Life Orientation where the discussions can put more emphasis on sex and gender equality. The study can also inform curriculum development, so that young girls can be taught earlier about sexual risks and how to cope in relationships dynamics. In a context where HIV and AIDS still continue to affect the experiences of many people, a study looking into issues of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS is important and can prove useful for the development of appropriate intervention project; this is more so as HIV and AIDS still affect the experiences of many young people in South Africa.

## **1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study has three objectives as outlined below:

- To explore what Black African teenage girls regard as sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS
- To explore why Black African teenage girls may engage in sexually risky behaviours.
- To understand and highlight the ways in which Black African teenage girls' understandings of sexual risk relate to their gendered positioning.

## **1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- What do African teenage girls understand as sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- Why do some African teenage girls engage in sexually risky behaviour in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- How do African teenage girls' understandings of sexual risk relate to their gender identities?

## **1.6 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) assert that the qualitative approach is used when in-depth research is required. In this research, I found the qualitative approach more suitable because it revealed more in-depth and insightful evidence of high school girls' responses to risky sexual behaviour. A qualitative approach also equipped me with the research tools to explore these girls' experiences and responses. For this study I have therefore selected a qualitative research approach. Brantlinger (2005) argues that engaging in qualitative research is not about generalization, but rather the focus is the exploration of specific contexts and particular individuals.

The study is located within the interpretive paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) defines the interpretive paradigm as an approach which focuses particularly on individual perspectives, personal constructs and negotiated meanings, and definitions of situations of selected participants. This approach is used in the hope to understand the subjective world of human experiences. Given the sensitivity of the topic, it was important to select an appropriate methodology for the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that case studies can provide important data in the social sciences research as one is able to use multiple methods in order to obtain depth. This study therefore adopted a case study methodology in generating the data. My aim in using a case study was to have a better understanding of the participants' lived experiences. Given the interpretivist position that had been utilised in this study and the nature of the research questions, I selected the case study methodology because it provided a systematic way to generate data, analyse information and report the findings.

The case in this study pertains to a specific context, i.e. girls in grade 10 and 11 at Kwa-Mashu Township, in KwaZulu-Natal. The study explored what Black African teenage girls regard as sexual risk in this setting. Rule and John (2011) argue that when using a case study, it might be challenging for the researcher to have an opportunity to consult everyone involved in the study. Based on that, therefore, I had to be selective of the people to be part of the study. It is important to point out that this particular school formed the case given the observations I identified when I once taught in the school: learners were falling pregnant, some were contracting HIV, and there appeared to be a culture of apathy in the school. I had specific criteria for the learners I wanted: they had to be females, they had to be in grade 10 or 11, they had to be between 16-18 years old and they had to be African. In the context of South African racial demographics, 'African' is regarded as the identity of black individuals of African descent, as noted earlier on in this thesis.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

As alluded to in the above sections, the study is critical because it explores the black African teenage girls' understanding of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. Currently, the available information on sexual issues among black African teenage girls (particularly living in townships) is limited in scope. The study is focused on exploring what black African teenage

girls regard as sexual risk when it comes to the issues of HIV and AIDS. In addition to the scarcity of information on sexual issues amongst African teenage girls, the work that explores HIV and AIDS sexual risk among young girls is also very scarce. There's plenty of work in the context HIV and AIDS and violence, but very research thus far exploring what young Black African women in South Africa consider as sexual risk has been very limited. This dearth warrants detailed investigation of the social phenomenon at hand.

This study is, therefore, different in nature from other studies because it employs a qualitative method in trying to address the gap. It explores sexually risky behaviour in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study is justified because of studies suggesting increased HIV infection in South Africa, despite the extensive financial and human resources that have been poured into addressing this disease. As a result, it is felt that the study is important because of the potential it has in contributing to a rapidly increasing body of knowledge on African female sexuality and the creation of appropriate interventions for dealing with HIV and AIDS.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

**Chapter 1** has provided the introduction and the background to the study, the problem statement, aims of the study and the research design and methodology. This introduction section explored broad problems that were investigated, provided a brief explanation of the importance of the research, an outline of the study and the context of the research.

**Chapter 2** presents an in-depth critical discussion of documented literature on the specific topic for this study. This will be done by highlighting various international, national and local studies that have already been conducted on the constructions of young women's sexualities, which include issues around sexual risk, particularly related to HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, this chapter provides a discussion on the social constructivist theoretical framework that I used to understand the data.

**Chapter 3** explains the research design and the methodology used to conduct the study. This chapter includes the following: an introduction to the research methodology, the design of the



focus group interviews and individual interviews, as well as how the interviews were administered. It also gives a detailed description of qualitative research.

**In Chapter 4** the research results will be presented and discussed. This section presents the data and a detailed description of the empirical results. The findings of the focus groups and the individual interviews from the participants are presented and clarified.

**Chapter 5** gives the conclusion and recommendations and points out the limitations of the study. This section summarises the research findings, highlight and discuss any limitations of my research and indicate possible future research.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented the research topic and the rationale for the study. The need for the study was discussed. The objectives of the study, the research questions and the research methods were also discussed. The significance of the study and the outline of the chapters were presented. The next chapter will present the literature review.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a literature review for the topic under research. The main focus is on the young women's construction of sexualities. The primary focus will be on the constructions of young women's sexualities, in particular, in relation to sexual risk and HIV and AIDS. Of particular interest in this study is to understand why some young African girls, from a black township in particular, engage in risky sexual behaviours. It is particularly crucial to understand this given the existing public information on the 'dangers' of sexual risk. To broaden the understanding of the social phenomenon, the chapter examines both international and local literature on sexualities. In doing so, the chapter aims to review and synthesise the literature focusing on sexual risk and youth. In fact, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents a thematic review of related literature. The second part provides a discussion of theoretical framework(s) that was employed to explain analyses and interpret the findings of the study. This is done to highlight the gap that this study seeks to fill, as well as the key debates on the social phenomenon under investigation.

#### **2. 2. GENDER, SEXUALITY AND HIV**

According to the UNAIDS Global Report (2013) women are the most affected by the pandemic. Schoub (1999) states that, biologically, women and girls are more susceptible to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. This is mainly attributed to the physiological construction of women's bodies. Furthermore, gender power imbalances also perpetuate HIV infection. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) assert that gender power imbalances make women vulnerable to rape, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

In this context, Reddy (2004:5) argues that “sexuality seems to be associated with pain, suffering, mourning and death (in the context of HIV and AIDS and sexual violence) in Africa, in contrast with the West where the material conditions seem to support sexuality as an aspect to be associated with pleasure, desire, sensuality and indeed freedom”. UNAIDS Global Report (2013) suggests that HIV and AIDS still remains high amongst women and young girls in every part of sub-Saharan Africa. However, it should be taken into account that sexuality is a broader term that needs to be clarified according to the context within which it is used. Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, Sharpe, and Thomson (1990) argue that sexuality includes individual’s feelings, desires, beliefs, and social norms and how people of the same or opposite sex interact to each other. Dixon-Mueller (1993) argues much focus around HIV and AIDS should be directed towards finding better and effective interventions.

Studies on HIV prevalence in this country (South Africa) indicate that heterosexuality is the main means of HIV and AIDS transmission (HSRC, 2009). Butler (1990) argues that sexuality must be understood in terms of performance and not about being a man or a woman. However, masculinity ideals condition men to be involved in behaviour that promote hegemonic masculinity. As a result men become assertive and domineering. On the other hand, women accept that they lack power to control a relationship. They are expected to comply with the expected norms of how a woman must behave. Most of the time women are expected to be passive in sexual matters. Shefer, Ratele, Strebel and Shabalala (2005) argue that in South Africa, in sex, a man’s responsibility is viewed as leading and dominating in the relationship, while a woman has to fulfill her partner’s desires and needs in sexual matters.

Moreover, women who are involved in heterosexual relationships often experience difficulties when negotiating the use of condoms. The difficulties are typically caused by high levels of physical and sexual coercion which occur when they are attempting to discuss safe sex (Wood, Lambert & Jewkes, 2007). Such experiences were discernible in Wood’s et al (2007) study which confirmed that the majority of young people associated problems in sexual practice with sexual violence. In this regard, Jewkes (2002) argues that violence happens at an initial stage in a relationship. Hallman (2005) concurs that there is proof that the first sexual practices that females have are often forced and they did not like it. In a similar vein, Wood et al (2007) argue

that in fact it is not uncommon for women and young girls to be raped and physically abused by their sexual partners, who usually reject the use of a condom. This ultimately influences the meanings which are attached to sexuality. In this set up, the girls learn to be submissive. This gendered positioning places women into a sexually impotent position. In contrast, men sometimes appear to be much more masculine. Invariably, these constructions determine how boys and girls give meaning to sexuality. From this point of view, one can argue that sexuality is socially constructed throughout by various races. Women and young girls are expected to behave in a particular way. In this respect Leclerc-Madlala (2001) argues that the ideals of femininity encourage women to conform and comply with gender norms, whereby women have to be passive in sexual matters. This subordinate status puts women at risk of HIV and AIDS infection and unplanned pregnancies.

Reddy and Dunne (2007) argue that women and young girls are confronted with challenges of social pressure which expect the women and young girls to maintain an innocent image. In other words a woman has to show that she does not know anything about sex, and this behaviour makes it difficult for that particular girl to practice safe sex. In this regard, Leclerc-Madlala (2001) confirms that women are generally socialised not to initiate sexual activity. The task is considered to be part of a man's role. This resonates with the study conducted by Reddy and Dunne (2007) which revealed that many girls were of the view that it is easier to surrender to practice unprotected sex than to suggest protected sex and be labeled as 'bitch' by their sexual partners. Furthermore, Mudaly (2013) and Leclerc-Madlala (2002) argue that women and girls are expected to comply with the norms of the society which dictates how a woman should behave. A study conducted by Mudaly (2013) revealed that many young women prefer to practice unsafe sex rather than viewed as 'loose' by their boyfriends. Marston and King (2006) concur with this when they argue that social pressures also put pressure on women not to talk about sexual issues and even to express sexual desires because the women are seen as 'loose'.

Many studies (Shefer & Foster, 2001; Harrison, 2006; Bhana & Pattman, 2009) indicate that women and young girls' exposure to HIV risk can be further perpetuated with the gendered nature of their roles which are deeply entrenched within heterosexual relationships. This inevitably leads to women and girls becoming increasingly powerless to negotiate sexual

matters. This resonates with the work of Jewkes and Morrell (2010), who note some women and young girls lack power to insist on condom use because they are scared of being ignored by their sexual partners. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) further argue that physical violence perpetuates risk of HIV infection.

While acknowledging the unequal power relations governing sexuality, we must ensure that we also acknowledge that some women and young girls challenge the dominant gender norms (Bhana and Anderson, 2013). Further, Sheffer and Stavrou (2005) posit that women transgress and deconstruct the dominant gender norms which dictate how women and men should behave. Studies indicate that some women and young girls perform sexual agency by becoming involved in relationships with ‘sugar daddies’. This is evident in a study conducted by Bell (2012) which found that the majority of women indicated that they were involved in relationships with sugar daddies in order to improve their economic status. This concurs with the study conducted by Nkosana and Rosenthal (2008:184) which found that the purpose of a relationship with older men was to gain material goods that helped the girls to develop a high self-esteem in front of their buddies. In similar vein, another study conducted by Selikow and Mbulaheni (2013) also found that the students are involved with sugar daddies in order to gain material benefits.

In Bhana and Anderson’s study (2013), focused on a group of young black girls in a middle class environment in Durban (the purpose of the study was to investigate the gender dynamics that have a strong influence on women and young girls’ exposure in heterosexual relationships), the study confirmed the subordinate positions of the majority of African girls; the girls were trapped in boys’ domination of the relationship. In other words boys were dictating about sexual issues and girls had little or sometimes no control in sexual matters. The study also found that girls challenged the domination of men in the relationship. Indeed, despite challenging such dominance, contradictions were evident whereby the boys showed infidelity. Arguments involving patriarchal structures also became apparent. Owing to the inequalities and inherent imbalances of power in relations between boys and girls in sexual relationships, such an unhealthy environment provides a crucial angle to risk. Bhana and Anderson (2013) argue that the girls demonstrated that they were aware that the boys were cheating, but the girls’ subordinate position limited their decisions to negotiate and develop equal power in a

relationship. From this point of view, it becomes clear that the gendered nature of young women and girls' roles within heterosexual relationships heighten the vulnerability of girls to contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The next section proceeds by shedding some light on how patriarchy controls and how it is taught by the members of the family. It also shows how the patriarchy contributes in other areas such as family and marriage. Lastly, the next section will further highlight the patriarchal practices which allow men to exercise control over women when it comes to sexuality.

### **2.2.1 AFRICAN GIRLHOOD**

Research surveyed suggests that culture plays an important role in the ways in which women experience their sexualities. Studies indicated that some African cultures are found to be in support of patriarchal structures. This, therefore, shapes and perpetuates gender inequalities by stripping women's power to control their sexualities (Kambarami, 2006). But nevertheless, it should be noted that culture is a broad term that can be interpreted in different ways. The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (2002: 282) defines culture to mean 'traditions, organisations and successes of a specific tribe, or a group of people'. Of critical importance in this study is patriarchy. Kambarami (2006) defines patriarchy as a social institution whereby men and women are taught how to behave. The more emphasis is put on that the role of a woman is to be submissive. It is a social system which is solely based on male domination.

Kambarami (2006) further adds that the family as a social institution is a brewery for patriarchal practices by socializing the young to accept sexually differentiated roles. Family members teach the young boys and girls to perform patriarchal systems. The boys and girls learn different roles that they are expected to play. Kambarami (2006) asserts that, in the Shona tradition for example, from an early stage, boys and girls learn that they are different from each other. Shona boys are taught to see themselves as leaders and independent in their homes and at school, while girls are taught to see themselves as subjects who needed to comply with norms and be dependent on men. Kambarami (2006) notes that a Shona girl is taught to please her partner. She must demonstrate some qualities of being a good wife which involves passivity and respect. She

further argues that the society view women as objects for sex and not as people. Kambarami (2006) further argues that women are described as relying on men for survival. These characteristics involve softness, subordination and being always determined to fulfill her husband's desire. This author claims that most African women depend heavily on their husbands for support. This is evident in the study conducted by Kambarami (2006) which found that most women confirmed that they were unable to survive financially; they believed that the man is a provider, therefore he should provide the woman's needs. Kambarami (2006) asserts that the patriarchal system has to be practiced all the way to include marriage and education.<sup>2</sup>

Leclerc-Madlala (2001) argues that in a Zulu polygamous marriage, the husband is allowed to have as many wives as he wants. Kambarami (2006) claims that in such a situation, a woman is often accused of being unable to fulfill her partner's desires. Furthermore, a wife has to demonstrate that she does not know anything about sex. A woman has to ensure that all the matters pertaining to sex should be handled by her husband. This task is considered to be part of a man's role. This resonates with Shefer, Ratele, Strebel and Shabalala (2005), who argue that in South Africa sex, is usually viewed as a man's responsibility and a man has to lead and dominate in the relationship.

This is evident in the study conducted by Strebel and colleagues (2006) which found that women were expected to respect their husbands, and husbands were expected to control and make final decisions. In such a situation a man can refuse to use a condom during sex, and thus may place a woman at a risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. Varga, (1997) argues that it is believed that HIV and AIDS has been spreading at high speed because women and young girls are forbidden from advocating for safe sex as men control the sexual encounter. This is supported by Messer (2004), who argues that the wives have to fulfill the needs of their husbands. Leclerc-Madlala (2000) acknowledges that it is often expected that man has to decide when, where and how sex should take place, and the woman has to conform to what is expected. In this respect, Jewkes and Morrell (2010) claim in circumstances like these, it is very unlikely that the couple uses a condom, and this places women and young girls at risk of HIV infection.

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<sup>2</sup> It is not the position of this thesis that all African cultures are patriarchal. Rather, the review focuses on the ways in which patriarchy plays a role in African cultures, given the study's focus.

The unequal power relationship often filters down to young women, who too learn from the actions of their parents about the ‘inferiority of women’ (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001). In this context, Leclerc-Madlala (2001) contends that young African girls’ cultures teach them to be submissive. Leclerc-Madlala’s (2001) study revealed that in a Zulu culture the role of women is also defined by her sexual engagement which often places some women within in a vulnerable submissive state. From this point of view, it can be gathered that these girls are expected to be passive on sexual matters and boys have to take control and make final decisions about when, where and how to have sex, and this situation may sometimes cause some girls to compromise negotiating safe sex and this may place these poor girls at risk of HIV infection and other related diseases. Having discussed the African girlhood at length, the following section highlights some possible behaviour that may expose women and young girls to sexual risk.

### **2.3 SEXUAL VULNERABILITY OF YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS**

According to a study conducted on young people aged between 16-18 (Mothiba, Maputle & Lebeso, 2012), adolescents who engage in sexual activities have serious health challenges linked with unsafe sex practices, like, sexually transmitted diseases and even unwanted pregnancy. Whitehead (1994) argues that adolescents are unlike older women who can plan to practice safer sex, but more often adolescents do not plan to practice safe sex. Amuzu (2007) concurs that young girls often lack the knowledge and skills of negotiating safe sex.

Extrapolating on this line of thinking, Pithey and Morojele (2002) and Jewkes and Morrell (2010) argue that unequal power relations between men and women sexual partners in heterosexual relationships lessens the power of women or a young girl to insist on condom use or reject sex. This is blatantly clear in a study conducted by Holland et al. (1990) titled ‘*Women, Risk and AIDS project*’. The research revealed that negative attitudes about sex on young girls in Manchester and London had made them exposed to the pandemic (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, Sharpe, & Thomson, 1990). The study revealed that many young women believed that their role was to satisfy their male partners in sex and males were perceived as having more knowledge about sex (this suggests that patriarchal power dynamics are not simply in African cultures, but other cultures beyond the continent also experience the same practices). The same study also



revealed that many young women ignored the use of condom and preferred an injection to prevent unplanned pregnancy than protecting themselves from contracting HIV (Holland, *et al.*, 1990). This finding concurs with Hoffman, O'Sullivan and Harrison (2006) who found that women wished for their partners to make use of condoms and regarded condom use as the role of a man. This is consistent with the study by O'Sullivan (2006) which highlights that boys lead sexual activities in intimate relationships.

The study conducted by Reddy and Dunne (2007) in South Africa, with a sample comprising of a mix of African and Indian male and female learners aged between 15-19 years, revealed that one of the main reasons why young girls enter the world of sexual relations and unsafe sexual practices was the wish to be loved by someone. This means that a girl has to show love to her partner by having sex; very often the condom use is very rare in such relationships (*ibid*). This resonates with the other research, cited above, which indicates that young girls associate sex with love. One can argue that in this context love is the main reason for having sex (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Reddy and Dunne, (2007) further argue that what was found to be contradictory in their study was that the majority of young women preferred to practice unsafe sex in order to make their partners (boys) happy. Many of the girls in the study expressed this to be the main goal in relationships.

The observation from Reddy and Dunne (2007) sits well with Jewkes and Morrell (2010) who concede that some women appear to be unable to exert an influence over condom use through fear of rejection and stigmatisation by partners. A study conducted by MacPhail and Campbell (2001), in the township of Khutsong in South Africa, consisting of women aged between 13-20 years old, also gave credence to the fact that the majority of young girls are fearful of losing their dignity by being labeled as a 'bitch' when they try to purchase condoms. Despite a strong emphasis on safe sex, the young women expressed reluctance when it comes to suggesting condom use. As such, this reluctance is seen as an attempt to disassociate oneself from an active sexual life. In other words, it is an attempt to maintain the image of a 'pure' woman who knows nothing about sexual matters. In similar vein, another study was conducted by Morojele, Brook and Kachleng'a (2006), consisting of a racially diverse sample of White, African, and Coloured youth. The study found that a proportion of girls felt that once they gain trust from their male

partners, there would be no need to use condoms as this would show seriousness in the relationship. Although trust may carry a symbolic meaning, the studies suggested that trust may provide less prevention from contracting HIV (Holland, 1990). Referring to the ideals of love, faithfulness, feelings and desires, Wood, Mafora and Jewkes (1998) assert that young girls were in agreement that love was linked to having sex without a condom. Invariably, this linkage is noticed more often in the case of men who at the beginning initially indicated to their partners that having sex was their main reason for being involved in the love relationship and that the women must always avail themselves for sex.

MacPhail and Campbell (2001) posit that many young boys and girls perceive the use of a condom during sexual intercourse as ‘eating sweets with the wrapper on and bathing in a raincoat’. That is, using a condom when having sex is like eating a sweet in a wrapped paper. In another metaphor, the young boys and girls also perceive the use of condom when having sex is like wearing a raincoat while you are bathing. These negative attitudes about condom use become the barriers when the young boys and girls want to use a condom during sex. Because of this ubiquitous perception, the majority of young boys and girls are usually against the use of a condom partly because they are of the view that condoms trap semen and reduce sensitivity and thus delay ejaculation. In addition, it is believed that the condom use lessens the number of ‘rounds’ (Bond & Dover, 1997). Similarly, Marston and King’s (2006) study focusing on young boys and girls aged between 10-25 years revealed that girls were of the view that condom-free intercourse is viewed as a sign of trust. In other words, if you trust your partner it is not necessary to use a condom. A study conducted by Reddy & Dunne (2007) revealed that many young girls believed in love and trust, therefore demanding a condom use perceived as to undermine love and trust. Other stereotypical ideas include, among others, the fact that women who use condoms may later in life experience some challenges such as an inability to conceive. A study by Mothiba, Maputle and Lebesa (2012) indicated that the majority of young girls used some indigenous herbs for contraception: the herb was wrapped by a thin string around a girl’s waist when the girl was practicing sex. The herb was said to be used for prevention purpose. From this perspective, it is clear that, in many respects, girls’ perceptions about sexuality and misconceptions about condom use tend to heighten their vulnerability to HIV infection. In other

words, young girls become more vulnerable to HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections.

Casale, Rogan, Hynie, Flicker, Nixon and Rubincam (2011) argue that poverty and gender power imbalances are key drivers of HIV risk that put women and young girls at risk. In this regard, Ackermann and de Klerk (2002) argue that financial disaster is viewed as a threat in the life of a woman. This fear further exposes young women to the threat of contracting HIV (Ackermann & de Klerk, 2002). This is consistent with the study conducted by Bhana and Pattman (2011), which found that girls indicated that they preferred partners who were economically well-off in order to be able to support them. This concurs with Arnfred (2004), who maintains that poverty, gender imbalances and social pressure often shape sexual behaviours which perpetuate HIV infection. This resonates with Hallman (2005) who asserts that young women's low socio-economic status often hamper their ability to protect themselves and places young women at a high risk of contracting HIV and AIDS.

Campbell (2002) contends that poverty is a widespread challenge. It further confirms that many women are stuck in abusive relationships because of high degree of dependency on violent men. Wood and Jewkes (2001) argue that in abusive relationships, women are often faced with sexual coercion and gender based violence from their intimate partners who demand that they exchange sex for money. Since the intimate partner provides for the needs of their partners, therefore, they demand that they are entitled to have sex with them and the sex must be practiced according to their terms. Needless to say, women often accept coercive or gender-based violence for purposes of economic survival. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) conclude that gender power imbalances provide men and boys with more relational power over women and young girls. This has become prevalent especially in conditions where poverty prevails and sex is exchanged for money.

Another element which emerges in the literature relates to the role that social class plays in placing young girls at sexual risk. Machel, (2001) argues that socio-economic depression may place women and young girls in a difficult position when discussing safe sex practices. The woman may lack the ability to argue for safe sex, because she may rely on her partner for financial support. A woman may avoid discussing condom use if the issue may jeopardise the

relationship's stability, and if she can lose financial support that is very crucial to her in order to survive. In a similar vein, Singh, Darroch and Frost (2001), argue that young women with lower socio-economic status have low self-esteem and may also have limited ability to negotiate safe sex practice. In addition, the women with lower socio-economic status comply with gender norms and they do not challenge the norms. This has further been confirmed by a study conducted by Pettifor, MacPhail, Anderson and Maman (2012), consisting of 30 young black women aged 18-24 in Johannesburg in South Africa. Another study conducted by Hallman (2005) found the economic demand and the pressure from families with low income or no income may sometimes place women and young girls at a vulnerable state whereby the girls have to face such challenges of coercion or physical violence due to economic disadvantages. Invariably, this situation can place women and young girls at a high risk of contracting HIV when unprotected sex is practiced.

Wood et al. (1998) argue that girls rely on men for economic survival and women exchange money for sex. This is evident in a study conducted by Leclerc-Madlala (2010). The study consisted of African girls aged between 14-22; the study found that girls labeled older men according to their tasks. It is often young school-going girls who do this. For instance, 'Minister of Transport' is a man whose task is to fetch and deliver the girl to any place that the girl would like to go (Leclerc-Madlala 2010). 'Minister of Finance' a man whose task is to provide 'financial support', for instance, buying clothes and perfumes (Leclerc-Madlala, 2010). 'Minister of Education' is a man whose task is to purchase school books (Leclerc-Madlala (2010). 'Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Tourism' is a man whose task is to take responsibility for vacation times, especially in December and January (Leclerc-Madlala (2010). In this regard, Leclerc-Madlala (2010) further argues that young women and girls use older men or sugar daddies to improve their economic conditions. The older men or sugar daddies provide cash, cars (for lifts) and cell phones and other material requested by the young girls.

Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) argue that the young boys' and the young girls' relationships usually involve exchange of favours for sex. This concurs with Campbell (2003), who contends that the majority of women and young girls trade sex for material gain with the older men or sugar-daddies and the young girls find it difficult to negotiate about condom use. As a result the

use of condoms is limited. This is typically evident in a study that was conducted by Hallman (2005) in KwaZulu-Natal. The study consisted of 4000 young boys and young girls aged between 14-24 years old. The study showed that in poor communities there is a lack of resources, and the compromised economy usually drives the poor women and young girls to older men or sugar-daddies for economic survival (Hallman, 2005). Thus, the money that the girls received from older men or sugar daddies is used to pay for the school-fees, transportation, and cosmetics. This resonates with Leclerc-Madlala (2010), who asserts that pens and cosmetic such gifts make them vulnerable to have sex with the older man. The older man may use his power by refusing to use a condom. This means that the sex may sometimes be practiced without using a condom, because the poor girls lack power to request for a condom use. And this places young women and girls at risk. Meanwhile, the research conducted by Bell (2012) in South Africa in an urban area found that young girls were involved with older men or sugar daddies in order to gain some money and material. Consistent with this research is the belief that girls' exposure to HIV infection is also located within economic disadvantage. Hunter (2010) argues that girls seek men who can provide for the needs that are the main reason the girls form relationships with older men. In this sense, it becomes clear that the girls' poor economic condition reduces their ability to refuse or even suggest the use of condom and this put girls at risk of contracting HIV and AIDS.

However, for the young women whose parents can afford to provide the basic needs, studies highlight that these girls form relationships with older men or sugar-daddies in order to get money and being recognized by other peers (Leclerc-Madlala, 2010). Leclerc –Madlala's (2010) study also shows that those young women whose parents cannot afford on the other hand are further placed at risk. A study conducted in Gaborone, Botswana highlighted that girls were competing with materials gained, a 17-year-old girl, who was involved with a 37-year \_sugar daddy' commented: –It's all about peer pressure, we compete with the type of cell phone we have, our hair styles, the type of vehicle our boyfriends drive, and the amount of money they give” (Nkosana & Rosenthal, 2007). The young women demonstrate that they have an ability to use older men or sugar daddies in order to access economic security. As a result the young women and girls gain money and material from the older men or sugar daddies. The women and young girls exercise sexual agency to use the older men or sugar daddies. This is a good skill, in

their view, because the girls benefit by getting what they need and want. However, the women's and girl's relationship with older men or sugar daddies may place them at a vulnerable state if, as likely, condoms are not used, under circumstances where gifts are provided (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008).

It has been argued that when alcohol is used prior to sexual activity, it is a high risk when selecting the partner of choice, and engaging in sex (Dunn, Bartee, & Perko, 2003). A study conducted by Livingston, Bay-Cheng, Hequembourg, Testa and Down (2012) found that young women identified it risky to get drunk and engaging in sex; on the other hand, they also acknowledged that alcohol had some benefits. One of the benefits of alcohol is that a person becomes free to socialise with the other peers. Another benefit of alcohol is that a person becomes free to express her feeling about sex. However, the young women also viewed alcohol as one of the causes that drive other young girls to become engaged in risky behaviours while they are under the influence of alcohol, often resulting in regretful consequences (Livingston et al., 2012). This is consistent with the study conducted by Watt, Aunon, Skinner, Sikkema, Kalichman and Pertise (2012) which revealed that both women and men exchange alcohol for sex. These studies confirm that consumption before intercourse has been associated with risky partner choice and diminishes woman's capacity to negotiate safe sex (Cooper, 2002). Thus alcohol use can sexually endanger young women and girls (Dunn et al., 2003).

This brings the discussion to the next section. This section discusses and explores issues related to gender based-violence and sexual violence which makes young women and girls vulnerable to HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections.

## **2.4 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AND THE RISK OF HIV INFECTION**

Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, McIntyre and Harlow (2004) argue that researchers and policy makers have increasingly identified gender-based violence and gender inequality as essential determinants of women's HIV risk, both worldwide and within sub-Saharan Africa. The research indicates that physical violence and gender power imbalances are key factors that place women at risk of HIV infection, both locally and internationally (Dunkle et al., 2004) This is supported

by Jewkes and Morrell (2010), who focus on the South African context. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) further argue that women with abusive sexual partners are at a high risk of HIV infection. This is evident in the study conducted by Wood (1997) among teenagers in Khayelitsha in the Western Cape Province, which found that more often most men used violent methods at the initial stage in a relationship, coercing women and young girls to practice sex with them (Wood, 1997). Wood (1997) further argues that in addition to the initial forced contact, boys continued to abuse women and girls physically if they reject having sex with them. This behaviour is considered as the primary contributing factor as to why the girls continued to have sex. Furthermore, the study also revealed that some girls were raped by a group of boys; this method was used by the boys to punish the girls if the boy suspected that the girl was cheating on him.

In a nutshell, the study is critically important because it explores what black African young girls aged 16-18 understand as sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. Currently, available information on sexual issues among black African teenage girls (particularly living in townships) is limited in scope. The study thus responded by exploring what black African young aged between 16-18 girls understand as sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. In addition to the scarcity of information, case studies exploring various HIV and AIDS related aspects of black African teenage girls' sexuality and decision-making are also limited in number. In South Africa, few studies have researched these issues at any length. This dearth warrants detailed investigation of the social phenomenon at hand. The study is justified because there are currently limited studies that have used the concept of sexual risk when specifically investigating teenage girls' sexual experiences particularly in a black African school. As a result, it is felt that the study is important because of the potential it has in contributing to a rapidly increasing body of knowledge on African female sexuality.

Finally, the socio-cultural constructions of gender, specifically the ideals of dominant masculinities and submissive femininities, continue to create challenges by encouraging gender inequity in relationships and interactions between young people. In an age of globalization and the increasing emphasis on the empowerment of women, it is very concerning that many young women continue to subscribe to the patriarchal ideals. A study that seeks to explore the deep-

rooted processes of socialization embedded in the lives of South Africans is also therefore important.

The following section defines and discusses the theoretical perspectives that have been employed as lenses through which to analyse and interpret the data in this study.

## **2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is framed within social constructionist theory. This study investigates the understanding of sexual risk among African teenage girls in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study investigates teenage girls' experiences in a specific context in a black township, by trying to establish what they regard as sexual risk. Girls are gendered beings, having their own identities and are active participants capable of making their understanding. The social constructionist framework provides the lens for my exploration of the role of gender, sex, power, and inequalities in shaping the understanding that these young girls give to sexual risk and to their femininities. According to social constructionism, there are universal distinct characters that are used to define what the differences between masculine or feminine are (Hildebrand and Wealands, 1995). These behaviours according Hildebrand and Wealands (1995) are influenced by a range of factors including class, culture, ability, religion, age, body shape and sexual preference.

This theory argues that girls and boys are actively involved in constructing their own gendered identities. According to the social construction theory on gender, men and women take up different ranges of masculine and feminine identities, which in many cases may contradict each other (Connell, 1987). Allard, Cooper, Hildebrand and Wealands (1995: 24) assert that we ~~are~~ not passively shaped by the larger societal forces such as schools or the media, but are active in selecting, adapting and rejecting the dimensions we choose to incorporate, or not, into our version of gender". Social constructionists believe that anyone with aspirations to know more about human relationships, such as young people's sexual relationships, must take into consideration the power dynamics within which beliefs, practices and (in this case) the sexual identities are embedded (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, Sharpe & Thomson, 1990).



Given that this study was concerned with the ways in which young women give meaning to sexual risk, social constructionism assisted in unpacking the ways in which the young women under investigation positioned themselves both at an individual, subjective position, and also how they related these positionalities to sexual risk.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

The chapter has presented an in-depth and detailed discussion of the existing literature focusing on the social phenomenon under investigation. In doing this, various bodies of literature were reviewed. These bodies included, among others, the international, regional and local studies. As discussed earlier on, the literature reviewed included debates and issues pertaining to the meanings attached to sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. In addition, the chapter also presented a detailed discussion on the theoretical perspectives which have been employed as the framework underpinning the study. The chapter that follows seeks to describe and discuss the research design and methods that I adopted in the study in order to generate appropriate data. This is done in an attempt to provide concrete answers to the three main research questions guiding the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is categorized into three parts. The first part of this chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the research methodology that was used in this study. Then I will move on to explore the philosophical underpinnings of the study, i.e. describe the qualitative research paradigm and the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the study. Thereafter, I will briefly describe the research site where this study took place. This will be followed by a discussion on the method of sampling which was used for the purpose of this study. The second part of this chapter will discuss the methods of data generation that were employed in this study. In the final part I will provide a discussion on issues of validity and reliability, the ethical considerations and the data analysis process. The first section focuses on the study's philosophical underpinnings and context.

#### **3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND CONTEXT**

According to Meyrs (2002), the qualitative research approach is a tool employed to understand and describe the world of human experiences and its strength. Moreover, qualitative research, according to Meyrs (2002), offers in-depth explorations of research in order to for the reader to grasp the ideas of situation. The reason a qualitative research approach was chosen in this study is the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. That is, the study explores high school girls' understanding of sexual risk. Meyrs (2002) further states that the qualitative research focuses on people, on how and why they interact with each other, and on their motives and relationships. That is why the study further explores why some high school girls engage in risky sexual behaviour, despite the knowledge they have about its negative effects.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007), the qualitative research methodology attempts to understand how the behaviour patterns are influenced by social and cultural context and other processes. It is

a naturalistic approach whereby the researcher attempts to understand behavioural patterns and thought in real life situations (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The researcher becomes the ‘research instrument’ in the collection of data. Since the objective of my study was to understand what high school girls give meaning to their (hetero) sexualities, the ideal method for me as a researcher was to attempt to understand what was being said by the participants. Hearing what the participants had to say was important for this study; hence I decided I would conduct interviews with the participants. I made use of the qualitative research design because I wanted to gather information that could later assist me in interpreting the views of the participants. According to Becker (1986) qualitative studies are more focused on an insider perspective rather than on an outsider perspective.

Willis, Daly, Kealy, Small, Koutroulis, Green and Thomas, (2007) maintain that interpretivists favour qualitative methods such as interviews because these methods allow them to understand how people interpret the world around them. Mason (2005) further argues that qualitative research offers researchers an opportunity to explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world of the participants. This approach provided me with the opportunity to gain deeper insight into the sexual lives of the participants in my study.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2008, p. 133), the qualitative approach can help the researcher to define what is important and also, it ~~in~~volves studying phenomena in all their complexity.” For the purpose of this study, a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach was deemed most suitable for the study, because the research topic is not mainly concerned with quantity but rather focuses on reasons, motives and behaviours. According to Leatherman (2007, p. 3) conducting qualitative research ~~allows~~ the investigator to interpret and bring in light an understanding of particular subjects and events”. This cannot necessarily be achieved by making use of a quantitative approach. Gaskell (2000) confirms this by arguing that the principle behind qualitative research is not to count opinions and/or people, but to explore a range of opinions and different presentations of the topic.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) assert that the qualitative approach is used when in-depth research is required. In this research, I found the qualitative approach more suitable because it

reveals more in-depth and insightful evidence of these high school girl's responses to risky sexual behaviour. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), using a qualitative approach is not based on generalization but rather on exploring a particular group. There are several strengths of using qualitative research approach; however, there are some weaknesses. Gonzals (2008) argues that the main strength of using qualitative data generation method is that it provides an in-depth and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, and behaviours. Furthermore, strength of using a qualitative data generation method is that it provides rich and detailed information about the participants. On the other hand, the weaknesses of using a qualitative approach includes that its results in data are not objectively verifiable. This according to Hancock (1998) means that data always needs an intensive analysis process which can include categorization. The next section discusses philosophical underpinnings of this research in order to demonstrate the relationship between my selected approach and the underpinnings and assumptions informing my study.

### **3.3 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS: EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY**

Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) define interpretivism as a research philosophy with its own ontological and epistemological assumptions. In order to understand participants, the interpretivist paradigm focuses on the realities of the participants. This study used multiple methods to access the different realities of the participants. Though using multiple methods can be a challenge to interpret, the knowledge generated will be useful for this study.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) identify four sets of assumptions. For the relevance of this study, I will focus on two sets of assumptions, related to ontology and epistemology. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) an ontological assumptions is more concerned about the nature or essence of the social phenomenon under investigated. On the other hand, the epistemological assumption is more concerned with knowledge and how knowledge is acquired and how knowledge can be communicated to other human beings. According to Higgs (2001), within the interpretive paradigm, human beings are usually involved in constructing and interpreting meanings. This is the notion of multiple constructed realities. Higgs (2001) further notes that the philosophy of

interpretivism suggests that knowledge is socially constructed. In this study, the humanist interactions between the researcher and the participants were useful because it allowed the researcher to access the participants' realities.

While the interpretivism approach is supported by many, Reeves and Hedberg (2003, p. 32) add that the "interpretivist paradigm stresses the need to put analysis in context". The analysis of the data proved to be a challenging task for the researcher because I realized that the subjective nature of the interpretivism approach requires careful analysis and interpretation. The interpretivist paradigm is concerned more with the need to understand the world from the subjective experiences of those individuals. Interpretivist researchers use meaning- (versus measurement-) oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. Kaplan and Maxwell (1994, p. 23) echo this view in stating that "interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges".

An interpretive researcher enters the field of research with some sort of prior insight about the research topic. During the data collection stages the interaction between the researcher and the participants create an interdependent and mutually interactive space which allows for researcher and the participants to construct a collaborative account of perceived reality. I remained opened to new ideas throughout the study and allowed for those ideas to develop with the help of the participants. The goal of interpretivist research therefore, is to understand and interpret human behaviour rather than to generalize and predict causes and effects. It is therefore for the above discussed reasons that the interpretivism paradigm was considered for this study.

### **3. 4 LOCATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted in a high school situated at KwaMashu which is one of Durban's oldest townships. It was created during the apartheid era to accommodate the mass resettlement of Africans from the mixed race Cator Manor Township. The school is situated in one of the poorest areas in Durban, with an enrolment of 988 learners, 528 boys and 460 girls. It is a public

school. The school has a staff of 32 teachers, of whom nine are males and 23 females, including a female principal and a female deputy principal. The research site is a school situated in a predominantly black community. Learners come from surrounding townships such as KwaMashu, Bester, Ntuzuma, Lindelani, Newtown and Phoenix. Other learners live in informal settlements and others come from working class backgrounds in formal housing. As this indicates, many of them are economically disadvantaged. High rate of learner pregnancy and substance [alcohol and drug] abuse are some of the issues that plague this school and its community. Violence, gangsterism, crime, excessive drug and alcohol use, as well as high rates of teenage pregnancy, are some of the issues that plague this community. Next, I explore how data was generated in the study.

### **3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA GENERATION**

Case studies are important methods of research in the social sciences and in socially related research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In the social sciences and humanities, the researchers investigate domains such as human behaviour, thought and feelings (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). According to Rule and John (2011) the purposes of conducting research in the social sciences and human disciplines are more about understanding the behaviour and experience of the participants.

Yin (1994:13) describes a case study as an empirical enquiry that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. It can also be said that case studies also take into consideration other contextual conditions such as the classroom, the culture of the school. This study considers the classroom, as well the school culture to play an important role in the everyday lives of the participants. Yin (2009) further argues that all social aspects may be highly significant to the phenomenon under study. Yin (2009) identifies three main types of case studies. According to Yin (2009), the three main types of cases are: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory.

Given the interpretivist position that has been utilised in this study and the nature of the research questions, I have selected the case study methodology because it provides a systematic way to generate data, analyse information and report the results. It also helps to understand the particular situation at great length. . The case in this study pertains to a specific context i.e. a school at Kwa-Mashu Township. The study explores what African teenage girls regard as sexual risk in this setting.

A case study answers the study's research questions using evidence from the particular case setting (Yin, 1994). The case study is particularly powerful in answering the how and why type of questions. Yin (2009) states that the more specific the questions that the case study should answer, the stronger is the likelihood of a case study staying on track and within limits. According to Rule and John (2011) case study researchers usually makes use of a variety of data generation methods.

Some researchers argue that case studies have some limitations. Case studies have often limited generalizability (Yin, 2009). However, Robin (2002) and Yin (2009) claim that case studies opt for analytic rather than statistical generalization. In statistical generalization, the researcher seeks to move from a sample to a population, based on, for example, sampling strategies, frequencies, statistical significance and effect size. However, in analytic generalization, the concern is not so much for a representative sample (indeed the strength of the case study is that the case only represents itself) so much as its ability to contribute to the expansion of and generalization of theory (Yin, 2009), i.e. there is a logical rather than statistical connection between the case and the wider theory. A case is not a sample. Yin (2009) points out that to assume that generalization is only from sample to population is simply incorrect, irrelevant, inappropriate and inapplicable in respect of case studies. Given the interpretive stance utilized in this study and the nature of the research questions, the case study approach was the most relevant research methodology for this study because of its advantages in generating a thick and rich description of the case. Moreover, the case study design provided a large amount of information and details about the research topic; this allowed me to be able to interpret a wide variety of raw data. This study adopts the methodology of a case study, as I have highlighted early on, the case

in this study pertains to a specific context i.e. a school at Kwa-Mashu Township. The study explores what African teenage girls regard as sexual risk in this setting.

### **3. 6 SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

Sampling is a crucial element of research. According to Cohen et al. (2011) the quality of research does not only stand or fall because of the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but the suitability of the sampling strategy also plays a critical role. In terms of methods of sampling, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) maintain that researchers use purposive sampling to build up a sample satisfactory to their specific needs. Durrheim and Painter (2006:133) define a sample as ‘a population pool from which researchers draw sampling elements’. A sample according to Durrheim and Painter (2006) is therefore representative when it allows the results of the sample to be generalized to the population. The individuals that were used as part of the study can be referred to as the ‘sample’ for the study.

Sampling is further explained by Sarantakos (1998:13) as a ‘process of choosing the units of the target population which are to be included in the study’. Sarantakos (1998) argue that samples must be able to provide a detailed investigation as well as detailed recording. The sample in this study therefore was deemed appropriate because it contained elements that were the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population. Rule and John (2011) argue that, often, the case study researcher cannot consult everyone involved in a case; he/she therefore has to select people who can shed most light on a case. According to Rule and John,(2011) this is known as purposive sampling where the people are usually selected as research participants based on their suitability in advancing the purpose of the research .Singleton (in Strydom, 2005, p. 202) further states that ‘this type of a sample is based on the judgment of the researcher’. People are also selected because of their relevant information, interest and experience in relation to the case. It is for these reasons that I decided to employ purposive sampling in my study. The participants in the study were purposively selected, as I searched for black African girls who ranged between 15-18 years old. To select ten participants, I decided to focus on the grade 10 and 11 because I believed that they were those individuals who yield the most relevant information about the topic under study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).



The Life Orientation teacher of grade 10 and 11 was approached to assist with the request to participate in the study. The Life Orientation teacher introduced me to the learners to whom I explained that I was going to conduct a research study. I explained that the study requires the girls aged between 16 and 17. Then I briefly explained about the study and requested those who wanted to participate to attend a briefing session that was to be held in one of the vacant classrooms. During the break time I provided more details about the study. About twenty girls became interested in the study; however, the targeted number was 10. Therefore, I had to use the strategy of dividing the potential participants into two groups, i.e. main group consisted of the target number of students and a ‘stand-by group’. This was done by asking volunteers to pick a number, for an example, number one which is representing main study (meaning that if you pick number one you are going to participate in a study) and number two which is representing the ‘stand-by’ group. All the numbers of course, were hidden during the time of selection, with students only being asked to reveal their numbers after they had all picked their numbers. This would ensure that I had the desired 10 participants, with the remainder being asked to be on standby. The volunteers revealed their numbers, and those who picked number one, were purposively selected.

The consent forms were read and explicitly explained to the participants. Learners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Parent and learner consent forms were also distributed to the learners. Interviews were scheduled for the following week. Below I provide a biography of the participants that were selected for my study. I do this for the purpose of highlighting the participants’ different backgrounds.

### **3.6.1 PARTICIPANTS’ BIOGRAPHIES:**

- i. **Nokubekezela** is 16 years old and in grade 10. She was living with her father up until when her father passed away in 2010. Therefore she had to go and stay with her aunt, uncle and two cousins. Altogether, there are five of them, living in the informal settlement in three roomed house. They depend on her aunt’s salary. She is a domestic worker. Her mother is still alive, but she could not stay with her because she says that they are not in good terms with her mother. Her aunt told her that her mother had

abandoned her when she was 18 months old. She met her mother when she was ten years old. When she visited her and asked for food she used to tell her that “\_Umuntu akazibonele” (you must fend for yourself). She insists that the reason she does not want to stay with her mother is because, she is verbally abusive. She does not know her two brothers, because her mother abandoned them too. She has a boyfriend. The challenge faced by this community is drug abuse.

- ii. **Nomathamsanqa** is an 18 year old who is currently in grade 10. She lives with four people in a four roomed house. She stays with her grandfather, grandmother and her younger sister (17 years old). Her mother passed away in 2002. They survive on their grandfather and grandmothers’ pension. She has a boyfriend. Her boyfriend is employed. The boyfriend is known and accepted by the family. The community is concerned about how the girls should behave. The community suggests that girls must introduce their boyfriends to the members of their families.
- iii. **Bathini** is 16 years old who is currently in grade 10. She lives with 11 people in a four roomed house. She stays with her grandmother, mother, father, uncle and aunt. Her parents are married with six children. They are both working, mother is a cleaner, and father is a builder. She has no boyfriend.
- iv. **Ngenzeni** is 18 years old who is currently in grade 11. She stays in an informal settlement. She lives with her uncle, her brother and her other twin sister. . They are five years old. They are both boys; her mother passed away in 2003.
- v. **Thembekile** is an 18 year old who is currently in grade 11. She lives with four people in a four bed-roomed house. She lives with her mother, sister and two brothers. Her mother is a cleaner at a restaurant. They depend on her mother’s salary. She has a boyfriend. The community is faced with challenge of drugs and crime.
- vi. **Nomusa** is 17 years old and currently in grade 10. She lives with five people in a four bed- roomed house. She lives with her father, stepmother, sister, and a step-sister and a step-brother. Her father is a truck driver and her stepmother is a cleaner at a hotel. This community has a challenge of drugs and crime.
- vii. **Nobuhle** is 17 years old and is currently in grade 10. She lives with eight people in a four bed-roomed house. She lives with her mother, grandmother, two aunts, three uncles and

her sister. Her mother is a cleaner at a primary school and her uncles are carpenters. Her boyfriend is employed. The community is faced with challenges of drugs and crime.

- viii. **Zothile** is a 16 year old who is currently in grade 10. She lives with five people in a four bed-roomed house. She lives with her mother, two brothers and two sisters. Her mother is a domestic worker. They depend on her salary.
- ix. **Aphelele** is a 16 year old who is currently in grade 10. She lives with three people in a two bed-roomed house in the informal settlements. She stays with her grandmother, uncle and her sister. They are sustained with her grandmother's pension.
- x. **Thokozani** is 18 years old and is currently in grade 11. She resides with five people in a three bed-roomed house in the informal settlement. She stays with her two year old son, mother, two sisters and her brother. They all survive with her child support grant, since her mother is unemployed.

### **3. 7 DATA GENERATION**

#### **3.7.1 INTERVIEWS**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 278) define interviews as open response questions to elicit participants' meanings and how they make sense of important events in their lives. Interviews are often used in case studies because they allow for a conversation between the researcher and the participants. According to Rule and John (2011), interviews are structured conversations where the researcher has in mind a set of questions that she/he would like to be answered by the participants. This study used semi-structured interviews because that allowed the participants the opportunity to talk freely about their experiences.

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005, p. 28) believe that interviewing is the most predominant mode of data generating in qualitative research". De Vos et al. (2005, p. 287), define qualitative interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the participant's experiences, (and) to unfold the meaning of people's scientific explanation". De Vos et al. (2005) further argues that qualitative interviews can either be structured, unstructured or semi-

structured. Structured interviews are based on a strict procedure and are highly structured. Sarantakos (1998) also adds that in structured interviews, there is a strict adherence to the questions and instructions. In this research, semi-structured interviews were considered to be the most effective mode of data collection and also relevant for the research.

The interview questions used in this study consisted of open-ended questions. Sarantakos (1998, p. 255) notes “that one of the distinguishing criteria for qualitative interviews is that they use open-ended questions”. Unlike closed-ended questions, open-ended questions do not suggest possible responses. The questions are flexible. There were a total of 23 interview questions. All these interviews were tape-recorded for later analysis. All in all, I conducted two focus group interviews, each session was scheduled to last an hour each with the ten participants. The semi-structured individual interviews were also scheduled for 1 hour each with only ten participants of the same group. An interview schedule was designed for each of these interviews and the interview schedule included both open and close ended questions. Each of these interview schedules consisted of about 23 interview questions. All the interviews were conducted in the high school in Kwa-Mashu Township. This was done because it was convenient for all girls because they were all attended the same school. All the girls agreed to participate in these interviews after school rather than during school hours. All the interviews that were conducted were tape recorded using a tablet in order to increase the reliability of the study. The next section discusses and describes each of the interviews in greater detail.

### **3.7.2. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

Morgan (1996:130) defines focus groups as “a research technique” that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. The focus group interviews allowed me to have a better understanding of the participants’ feelings and thoughts about issues of sexual risk in the context of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Focus group interview also create a process of sharing and comparing among the participants. According to De Vos et al. (2005, p.299) focus groups interviews are powerful means of exposing reality and investigating complex behaviour and motivation. Morgan (1996) suggests that the interaction among participants often consists of their efforts to understand each other, as they convey a

willingness to listen without being defensive, which is uniquely beneficial in an emotionally charged environment.

This period did not require too much commitment from participants and was just enough to ensure concentration. During the focus group session I managed to engage a group of 6 to 10 participants together and facilitated a discussion among the participants (Rule & John, 2011). There were ten girls who participated in this interview. I did not conduct the first scheduled interview, because only four girls managed to come for the interviews. They did not even bring the consent forms. Therefore, I had to re-schedule the interview for the following week. The following week all the participants attended the interviews. Before the interviews began I reassured the participants about confidentiality and also confirmed that the participants were allowed to withdraw at any time with no harm or discrimination.

I was not a teacher at this school, but talking about sex to an adult was uncomfortable to some learners. I requested the learners to share openly their stories and to be true to the research without feeling like they would be judged. Fortunately for me, the girls trusted me. They were never intimidated by my positioning as an adult and a researcher.

The first focus group interview was conducted in deputy-principal's office. The discussions were conducted in a round-table manner with me amongst them. The round-table arrangement ensured that everyone was not only given an opportunity to speak, but also that there was easy eye contact. A tablet was placed in the middle to capture details of what was discussed. After permission from participants was obtained, all discussions were recorded. The recording ensured that data was accurately captured and that the recordings could be used for verification of facts later, should the need arise (Bryman, 2004).

The success of interviews, however, largely depends on the cooperation of participants (Marshall & Rossman 2006). Sometimes they may not be willing to say all that one wants to know, and indeed as happened in this study some participants were not willing to talk about their own sexual experiences, preferring to talk in general terms like "teenagers" or "they" rather than "I" or "we". This is a reflection of the deep-seated cultural practice where issues of sexuality are still

regarded as a taboo and not to be discussed openly (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In such case, I directed questions about their friends and other girls rather than themselves. What I noticed, was that the participants spoke more freely and openly about the sexual behaviours of others but they often tend to shy away from talking about their own sexual behaviours and encounters. This resonates with Leach (2006) who asserts that while girls in her study were enthusiastic to be interviewed, they were not eager to talk about their own experiences and almost never talked about sex in connection with themselves. Leach (2006) connects this imperative of femininity to appear modest and innocent.

This focus group interviews also faced some challenges, which made me to decide to conduct further data collection. There were many interruptions. Since this research was conducted in a deputy principal's office, therefore this interview was interrupted by phone calls and by teachers who entered the office for various reasons, which include collecting some materials, signing of the time book, wanting to see the deputy- principal and so on. While we were still busy with the interviews, the clerk requested us to leave the office because she wanted to close. As a result, I had to fast-track and expedite the process of asking the questions. This had dire consequences for the gathering of empirical data because I could not get enough data. Therefore, I decided to reschedule another interview in order to generate more data. I requested the link teacher to organize another place, so that I could be able to conduct my interviews.

The second focus group interviews were held in the computer lab classroom; it was a very private place with no interruptions during the interviews. This focus group interview went very well. I urged the participants to speak freely about the issues of sexuality and emphasized that I was not going to judge them, and I also communicated with these girls in a way that made them feel comfortable and safe because as a researcher it was vital that I created a safe-zone environment for my participants. This was an attempt to encourage them to be open about sensitive issues to be discussed. This strategy worked, the majority of the participants began to speak openly about issues of sexuality. As the interview progressed, it appeared the participants became more relaxed and comfortable in my presence. They then began to talk about their life experiences and they expressed their thoughts and reflections with more ease. During the interview, they sometimes often laughed at each other's comments and criticised one another's

action. In an attempt to create a relaxed atmosphere in the group, I urged participants to respect and tolerate each other's opinion. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005) assert that in focus group, participants are usually use each other's opinions and will build on each other's opinions and comments to provide in-depth information. Through using a focus group interview I was able to generate rich data.

### **3.8.2 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS**

According to Seidman (1998) conducting interviews has long been the most popular method in qualitative research. Interviews usually imply one-on-one discussion between the researcher and the research participants, a sort of guided conversation. Halcomb and Andrew (2005) argue that the data generated from individual interviews can be combined with focus group data for the purpose of data completeness and confirmation. McDonald and Loughlin (2005) further argue that when the two methods are combined together, this contributes to the depth of the findings. Furthermore, McDonald and Loughlin (2005) note that personal interviews may be useful in exploring personal experiences, while the focus group interview may be more useful for examining the opinions and the beliefs about the phenomenon at hand.

The follow up individual interview was conducted two weeks after the focus group interview. The individual interview lasted thirty minutes per participant. During the interview process I noticed that some of the participants were not as open and comfortable as they were during the focus group interview. This time, I found the participants to be brief and vague. Morgan (1999) asserts that the dynamics of an individual interview puts more pressure on a participant to explain themselves to a researcher and perhaps this was also the case with this participant. In an attempt to overcome this challenge, I once again attempted to create a safe and comfortable zone for the participants to freely express themselves in my presence. I also had to prompt and probe them for more detailed responses to generate rich data.

The interviews assisted me in exploring the participants' knowledge, attitudes opinions and experiences. Most importantly, their understanding about their vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases was also of utmost importance (Mason, 2002). Marshall and

Rossmann (2006) contend that in a phenomenological study the use of interviews is recommended because it focuses on the deep-lived meanings that events have for individuals. It provided me with an opportunity to get to know my participants better and helped me to understand their feelings and experiences better. Furthermore, the method provided me with an opportunity for gathering descriptive data in the participants' own words or language (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Using open-ended questions during the interviews ensured successful conversational dialogues, conversations with a purpose between me and my participants (Marshall & Rossmann, 2006).

Below is a table which shows how many times each participant interviewed, the duration and the type of the interview conducted by the researcher (FG meaning focus group, Ind meaning individual).

<b>Participants</b>	<b>How many times interviewed</b>	<b>How long</b>
1 Nomusa	3	2 hours FG, 30 minutes Ind
2 Nobuhle	3	2 hours FG, 30 minutes Ind
3 Thembekile	3	2 hours FG, 30 minutes Ind
4 Nokubekezela	3	2 hours FG, 30 minutes Ind
5 Thokozani	2	2 hours FG
6 Aphelele	2	2 hours FG
7 Ngenzeni	3	2 hours FG, 30 minutes Ind
8 Zothile	2	2 hours FG
9 Nomathamsanqa	3	2 hours FG, 30 minutes Ind
10 Bathini	3	2 hours FG, 30 minutes Ind



### 3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Strydom (2005, p.57) suggests that “ethics are a moral fabric to conducting a study”. Strydom (2005, p. 29) views “ethics as a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students”. By outlining the ethical standards to follow, the privacy and anonymity of the participants can be protected.

All participants who took part in this study were adequately informed about the nature of this study, such as: how and why the study would be done, when the study would be done and how it would be conducted and, importantly, that no one was forced to take part in this study. Privacy and anonymity were ensured while conducting the study. As a researcher I had to assure the participants of their privacy and that the information they gave would not be disclosed in any form that will violate their privacy.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee. The principal of the selected school was consulted about granting permission for the research to be conducted. All participants were provided with information sheets detailing the purpose of the research and the research procedures. All the participants were given an opportunity to ask questions about the research. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so without any negative consequences. Written consent form was obtained from each volunteer prior to commencement of data collection. Maintaining participants’ “confidentiality” is often a major ethical concern of interpretive research because of the personal nature of the research and the type of questions the participants are asked (Cohen et al., 2011). As a result, confidentiality and anonymity of participants and sites were guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms.

The recording of interviews and focus group discussions was only done with the permission of participants. Krathwohl (1993), as cited in Normand (2007), states that research data should be

kept confidential so that individuals and communities cannot be identified in ways that maybe harmful. Although measures were put in place to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, I am still not sure how the involvement of the link teacher might have jeopardised this privacy. Even amongst the participants themselves, it is impossible for me to guarantee that there was total confidentiality. The authors advise that the best solution is to seek clearance from the individuals concerned for the use of data in the research report. Nonetheless, no serious problems regarding the privacy of my participants were encountered or reported.

The information sheet had included information about the researcher and the supervisor's name and contact details should they have any questions or concerns throughout the study. The consent form for learners was written in a manner that was simplified for the participants to ensure that they clearly understood what they consenting to. The consent form for parent/ guardian was written in both English and isiZulu (mother-tongue); this was also an attempt to ensure that the parents / guardian clearly understood what they were consenting to. Due to the fact that the learner was under the age of 18, therefore, the parent/guardian was required to sign the consent form granting the permission for his/ her daughter to participate in the study.

In my research participants volunteered to partake in the research activities after school hours which I thought was a great sacrifice and I had to be considerate. For example, I provided them with refreshments and sometimes with transport to their homes especially if they were going my way. I am not sure whether or not the offer of refreshments might have affected voluntary participation.

I obtained all the necessary consent forms from each of the participants prior to recording all the interviews. I also assured the participants that the recorded data and the transcripts were to remain strictly confidential. I also informed the participants about the procedure that is used in the storage of research data. The participants were informed that all the documents will be shredded, and the information will be destroyed after five years.

### **3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS, FAIRNESS AND AUTHENTICITY**

Creswell (2002) suggests that terms like validity, reliability, and generalisability do not carry the same connotation in qualitative research as they do in quantitative research. In this study I have used Guba's model of describing the credibility of qualitative research. Guba (1990) prefers to describe the rigour of qualitative research in terms of trustworthiness, and uses criteria like credibility, dependability, and conformability as the most applicable. Credibility relates to the truth value of research findings. According to Ulin et al. (2002), credibility in qualitative research focuses on the truth of the findings of a study, including accurate understanding of the context. Credibility has also been enhanced by the detailed description of the study settings (see Chapter 4). Moreover, I have made a thick description of the findings with sample quotations from participants, to show that the findings originate from them.

After the data generation I transcribed the interviews and focus group discussions. I took the transcripts back to my participants to check whether what was summarised is what they actually said; a process known as "participant validation or member checking" (Creswell, 2002; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). According to Bryman (2004, p. 274) participant validation is referred to as "a process whereby a researcher provides the people on whom he/she has conducted research with an account of his findings". This input from participants has added to the credibility of the results because it shows that the report contains their actual voices. Ungar (2003) argues that data are most credible when they reflect the voices of participants (as cited in Normand, 2007).

Dependability relates to the reliability and the reflexivity of a study (Rolfe, 2004). This author claims that reflexivity is central to the audit trail; this means that the researcher must constantly keep a self-critical account of the research procedure. I ensured that I kept a reflective journal in which I documented all the processes and procedures that influence the research.

Conformability usually focuses on the issue of presentation (Rolfe, 2004). Here steps require to be followed to ensure that the findings are in the participants' experiences rather than the researchers' preferences (Shenton, 2003). All the participants were given the opportunity to read the transcribed interviews. This was done for participants to confirm that what had been

transcribed was a correct analysis of participants' experiences and not merely my own preferences as a researcher.

### **3. 10 DATA ANALYSIS**

Braun (2006: 80) defines the thematic analysis process used in qualitative method as ~~an~~ analysis that can be used for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data". A thematic content analysis was used to analysis the data. Burns (2000: 589) defines content analysis as ~~the~~ systematic quantification of certain characteristics the investigator may be interested in, in terms of the frequency of occurrence within a selected context". Sarantakos (1998: 279) ~~sees~~ content analysis as a documentary method that aims at a qualitative and/or quantitative analysis of the content of the text, pictures, films and other forms of verbal, visual or written communication". In this study, content of text from transcripts of interviews, and non-verbal communication were analysed. The responses of the learners were analysed as I was looking for emerging patterns. The responses to the questions gave rise to the discussion of key findings. The key findings have been effectively used to draw conclusions. Chapter 4 and 5 will be dedicated to describing and analyzing the interview data derived from the learners during face-to face interviews.

To ensure reliability, once the process of transcribing was complete, I listened again for a second time while reading the transcribed material (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004). Leedy and Ormond (2008, p.144) argue that the categorisation and the interpretation of data in terms of common themes were used to analyse the research data. Using this approach allowed me to apply this inductive approach in order to organize my data into categories and to identify possible patterns and relationships among the categories, as advised by McMillan and Schumacher (2009, p367). I elaborate on this further in the next chapter, where I discuss the analysis process in greater detail.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

The chapter was divided into three parts. The first part provided an in-depth discussion and description of the various methods used in the research design and methods of data generation. It provided a detailed description of how the interviews and the focus groups interviews were conducted. I also explained the way in which the data would be analyzed. In the next chapter the findings will be provided. The findings will also be interpreted and discussed in the light of the literature review.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I present the critical findings that emerged from the data generated. The data obtained from grade 10 and 11 African teenage girls aged between 15-18 years old is analysed in accordance with the focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews undertaken during the data generation process. The purpose of analysing data is to interpret data from the participants' point of view (Creswell, 2007). This chapter outlines the findings with regards to the participants' responses. The chapter is divided into two parts:

A. Analysis process

B. Presentation of the findings.

#### **4.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS**

According to Braun (2006, p.80) thematic analysis is "a qualitative method of analysis used for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data". As established in the preceding chapter, thematic analysis was used as an analytical framework informing this study. This framework is commonly used in qualitative studies. In terms of the analysis of the data, the interview transcripts that consisted of rich data about the sexual beliefs and attitudes of the participants were used as the primary data for the study. The interviews were conducted in Zulu and were audio-taped, translated and then transcribed. As a researcher I was aware of the loss of meaning between languages. To combat this, I requested the participants to elaborate and provide clarity on some of the responses during their checks of the transcripts. To ensure the trustworthiness, once the process of transcribing was completed, I listened again for a second time while reading the transcribed material (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004).

The first step of the analysis process involved listening repeatedly to the interviews that had been taped on my tablet. The main reason was to transcribe the data as accurately as possible. The second step involved listening again to the interviews and comparing the audio with the typed transcripts to edit or delete information. The transcripts were sent to the participants to conduct member checking. The participants were requested to check, verify and add or delete if possible so as to ensure that what was captured reflected the participant's individual sentiments. After the completion of the member check, the participants returned the transcripts, leading to the third step.

The third step meant reading the transcripts yet again to identify patterns of similarities and differences in the participants' responses. The themes were identified and coded using different colour pens for each code and I made a note of what that code was communicating. For instance, I highlighted different codes that were emerging so I had different colours e.g. blue, red, orange, green etc. After establishing the themes and sub-themes, I then clustered the relevant themes to establish the argument of the thesis.

The following themes emerged from the individual interviews and focus group discussions: sexual coercion as debut; young girls and the use of protection; society, women and sex; multiple sexual partners and sexual risk; poverty and relationships; girls, older men and condom usage; alcohol and sex; violence as love; and young girls' understanding of HIV and AIDS. Pseudonyms were employed to protect the identities of the ten participants as well as that of their school. The participants were referred to as Nomusa, Nobuhle, Thembekile, Nokubekezela, Nomathamsanqa, Bathini, Aphelele, Zothile, Ngenzeni and Thokozani and their high school was referred to as Gabisile High.

## **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA**

### **4.3.1 THEME 1: SEXUAL COERCION AS DEBUT**

One of the things that come through quite clearly in the study is about coercion of young girls in terms of their sexual debut. From the narratives presented by the participants, it emerged that

young girls are often raped by boys and men when it comes to their first sexual experience. For the majority of the participants in this study, sexual assault in the form of rape was said to be the first sexual experience. Many of the girls indicated that they were not ready when they first had sex and that they did not use protection when they had sex. All of this is not new because a number of studies have found this to be the case. Recent research reports highlight the widespread practice of male coercion and violence when it comes to sex, for many of the township girls. In Wood's (2007) study, it was found that many young people perceived a link between sexual pleasure and forced sex. In the current study, an example of this coercion was powerfully shared by Nobuhle, who noted that she was raped by her boyfriend. Nobuhle stated:

—: . I was not ready at all. I did not want to do it. I was not ready ... and then started to touch me, and he forced me to have sex with him. Yah... he raped me! ...If I wanted him to be arrested I would, but I didn't want to arrest him, Eish..., you know, well I don't like to attend cases. He kept on touching me and said —“Are you a virgin?” And I replied: —“Yah, I \_m a virgin”. He said: You are lying, you are not a virgin, and then he forced himself into me. I tried to stop him but he couldn't stop. He had sex with me. When he was done he said: —“I thought you were lying when you said you are a virgin because of the type of friends that you have they are cheaters. So I thought you were not a virgin.”

Nobuhle pointed out that she was not prepared to do sex, but she was forced by her boyfriend who knew that Nobuhle was vulnerable, and therefore used this vulnerability to advance his own interests. Nobuhle was vulnerable because it was late at night and she could not go home because she was scared of her mother who was going to punish her because it was very late. Nobuhle's sexual violation appears to have been informed primarily by the fact that she was a virgin, therefore providing a trigger for her boyfriend to violate her sexually. Studies in South Africa context have shown for instance how having sex with someone who is a virgin is particularly prized amongst some men in South Africa. It was clear that this was the case in this study that girls were forced by their boyfriends to have sex and most of the girls were not ready. This is most visible by the excuse in the end of the violation: her boyfriend claims to have simply wanted to see if she was telling the truth about her virginity. The fault shifts from violation to



Nobuhle's company; her boyfriend suggests that it is due to the friend she keeps that he doubted her. This suggests a deeply embedded form of violence. Not only is Nobuhle physically violated through the rape; she is also psychologically violated as the blame shifts from the boyfriend to her: she is the one who kept bad friends, hence the rape. Penn-Kekana (1997) argues that sexual violence usually occurs at an earlier stage in sexual relationships. This is confirmed by Hallman (2005) who argued that there is evidence that the first sexual practices that women have are forced and that many women do not enjoy their first sexual experience. It was clear from Nobuhle's story, as well as many others in the study that this was also the case in this study.

One of the other aspects that Nobuhle shared regards the lack of reporting that often follows after the violation. When pressed further about not reporting, Nobuhle noted that although she was raped, she did not want to press charges because she found this to be a waste of time and she still needed her boyfriend. Nobuhle was aware of her legal right to report the case of rape, but she decided not to report the case. She decided to conform to traditional femininity by not challenging her boyfriend. In this sense, Nobuhle demonstrated the qualities of gentleness and submission. As Leclerc-Madlala (2001) asserts, young African girls' cultures often teach them to be submissive, and the same was found in this instance and many other cases interviewed. An interesting aspect that emerges in Nobuhle's narrative regards how masculinity is constructed in relation to sexual encounters. Note for instance that Nobuhle's boyfriend asked her several times whether she is a virgin. This is connected to issues of masculinity. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) argue that young boys want to assert their masculinity through sleeping with virgins as a matter of conquering. In this study it became clear that Nobuhle's first sexual encounter was about conquering. Her boyfriend wanted to conquer her in that way, because he repeatedly asks: "Are you a virgin?" and then of course at the end of the quotation we realise that in fact he wasn't really concerned about protecting Nobuhle's virginity, he simply wanted to sleep with her because she was a virgin.

Nobuhle later revealed that her boyfriend "had several girlfriends", "was a cheater", "had babies", and was therefore really not concerned about her wellbeing. He was simply concerned about conquering a virgin – an ideal for hegemonic masculinity. It is important to point out that

no protection was used during this encounter, a major concern given the fact that it was clear that her boyfriend was having other unprotected sexual encounters with other girls. I return to this point later on in the chapter.

Nobuhle further disassociated herself from this sexual activity. She stated that her boyfriend was the one who wanted to have sex with her. Another similar story to that of Nobuhle emerged from Zothile, who noted that she was raped by her boyfriend and as result of that she fell pregnant. She stated:

—.. Mam to be honest I was not ready. He was my boyfriend, but I think he raped me, and as a result of that, I fell pregnant. Of course we did not agree to do this, I was sure that I did not want to do it (sex), but he forced me, I did not want to do it and that is a rape. I kept on telling him that I wanted to have sex when I'm 21, but he kept on pushing me, until he raped me.

Zothile expressed that there was no agreement between her and the boyfriend, but sex was made against her will, and she fell pregnant. This means she was forced to have sex and the condom was not used. This suggests that sometimes girls have no power in sexual negotiations. As Jewkes et al. (2009) note, imbalances in power prevent young women from discussing and doing what they want about sex. The effect of this is that some pregnancies are the result of forced sex because many young girls/ women cannot discuss about condoms. Rape, force, or coercion discussed by the girls in this study suggests that the boys control the relationship and dictate what should be done according only to their (boys') terms. As Jewkes and Abraham (2002) assert that the notions of male control over women and male entitlement to have sex has a strong feature in the dominant constructions of masculinity in South Africa. According to Jewkes, Skweyiya, Morrell and Dunkle (2011), research in South Africa indicates that the notions of hegemonic masculinity play a critical role in perpetuating gender inequalities in South Africa. Jewkes et al. (2011) describe rape as evidence of control over women. I argue that masculinity makes it difficult for the young girls in this study to abstain, because most of the girls revealed that they were forced or raped by their boyfriends on their first sexual encounters. It is a notion of hegemonic masculinity to conquer a virgin. This behaviour of men and boys by practicing unsafe sex puts women and girls at risk of contracting HIV. The girls further indicated that the

boys violated their rights and their wishes of remaining virgins until they were ready for sex. One of the participants articulated:

... Of course, both of us have rules ... the rule is that since I am a virgin I don't want to have sex until I reached my 21<sup>st</sup> ...but he broke that rule by forcing me to have sex (Zothile)

Zothile put it clear that her boyfriend broke the rule that they made about having sex when she reached the age of 21, she wanted to keep that rule. This means that it was very important for her to remain a virgin. Zothile believed in the idea of female purity and virginity (Bhana & Anderson, 2012). This is supported by Leclerc-Madlala (2003) who argues that in many parts of Africa, a strong symbolic and cultural value is attached to virginity and virgin girls (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003). Girls in this study kept on emphasizing how much they wanted to remain virgins, but how this wish was taken away from them without their consent. According to Leclerc-Madlala (2002) and Moletsane et al. (2008) the virgin status of girls is often associated with good health and fertility, and is also believed to protect and honour the family while also serving as a lure to fetch a higher bridal price. This means that if a girl remains a virgin the family was exempted to pay some money to the chief and was also respected by the society. But if their daughter was no longer a virgin the family had to pay some money to the chief and lost dignity from the society. This was the case for all the participants. The girls wanted to keep their virginity.

Zothile revealed to me that her boyfriend accused her of having another partner that she slept with when she would refuse to have sex with him. She noted:

... He said that I was lying... I had another guy that I sleep with that is why I don't want to sleep with him wara wara (nagging).

It is clear that Zothile's boyfriend was using a form of trickery by accusing her of sleeping with another guy. This was a strategy that he used to get her to sleep with her, because the accusations were geared to convince Zothile to sleep with him. Zothile indicated that it became clear after the forced sexual encounter that the drive was for her to accede to the sexual advances. This

again suggests that many men continue to pursue girls and women who are virgins as a strategy to conquer them. As Bhana and Anderson (2012) assert, men prefer virgins because this is the ultimate symbol of purity.

What was interesting however with the case was that Zothile exercised agency by ending the relationship. She noted that:

... Since he had decided to rape me I couldn't continue with the relationship.

We had to break up, the only thing that connects us is the child, and he should support the child because I am unemployed...

Zothile had exercised agency by breaking up with her boyfriend. She interestingly deviated from gender norms which often promote the culture of submissiveness on women. She pointed out that he was the one who took a decision to rape her; therefore she had to punish him. The relationship had to be terminated and he had to support the child. In this above extract Zothile rebels and challenges the accepted gender norms of society. She further gives an instruction that he (the boyfriend) is responsible to support the child. Zothile reflects a powerful agency, an agency of a young woman who transgresses masculinity norms which give men more power over women. She demonstrates power by dictating who must do what and what should happen, and why.

Unlike Zothile, the other girls in this study conformed to gender norms which promote that young women and girls should be subordinate to men and boys, and this subordination often put them at vulnerability and risk. Some girls did not challenge their boyfriends, but instead accommodated and accepted the men's demands. Thokozani noted that she lost her virginity because she was pressured by her boyfriend to prove if she was really a virgin.

–He begged me... and begged me saying how I will know if you are a virgin or not...”

Thokozani put it clear that she was under pressure to prove her virginity status. This shows that some women have no control over sexual matters and their boyfriends had power to determine when, where and how sexual activity should be occurred and this put them at risk.

Although the majority of the participants said they were coerced in terms of their first sexual encounter, it was not that all the girls were coerced. For instance, Thembekile noted that she had actually had a positive first sexual encounter:

–He asked me to have sex with him. Then I agreed because I love him.”

Although Thembekile had noted that her first sexual encounter was positive, it is interesting that she equates sex to love. Thembekile pointed out that she agreed to have sex with her boyfriend because she loved him. This suggests that if you love your boyfriend you must prove that by having sex with him. By having sex you are showing that you really love him. This has also been found to be the case in other studies. For instance, studies by Reddy and Dunne (2007) found that teenage girls often associate sexual activity with love. This is also consistent with another study which revealed that young women’s agreement to love was equated with having penetrative intercourse (Wood et al., 1998).

What is also interesting is that Thembekile is the only girl in this study who practiced safe sex on her first sexual encounter. Thembekile exercised sexual agency because she used a condom during sex. This is not to say that other girls did this on purpose, as it has been mentioned that girls had negative sexual debut as they were coerced, forced or raped by their boyfriends.

Another interesting aspect which emerged with the coercion that happened to girls related to how the boyfriends associated the need to have sex with proving one’s heterosexuality, and therefore demonstrating that one is a man. Aphelele, a participant in the study, noted that her boyfriend kept on insisting that he was a boy not a gay, therefore demanding to have sex. Aphelele noted:

...but he kept on saying that he was a boy not a gay. He forced me to have sex with him because he said he wasn’t gay.

This excerpt suggests that Aphelele’s boyfriend framed heterosexual men as unable to control their feelings as he claimed that he was a man; therefore he was entitled to have sex with his girlfriend. A gay man was viewed as not a real man. This shows how heterosexual men disassociated themselves from homosexuality in order to reaffirm their own sexuality (Froyum, 2007). This is consistent with the study which indicated that a group of American low-income

Black teenagers treated homosexuality, and even transgender behaviours, as a deficiency or a contagion that needed to be guarded against (Froyum, 2007).

The above theme highlighted that the majority of the girls had negative sexual debuts as they were violated by their boyfriends and no protection was used. In the next theme I focus intently on the lack of protection during sexual encounters.

#### **4.3.2 THEME 2: YOUNG GIRLS AND THE USE OF PROTECTION**

One of the things that came through quite clearly in this study was the inconsistency of condom use: very few girls indicated that they used condoms consistently during sex. Some girls in this study indicated that they never used a condom, while a few girls indicated that they chose to abstain from sex. The girls in this study provided various reasons pertaining to the use of condoms for protection. Four groups of girls emerged in relation to condom use during the conversations: three girls represented those who sometimes used condoms, two girls represented those who did not use condom at all, three girls represented those who always used a condom and two girls represented those who have chosen to abstain from sex.

The majority of the girls indicated that they did not use the condom during sex, as I already mentioned above, and different reasons were provided for their decisions. During the focus group interviews Aphelele noted that it was not necessary to use a condom on *\_indoda yakho* (your real man), but you should use it (condom) on *\_umakhwapheni* (secret lover). She noted that:

-If I have just met the guy no matter what, I can ask him to use a condom, but if it's *\_indoda yami* (my real man) I cannot use it."

-Of course we would have known each other for quite some time."

-But if it is *umakhwapheni* ... we can use it."

Aphelele clearly suggests that she will not use the condom with her regular partner. She claims that she will definitely use the condom with a stranger. She believes that it is safe not to use a condom if you have known a person for a long time. This is consistent with the study conducted by MacPhail and Campbell (2001) which found both males and females expressed that condoms should not be used on *\_steady* partners, but that condoms should be used on casual partners.

Aphelele noted that she trusted her boyfriend when he made a promise to her. So they do not need to use a condom. She said that her boyfriend told her that

“I know that I love you and I will never cheat on you ... so we should not use the condom...”

Clearly, Aphelele trusts her boyfriend. In this case Aphelele associates love with trust. She believes him. She was even willing to risk her life by not using a condom when practicing sex, despite the risk of HIV infection, other related diseases and unplanned pregnancies. This is consistent with the study by Reddy and Dunne (2007), which highlighted that girls' understanding of love was linked to trust and that they were prepared to compromise their safety, irrespective of the risks involved. Holland et al. (1990) assert that other girls believed that once they developed trust with their boyfriends, the condom was not necessary and this showed seriousness in the relationship. Aphelele noted that she practiced unsafe sex with her boyfriend:

“... I had to do what he wanted, we stopped using a condom”.

Aphelele pointed out that she practiced unsafe sex because she wanted to please her boyfriend. She confessed that she did it for him, not for her. She gave all the powers to her boyfriend. This means that she conformed to the notions of masculinity which assign the power and dominance to men. In other words she did not challenge patriarchy. Leclerc-Madlala asserts that African women and girls are often compelled by social and cultural restrictions to comply with sexual behaviours that promote male domination and restrict their sexual agency. In this case “African women and girls” refer to “black” women and girls. Leclerc-Madlala's (2001) study revealed that in a Zulu culture, the role of women is also defined by her sexual engagement which often places women within this culture in a vulnerable submissive state. Leclerc-Madlala (2001) argues that young African girls' cultures, as in this case of Zulu culture, have taught them to be submissive. . Leclerc-Madlala (2001) further argues that young women are prepared for a future of muted wifehood. It is often her duty to show love by meeting all of her husband's needs, including his sexual needs, when, where and how he wants sex. While some may suggest that Aphelele's decision not to use a condom during sex demonstrates her own individual agency, I argue that this is not the case, because she equates trust with love. She believes her boyfriend and accedes

to her request for risky sexual engagements. Her actions are reflective of the covert cultural processes that work to subordinate women.

Aphelele was not alone in the inconsistent use of condoms. Nokubekezela reported that she did not use condoms on a regular basis. She pointed out that they (her and her boyfriend) sometimes used a condom and sometimes they just take a break because her boyfriend does not want to use a condom. She noted that —. My boyfriend tells me that he can't find it. Maybe he lies, because he doesn't want to use it that day...”Nokubekezela is quite aware that her boyfriend lies when he says he can't find a condom. The fact is that he does not want to use condom. She also highlighted that, her boyfriend took care of the condom issues: —. He is the only one who is looking for it (condom)”. Nokubekezela relied on her boyfriend to control the issue of condom use. She felt it was her boyfriend's responsibility to facilitate the issues related to sex. She put it clear that it is him not her who should control the process. This shows that Nokubekezela believes that women must be passive on sexual matters. Nokubekezela allowed her partner to lead and control their sexual activities. This may place her at a high risk of HIV infection and other related diseases and even unplanned pregnancies.

While the girls highlighted above did occasionally use condoms, some did not use condoms at all. Ngenzeni, for instance, noted that she did not use a condom when she had sex with her boyfriend. She explained that her boyfriend wanted a child. Ngenzeni confessed that she was using contraceptives, and her boyfriend did not know about that. She noted:

Ya...my boyfriend and I once used a condom, but we are no longer using it (condom) now because my boyfriend wants a child, but I am using contraceptives, but he does not know...

Ngenzeni has stopped to use a condom because she wanted to please her boyfriend by pretending that she wanted to conceive a baby. By doing this, Ngenzeni put her life at risk of contracting HIV infection by not using a condom when she had sex. She rendered herself vulnerable to HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections. This is noticed in the study conducted by Reddy and Dunne (2007) which revealed that young women articulated that their focus was to



satisfy the needs of their loved ones rather than on what they knew to be unsafe sex. Ngenzeni stressed the point that her boyfriend wanted a child:

—He wants a child. He does not have a child, but he has no idea that I am on contraception. I am using contraceptives... and he is expecting a child from me”.

Ngenzeni kept on emphasizing that her boyfriend wanted a child. Ngenzeni decided to deceive him, because there was a lot of pressure from the boyfriend to have a child. This is connected to issues of femininity. The feminine ideal indicates how a woman should behave. As a woman she has to comply with the gender norms. In this case she is prepared to risk her life by practicing unsafe sex (not using a condom) for the purpose of pleasing her partner pretending that she needed a child, which in reality she did not need. This behaviour may put her at risk of infection by HIV and other related diseases.

Ngenzeni further revealed in the conversation what her boyfriend said that when he burst the condom:

—He burst it... and then he pulled it out and said nx... of course, baby... I hated this thing (condom).”

The above statement suggests that Ngenzeni’s boyfriend did not like to use a condom. This is consistent with the study conducted by Varga (2003) which indicated that young men viewed the use of condom as against the ideas of masculinity and pleasure. Ngenzeni indicated that she loved him and she was aware that she was at risk: —If I love him I know that I will be infected by him”, she noted. Ngenzeni expresses how much she loves her boyfriend. She is aware that she could be infected by her boyfriend because they are not using a condom, but there she notes that there is nothing that she could do because her boyfriend is against the use of condoms. Demanding condom use will undermine the true love she has with her boyfriend. In this sense, she prefers to practice unsafe sex rather than safe sex. This was also evident in the study conducted by Reddy and Dunne (2007), which revealed that more than often girls compromised their agency in relationships while men did not. Reddy and Dunne (2007) further argues that this

need for love further places young girls under pressure and thus due to this they lack good decision making skills when it comes to sex.

There was a group of very few girls who chose to use the condom. Zothile was among those girls. Though Zothile previously indicated that she was coerced by her boyfriend as a result she fell pregnant, she still showed assertiveness in her character. What is interesting is that she never allowed being coerced into sex by her former boyfriend to become an obstacle in her life. Zothile indicated that they (current boyfriend and her) consistently used a condom. Zothile and her boyfriend exercised sexual agency by practicing safe sex. She noted in response to whether she has unsafe sex

–Hhayi! (No!) ...We use it (condom) all the time”.

Interestingly, Zothile uses ‘we’ to explain that the relationship is not controlled by only one person, but rather that she and her boyfriend work together to facilitate the use of a condom. She has power to negotiate safe practice. She highlighted that they negotiated about condom use with her boyfriend. She expressed what her boyfriend said to her. —. My wish is that whenever we have sex, we use a condom all the time because I don’t need a child at the moment.” The above statement clearly demonstrates that Zothile’s boyfriend conforms to a different type of masculinity; albeit that not wanting pregnancy appears to be the focus for the use of condoms. While clearly not without problems, this is commendable in a country where young men are encouraged to have children at a young age to exhibit their heterosexual masculinities. Zothile’s boyfriend appears to involve his girlfriend in decision making. He (boyfriend) uses ‘we’ when he negotiates about sexual matters. In this sense Zothile and her boyfriend deconstruct and destabilise the femininity and masculinity ideals which dictate how men and women should behave (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010).

Finally, Bathini’s represented a different type of femininity: one that preferred abstinence in relationships. This position was different compared to those of the other participants in this study. She wanted to remain a virgin until marriage, noting that –I will sleep with him on the day I get married. It is my wish, is my wish that I sleep with him on my wedding day.” Bathini associates sex with marriage. She believes that sex must be practiced by married couples. She is

determined to maintain her virginity until her marriage. Mudaly (2012) argues that the notions of love, trust, virginity and marriage are the central constructs of traditional notions of what it means to be considered a good girl. This has also been previously noted by Scorgie (2002) who argues that in today's society women's dignity and pride is linked with the avoidance of premarital motherhood. Clearly, while Bathini should be commended for protecting herself, this position is not without problems as it is mainly centred on controlling girl's sexualities. While abstinence from sex is particularly encouraged amongst young people, it is true that young people are also sexual beings, and should be viewed as such. Nevertheless, Bathini's stance is interesting given the various expressions of sexuality presented by the girls under study.

The above theme indicated the majority of the girls did not use a condom consistently. What is interesting was that some girls in this study exercise sexual agency by practicing safe sex. I now pay particular attention to the pressures that govern feminine sexuality.

### **4.3.3. THEME 3: SOCIETY, WOMEN AND SEX**

The majority of the girls in the study indicated that they could not carry condoms because this was attached to negative reputations and labels for those girls that carry protection. During the focus group and individual interviews participants expressed their views about this issue of condoms. Thembekile expressed her fears about carrying a condom, she said:

—..Because if I'm the one who carries the condom he will say ...this girl is not good, she sleeps around..."

Thembekile was scared to carry a condom because she felt that her boyfriend would view her as someone with low morals if she carried one. This study is in line with the study conducted by Varga (2003), which suggests that both male and female participants view girls who suggested condoms as inappropriate, reflecting loose morals. This is also supported by the study conducted by MacPhail and Campbell (2001) which found that male participants stated that they did not trust girls who carried condoms.

Thembekile believed that a proper woman does not carry a condom. She noted that:

—It is acceptable if the man carries a condom not a woman."

Thembekile believes that a good woman does not carry a condom because that will mean she knows more about sex. But a man can carry a condom because he knows about sex. This is connected with gender role norms which prescribe how men and women should behave (Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). Thembekile expressed that a woman must be innocent and passive on sexual matters. On the other hand, a man must be active and show knowledge about sexual activities. Marston and King (2006) argue that young women face tremendous social pressure to maintain an image of innocence and thus have to suppress any sexual knowledge they may have.

Ngenzeni had the same view like other girls in this study that she could not carry a condom as she was scared of her boyfriend. She argued that “I cannot be able to carry a condom. I can’t carry it. ...that...\_person‘, oh no...!” Note for instance that the person referred to as “that person” is in fact Ngenzeni’s boyfriend. This suggests that her boyfriend may be too authoritarian in the relationship, causing a degree of distance between Ngenzeni and her boyfriend. That is why it becomes difficult for her to discuss condom issues. He dominates the relationship, often placing Ngenzeni at greater risk of infection. This is also found in the study conducted by Reddy and Dunne (2007) which indicated that many girls suggested that it was easy to submit to unsafe sex, than even to raise the issues of safe practices and be labeled “\_cheap“ or “\_loose“ by their partners. Ngenzeni pointed out that her boyfriend hated condoms:

“The worst part is that he hates condom, oh no! ...I cannot carry it.”

The issue that Ngenzeni’s boyfriend hates condoms consistently emerged during our individual interview. This means that safe sex couldn’t easily be negotiated in the relationship as already established above. It is clear that it was difficult even to mention the word “\_condom“ to her boyfriend. This is noticed in the above extract by the way that she expressed how her boyfriend hated the condoms. Ngenzeni decided to comply with the accepted norms of the society which expect her to be an innocent girl who does not talk about sex. The result of the disdain for the condom as well as the social pressures on Ngenzeni is that she ends up preferring to practice unsafe sex than being branded as “\_loose” by her boyfriend, and this behaviour put her at great risk of contracting HIV.

Ngenzeni also highlighted that her boyfriend would think that she was sleeping around, and this was also a concern for other girls in this study:

“I think my boyfriend will say that I am used to do this to other men (carry condoms)”

It was clear that Ngenzeni believed that her boyfriend would think of her as ‘loose’ if she carries a condom. Therefore, she has decided to compromise her agency by not insisting on condom use rather than being labeled as a ‘bitch’. She added: “maybe many people will say it means that woman is ‘isifebe’ (bitch) ... because in a rural area they are very particular about izifebe (bitch). That is a ‘taboo’ the big one.” Ngenzeni is influenced by her community and social pressures. Marston and King (2006) argue that social pressures put pressure on girls not to talk about sex or acknowledge sexuality.

The above theme highlights that the majority of the girls indicated that they could not carry a condom due to the fear of rejection and stigmatization by their partners and their communities. The majority of the girls viewed boys as having more knowledge about sex. The majority of the girls submitted to unsafe practices rather than being labeled as loose by their partners, a similar claim made by Jewkes and Morrell (2010). This behaviour put the girls at great risk of HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and even unplanned pregnancies.

#### **4.3.4 THEME 4: MULTIPLE SEXUAL PARTNERS AND SEXUAL RISK**

When the participants were asked about their thoughts on women having multiple sexual partners, different views were given. Many participants indicated that it was not right to have many sexual partners. However, in spite of the value attached to women’s fidelity and innocence, many girls indicated that they engaged in multiple sexual relationships for love and for economic pressures.

Thokozani’s view about a woman with more than one partner was different from other girls. Thokozani felt it was a good idea to have many partners. She noted that she was dating many partners

“... Ehhe (yes)... I think it is right... All of them ... they (boyfriends) are four.”

In this sense Thokozani breaks with the ideas that only men should have many partners. Thokozani transgresses the femininity norms which prevent her from having more than one sexual partner. Though Thokozani show assertiveness, this behaviour puts her at a high risk of HIV and other transmitted infections and even unplanned pregnancies. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) argue that dating multiple partners make girls vulnerable to sexual risk.

When Thokozani was asked if she used protection when having sex with her partners, it was clear that she was at great risk. She noted:

–I use the condom to the other two (boyfriends) that I trust.”

–The others ...no... no... I sleep with them with a condom because I don't trust them... I don't trust them at all”

...when I heard rumours about them no I can't ...

Thokozani had four boyfriends. She did not use a condom on the two boyfriends that she trusted, but she used a condom on the other two boyfriends that she did not trust. This extract clearly showed that the use of condom was inconsistent, as argued elsewhere in this thesis. The decision of the use of condom was based on trust. This extract also manifested that she was aware of the risk as a result she insisted a condom use on the other partners. She acknowledged the need to use a condom when she had sex with the other partners. She emphasized that she would make sure that she used a condom with the other partners and she would never make a mistake of not using a condom with these partners.

Thokozani justified why she had multiple sexual partners. She noted:

It's like... especially, if a person is not working, there is nothing that you can ask from that person. It's like you just love each other. But ... If I have two boyfriends I know that if the other one is not working, the other one is working, so I will ask the one that is working of course he will give me what I want...

It is clear that Thokozani links love to material gain. She wants a man who can provide what she wants. A man who will love her and also give her what she needs. Thokozani exercises agency by initiating love in order to benefit. In another study conducted by Selikow and Mbulaheni

(2013) it was also evident that many girls initiated love for their wants. Women can exercise agency in many ways, for instance exploiting sexuality for resources gain, and avoiding or delaying sex (Masvawure, 2010; Selikow & Gibbon, 2010). According to Petesch, Smulovitz and Walton (2005), agency refers to a process whereby individuals are able to envisage different paths of action decide among them and take action along a chosen route.

Nomathamsanqa shared the same opinion with Thokozani, who supported the idea that it was acceptable to have more than one partner. Nomathamsanqa gives reasons for having more than one partner. She noted that it was a good idea to have more than one partner.

—Ya... it is ok to have another partner. My other partner keeps me busy, because my boyfriend is always at work. Mam... I'm just keeping myself busy. He thinks I'm serious about our relationship, but I'm not.”

Nomathamsanqa is exercising agency by having another boyfriend in order to release her stress. She is transgressing normative expectations that encourage men and boys to have multiple partners in order to fulfill their needs. Nomathamsanqa wants another partner to avoid boredom while her boyfriend is not around. She exercises agency by deceiving her partner, making him think that the relationship is serious, while it is not. Nomathamsanqa is exercising sexual agency by not having sex with her boyfriend. She deconstructs ideas which condone men and boys to be entitled to sex and control in the relationships. Of course, as Nomathamsanqa exercises agency by having multiple partners, this behavior makes her vulnerable to HIV infection (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010).

When the participants were asked about their views about a woman with multiple sexual partners the majority of the girls described her as “bad”, “promiscuous”, “isifebe” (this is term given to women who are considered loose or whores). One of the participants expressed that she was against the idea of a girl having multiple sexual partners. Ngenzeni noted that it was a bad idea for a woman to have many sexual partners, noting that “...No I will feel like a person with low morals”. Ngenzeni labeled a woman with low morals as “isifebe.” Though Ngenzeni felt this way about this woman she argued in a contradictory manner that multiple partners were needed to provide for women’s needs. She suggested that:

–It's not ok to have one partner... like you need R100, 00 to this one (partner) and he says I don't have money... then you ask the other one and... sometimes you get it. It helps if you have two partners not just one...”

Although more value was given to female fidelity, the majority of the girls felt pressured to have many partners due to economic conditions. Though Ngenzeni felt this way, she considered that multiple partners were needed to provide their (girls) needs. Ngenzeni supported the idea that women must have multiple sexual partners: She argued that a woman must not rely on one partner. She must have another to provide emotional support.

–But other people say it is not ok to stand on one foot, others say you must stand with two legs... because if one leg broke you would be left with nothing it means you won't be able to walk because you stand on one foot. If the other partner cheats at least you can have the other one (partner). .. You know... now we are scared of the diseases. But the truth is it is not cool to have one partner.”

This clearly demonstrates that Ngenzeni is aware of the double standards by the boys, as a result she takes her sexuality into her own hands. She needs a reserve partner to lean on if her boyfriend cheats on her or if he treats her unfairly. However, she is scared that if she has another boyfriend she might get infected with HIV. This is clearly visible in this instance. What this suggests is also a changing profile concerning women's sexualities.

Aphelele noted that multiple sexual partnerships are accepted if practiced by men. She noted:

–..No... no... no...! It's not right if you are a girl.  
...at least it is understandable on boys, but on girls many people see you as a  
\_whore”.

It is quite clear that Aphelele complies with patriarchal notions which promote the idea that men and boys can have as many partners as they wish, but women and girls are prohibited from having more than one partner. Women are expected to accept that men have multiple sexual partners and not to question this. This is the reason why Aphelele accommodates and approves this behaviour of men having many partners. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) note that when a woman



has many partners, she is labeled as ‘promiscuous’ or ‘whore’ while men are labeled as ‘amasoka’, meaning ‘playboys’.

The above theme highlighted that many participants indicated that it was not right to have many sexual partners, therefore subscribing to traditional ideas of femininity. However, as clearly evidenced above, despite the value attached to woman fidelity, some girls indicated that they engaged in multiple sexual relationships for love and for economic pressures. This of course is connected to the socio-economic conditions that many township girls find themselves in (Hunter, 2010). I now explore this below.

#### **4.3.5 THEME 5: POVERTY AND RELATIONSHIPS**

Ackermann and de Klerk (2002) argue that female poverty is regarded as a threat to the well-being of women, particularly because it can play a crucial feature in encouraging behaviours that increases the risk of HIV infection. This became clearly visible in the conversations with the participants in this study. Nokubekezela, for example, argued that the death of her father left her devastated, because she struggled to get money to go to school. She argued that she had sex because she was vulnerable:

—That’s why Madam I found myself sleeping with this guy...because this boy used to give me a lift when I was coming here to school. ...and also gave me pocket money for school...”

It is clear that Nokubekezela was involved in this relationship because she needed the transport money to go to school. In this sense, Nokubekezela used sex as a way of getting out of poverty. The above suggests that she needed a man who could provide her basic needs such as transport fees, cosmetics and pocket money.

Nokubekezela noted that her boyfriend used to give her some money: “He also gave me pocket money for school...” Nokubekezela tied love and money with a masculine provider (Hunter, 2010). This combination of love-money and masculinity provider was dangerous to her. As a result, after the boyfriend provided for her, he claimed that he was entitled to have sex with her.

Hegemonic masculinity prescribes that men have privilege to dominate and make decisions on sexual matters and women have to be submissive and comply with the accepted gender roles. It becomes very difficult for her to insist or suggest condom use because the man has provided what she needed. Hallman (2005) argues that young women's low socio-economic status hampers their ability to protect themselves and this places young women at risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. Nokubekezela noted that she was coerced by her boyfriend:

— .I.knew that if I refused to have sex with him he was going to beat me and demand all his money that he has given me..." she noted sombrely.

From the above statement, it becomes clear that Nokubekezela was coerced by her boyfriend to sleep with her. Nokubekezela explained that her boyfriend was abusive. Nokubekezela had to accept coercion in order to access financial security. The state of poverty compromised her ability to refuse unsafe sex. She had to practice unsafe sex as she wanted financial support. She had to sleep with him in order to get the transport and also the money to go to school. Campbell (2000) argues that poverty is a widespread challenging social problem and many women are locked into relations of dependency. As established in earlier themes, Nokubekezela often had unprotected sex with her boyfriend, therefore placing herself at great risk: "I don't know ... we just don't find condoms..." she noted. In this sense Nokubekezela had to submit to her boyfriend by practicing unprotected sex; this was a means to access financial security. This is consistent with the study conducted by Pettifor, MacPhail, Anderson and Maman (2012) that highlighted that young African women reported that they were financially dependent on their partners and this contributed to cases where they felt they should not use condoms. Furthermore, Hallman (2005) asserts that women of low socio-economic status are often placed at a disadvantage when it comes to sexual negotiation because they may be more dependent on their partners for survival.

Other girls in this study indicated that they were not involved in these types of relationships but had friends and knew of other girls in the school or in the community who were involved in transactional relationships (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Nobuhle indicated that some girls exposed themselves to sexual risk. She noted that:

—Yah... You hunt for a guy who has got money and the car...the guy will say:  
—I will give you everything you want'.... Then you become excited, and you  
end up having sex with him, because he provides everything for you.”

Nobuhle pointed out that girls searched for guys who had resources. It is clear that patriarchy enabled a situation where notions of a “man as provider” were accepted as normal. The responses from the participants suggested that a man had more power than a woman. When the man has provided for the woman, it was deemed normal for him to expect sex from her, and the sex was done according to his terms, therefore placing women or the girls at a high risk of HIV infection. It has been argued that when sex is rewarded with resources, there is increased relational power of men over women (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Selikow & Gibbon, 2010).

The above theme indicated that poverty plays an important role in driving some girls to engage in risky sexual behaviours which further expose them to high risks of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. I now explore another factor, related to poverty, which emerged as placing young girls at risk.

#### **4.3.6 THEME 6: GIRLS OLDER MEN AND CONDOM USAGE**

Studies completed prior to this have found that young women form relationships for survival (needs) or for material gain or for elements of both, with older men (Masvawure, 2010; Selikow & Gibbon, 2010). In this study the participants indicated that most girls formed the relationships with older men for basic needs or for wants or for both. The participants were not involved in these relationships, but they provided the information about their relatives, friends who they (girls) knew from school, neighbours, and the community. The participants had also concerns about older men’s age. Nomusa was concerned about the age of her friend’s sugar daddy. She noted that:

- . That man is of the same age like her father.”
- . He qualifies to be her father not a partner.”
- . Ayi...she (the girl) can be her daughter....The man is too old for her.”

Nomsa was very concerned about this man's age. She has an image of him being a parent, a father-figure, not a lover. In her eyes, the man did not deserve her friend. Nomsa explained why her friends dated the older men: ~~My~~ "My friend has no parents, they died. She lives with young children. So if she wants to buy something, this man gives her the money." Nomsa's statement explains why a young girl is involved with an older man; it is for basic needs. She has a responsibility of taking care of her siblings. Therefore, she needs this 'older man' to provide for the family. The study conducted by Nkosana (2007) found that material gain was the main factor motivating girls to be involved with older men.

Nomsa was also concerned about the use of protection in her friend's relationship with the old man. She noted that:

-So if this person says I don't want to use condom, the girl can't refuse because this person will say I'm doing everything for you..."

The above statement shows that the girls' dependency on these older men became a barrier when it came to the issue of condom use. The girls' dependency makes it difficult to request their partners to use a condom during sex. Just because the man provides the needs for the girl then the man expects to benefit from the girl. The benefit is often sex without a condom. Kusunoki and Upchurch (2011) assert that young girls involved with older partners are less likely to demand contraception and condoms.

Aphelele described the older men who were involved with her friends:

-... Hhayi... they are very old, most of them are married and others have kids."

Aphelele shared the same view like the other participants who indicated that these men are very old. They have families. Aphelele explained why her friends loved these older men. She noted that:

I have friends who are dating older men who are working ... ya ...\_sugar daddies' ...they (girls) just want money and to boast about it... all of them (friends) have galaxy s4, s5... you know ... they boast about the type of cars that their boyfriends drive...

It is clear that young girls are dating older men for the purpose of gaining money and material benefit. By having money and expensive cell phones, they gain the recognition from their peers. This lifestyle boosts their status from the peers. This makes them have power over other girls because of the glamorous life that often accompanies relationships with older men. In this sense these girls exercise agency by exploiting these older men to get what they want. They are improving their lives. This is evident in the study conducted by Nkosana and Rosenthal (2008, p. 184) which found that a relationship with older men was viewed as way of acquiring a \_top up' that assisted to boost their status. A study conducted by Selikow and Mbulaheni (2013) on students involved in sugar daddy relationships found that the girls' relationships were based on wants. However, these girls put their lives at risk, because they had to pay the prize. After the older men had provided for the girl's needs, he might demand to have sex with her. As it has been already been mentioned, the sugar daddies are very old and the age difference made it difficult for the girls to refuse their demands.

Zothile indicated that her older sister dated the older man. She noted that

–The truth is ... my sister was dating the older men... he was my father's age... 43... and my sister is 19... just because he was a -taxi- owner, he is not married...he is a player (a person who has many girlfriends) because he has got this money.”

Zothile noted that she was disappointed that her sister was involved with an old man, who was supposed to be a parent to her not a sexual partner. She believed that her sister became involved with this man just because this man had money and her sister was in need of the money. She believed that was how she got trapped into that relationship. Zothile further argued that the man was single and he had many girlfriends because he had money. Zothile explained why her sister loved this man.

–My sister said to me... you see...when these older men come to you they give you everything you want... and you say this is the chance. They give you gifts, they take you out for dinner, they buy clothes for you... My sister was at the university. When she was at the university she had everything. The older man was paying for the accommodation. My sister had everything... She had money. She didn't even bother my mother by asking her for the money.”

This clearly shows the role that the older man played in Zothile's sister. He provided everything that she needed. He changed her life. When the older man came into her life, things changed. She began to live the good life. Zothile noted that her sister used the opportunity to get what she wanted:

–...you say this is the chance.”, she noted.

In this sense, Zothile's sister saw an opportunity and she grabbed it, as a result her needs and wants were met. She exercised agency to exploit the older man to provide her needs and wants. Bell (2012) argues that young women and girls often find themselves exercising sexual agency by engaging in transactional sex with older men or sugar daddies as a way of improving their financial situations. This is consistent with the studies such as those conducted by Leclerc-Madlala (2010), which revealed that some women have nicknames for their sugar daddies such as sponsors or investors or ministers. The concept of the Three C Girls (young women who sexually exploit men for cash, cars and cell phones) is well known across the entire southern Africa region (Leclerc-Madlala 2010). Often these relationships involve engagement without a condom. As Zothile noted

–He does not use a condom. If a person is old he does not use it (condom)...of course he is spending his money for you. So you don't have a say... because he provides everything for you. ...You have to follow all the instructions that he gives you. You can't ask him to use a condom because he is not using that thing (condom) ... because he provides all your needs.”

Zothile pointed out clearly that her sister's sugar daddy was against the condom use. He demanded that a woman follow all his orders as a man. This has to do with patriarchal relations

between men and women. Just because he is provided the finances and was older, he assumed more power over the woman. In addition he entitled himself to sex with the young girl. This clearly put the young girl at a higher risk of HIV infection.

The above theme highlighted that the participants indicated that some girls form relationships with older men for survival and material gain. The participants also indicated that condom use was very rare in these relationships and that placed women at high risk of contracting HIV infection. I explore below another issue which placed girls at risk.

#### **4.3.7 THEME 7: ALCOHOL AND SEX**

According to Abbey (2002) the combining of alcohol and sex is regarded as one factor that has been consistently linked to increased sexual risk for teenage women. In this study all the participants indicated that getting drunk made girls vulnerable to unwanted sexual advances, HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections or unplanned pregnancies. When the participants asked about the risk of being a girl and drinking alcohol the participants came up with different responses. Nomsa described her first sexual encounter. She noted that:

I was 14 years old. I was not ready at all. Secondly, we went out together to a certain event and then we had some drinks (alcohol). Then we got drunk. And then we went to his home. But he was a good person. We ended up having sex. It was my first time having sex. Then I got pregnant. I was not worried because he was a good person.

Nomsa argued that she was not ready to have sex. She argued that she was under the influence of alcohol when she first had sex with her boyfriend. She stated that it was her first time to have sex and she got pregnant. Despite this, Nomsa does not blame her boyfriend about the whole situation but she takes the responsibility. She still maintained that he was an honest man. She blamed herself that she failed to control herself because she was under the influence of liquor. It was interesting to note that Nomsa not once placed the responsibility for falling pregnant as a collective mistake. Rather, she owned the mistake, therefore conforming to patriarchal notions

which locate women as the only gender in heterosexual relationships able to control their sexuality. Men on the other hand are constructed as having uncontrollable sexual urges, which can only be stopped by the refusal of women to engage in sexual encounters. Clearly, such an approach absolves men from any responsibility when it comes to sexual encounters, something Nomsa appears to also believe in.

It was also interesting to note how Nomsa challenged the notion of girls drinking alcohol, while at the same time saying nothing about the boy's responsibility where alcohol is concerned. She believed that when girls drink alcohol, they lose control of the feelings and they end up having unplanned sex. She believed that when girls drink alcohol, they desire to have sex. Nomsa was not alone in this thinking. Other participants indicated that girls who drink alcohol become targets of boys for sex. Aphelele noted that girls who drink alcohol are not safe. She argued that:

“Other boys buy alcohol for you... give you more and more alcohol...and they put *\_umgwinyo* (drug) inside alcohol and you drink... then you'll have a black out... once you have a blackout it is when they get you... when you wake up in the morning you don't know who did you sleep with...”

This extract shows how the boys strategised to trap girls in order to have sex with them. The boys bring a lot of alcohol for the girls to drink. In addition, drugs are added into alcohol and this is done in order to diminish young girls' capacity to make good decisions about sexual activity. Through this the girls become vulnerable as they are unable to know who they slept with, how this happened and when it happened, who a girl should sleep with, how and when.

This connects with the idea that men must be providers. The purpose of men providing alcohol is to get the girls drunk so that they (men) can have sex with them (girls). By providing alcohol to the girls, men begin to demand sex. This is consistent with the study conducted by Livingston et al (2012) which found that participants expressed the feeling that young men are entitled to sex when they provide women with alcohol. Consistent with the above point, Zothile noted:



—..of course a woman should not buy alcohol for herself... this guy has to buy you alcohol...”

Zothile believed that man should offer a woman alcohol. In this case Zothile subscribed to normative social ideals, a man is always expected to provide for his partner whereas a woman must depend on her partner. Zothile further argued that a man has to be compensated for providing alcohol for the woman. “If he has bought alcohol for you then he must be rewarded in the end. When he is rewarded, then it is a risk to you as a woman”, she noted.

Zothile pointed out that the purpose of buying alcohol for the woman was to obtain sex; therefore a man has to get what he wants which in this case is sex. This is also connected to the notion of masculinity that men are entitled to sex. The woman has to compromise her ability to practice safe sex and this places her at a risk. Zothile suggested that the women are at risk of contracting HIV. She noted that:

—You are risking with your life... because you might discover that...that person is sometimes HIV positive, because you don't know him... and he doesn't know you ... you have just met him that night ... but he has slept with you.”

Zothile's argument is that young women are at a high risk of contracting HIV and AIDS, other related diseases and even unplanned pregnancies. Zothile argues that some women who drink alcohol are at a great risk of contracting HIV because they drink alcohol and have sex with strangers.

The participants in this study were aware of the risks linked to combining alcohol and sex on the other hand. However, the participants in this study view alcohol use offering various sexual advantages. All the participants indicated that alcohol liberates girls to express their feelings in sexual activities. Some of the participants argue that alcohol was useful in improving one's sexual drive, and as such they often got drunk to please their boyfriends. As Nobuhle stated:

—.. If you are drunk you don't feel shy. ....You change styles when you have sex.”

Nobuhle believes that when she drinks alcohol and have sex she performs better, she has confidence. She is able to express her feelings freely. Nobuhle shared the same view like the other girls in this study that alcohol liberates them (girls) to have fun and pleasure when they practice sex. Livingston et al. (2012) argue that these advantages diminish rather than encourage sexual agency as a result women compromise to practice safe sex. The above theme indicated that the participants recognized the risks linked with combining alcohol and sex, yet they also perceived ‘sexual liberation’ as an advantage when it comes to drinking alcohol.

#### **4.3.8 THEME 8: VIOLENCE AS LOVE**

Research conducted by Penn-Kekana (1997) shows that unequal gender power role in relationships and intimate partner violence place women at enhanced risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases. For instance, Penn-Kekana (1997) argues that when violence occurs in intimate relationships, it is often perceived as normative and is socially accepted by women and young girls. This was also evident in this study. The participants viewed beating as a sign of love and they also indicated that it was necessary for males to physically beat them in order to instill discipline in them.

In the focus group, the participants discussed about their own experiences, friends and other girls that they knew. Nobuhle explained:

—You see... my boyfriend always beats me... He just doesn't beat me for nothing... without a reason... He beats me when I'm wrong... I tell him that I deserve to be punished because I am wrong... because “*yangilungisa*” (discipline) he wants me to do the right thing.”

This reaction represents the views of the majority of girls in this study, who revealed that violence was viewed as normal and accepted behavior. As Nobuhle acknowledged, her boyfriend beats her all the time. She tolerates this behaviour of abuse from her boyfriend and even defends her partner. She views this as something that has to happen. In other words her boyfriend has a

right to control and hit her when she does something not pleasing to him. Of course, this finding is not new in the context of South Africa. As Jewkes and Morrell (2010) argue, African women often excuse the acceptance of male violence as essential for keeping the right men (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Further, Jewkes, Levin and Penn-Kekana (1997), in their study on domestic violence, found that a quarter of women have been beaten by their intimate partners.

Jewkes and Morrell (2010) assert that power imbalance result in men dominating and controlling women. Ngubane (2010) acknowledges that this domination is influenced by cultural values which men abide by and which are internalized by women. Note for instance the insistence above from Nobuhle that the violence is important because it disciplines and corrects her. She continued to note that:

“If my boyfriend keeps on giving me warnings and not beating me I will not take him serious, but I will continue to do the wrong things. If he beats me it helps because... ya... I will never do it again because I will know that he will beat me...”

Nobuhle believes that a problem in a relationship must be solved by applying violence. She pointed out that the verbal warnings do not work, what is working is only the violence. This shocking finding explains the normalisation of violence that is prevalent in South African society. It is also interesting to note that the sentiments that Nobuhle expresses are in line with what is often said in South Africa when it comes to corporal punishment. That young people see violence as a legitimate way of solving conflict is deeply concerning. This finding relates to a study by Sathiparsad (2005) on male youth in rural KwaZulu-Natal who spoke of violence in their relationships. The study revealed that young males expressed that it was deemed necessary to beat up woman if she failed a man in any way. In this regard Sathiparsad (2005) reminds us that girls are indeed able to hit boys but are socialised into thinking that such behaviour is unacceptable and will have negative consequences for them. Wood (1998) further draws our attention to the fact that many women, in fact, support the idea of women being controlled by men.

Some of the other girls in my study also indicated that they were physically abused by their boyfriends. Nomathamsanqa also indicated that she was beaten by her boyfriend. She noted: –You see here... (Showing me the bruises) I have been beaten by my boyfriend when he found out that I was cheating on him.” That she was found cheating appeared to excuse the violence in Nomathamsanqa’s eyes. She presented evidence of physical torture but felt that her boyfriend was entitled to punish her because she was with another man. Nomathamsanqa believed that if her boyfriend punishes her that will mean he loves her. This links to gender role norms which dictate how girls and boys should behave. In this case the man controls and dominates the relationship and the woman must tolerate and be submissive. The woman is punished for infidelity and if the man is found in such a condition, it becomes acceptable and the woman must tolerate this. What was surprising was that five girls in this study viewed this act of violence as a sign of love, which can be equated with ‘violence as love’ (Wood & Jewkes, 2001). The following quotes represent girl’s views in this regard:

I’m saying a person who beats you shows that he loves you... (Aphelele)

He cares about you... (Thembekile)

Others... they beat you because they love you so much... (Nomathamsanqa)

If your partner doesn’t love you, he will not punish you. (Ngenzeni)

I had a boyfriend who used to beat me a lot, but I loved him so much...  
(Nokubekezela)

Clearly these quotes show that the girls construct violence as love. They believe that if your partner beats you it means that he loves you. A study conducted by Strebel (1993) indicated that some girls sometimes viewed and expected to be beaten by their partners. According to Strebel (1993) this was seen as a symbol of love by the women and young girls. Further evidence of this trend was highlighted by Wood et al.’s (1998) study investigating factors associated with adolescent pregnancy. The study found that women suggested that forced intercourse which they

experienced with their partner could never be termed rape as ~~it~~ is your boyfriend and there is something between you.” Such a definition of rape, as an act committed by someone you are not in a relationship with (usually a stranger), is concerning. What was also surprising was that many girls in this study preferred boys who beat them to those who can’t beat them. The following quotes represent the participants’ views about boys who do not beat girls.

...But hah...a boy who says he is unable to beat a girl is dangerous (Nompilo)

...He is dangerous (the majority of the girls agreed on this point)

...is the one that has grudges... (Bathini)

Clearly these quotes show that the girls have negative perceptions about boys who do not beat girls as they view ‘\_violence’ as love, and violence as normative. This means that girls acknowledge boys who dominate and control the sexual relationships. This clearly demonstrates that the girls’ constructions of men are based on men who should control and use violence to instill discipline (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Jewkes and Morrell (2010) further argue that this is encouraged by cultural wisdom, such as the saying that beating is a symbol of love.

The participants indicated that girls were beaten by their boyfriends for various reasons. The following quotes highlight the reasons that caused the girls to be beaten by their boyfriends.

Chilling with your friends... (Nobuhle)

...Going to parties and drinking alcohol...you spend more time with your friends (Thokozani)

... Talking to another boy assuming that is your boyfriend, cheating on him.  
(Nomathamsanqa)

...He has to punish you if you do the wrong things. ... (Ngenzeni)

...There are those boys who beat you if he wants to have sex with you and you refuse to have sex with him...nx... (Aphelele)

Why you don't want to have sex with me... and he beats you... (Bathini)

These quotes show that the girls' freedom was restricted by the boys who expected them to comply with their rules. These quotes also highlight that the girls were not expected to be with their friends, girls were accused by their boyfriends of cheating on them and girls were also coerced into sex by their boyfriends, a point I exhausted in the first theme of this chapter.

Not all the girls in the study viewed 'violence as love'. Other girls insisted that if a boyfriend can beat them, they can terminate that relationship. This was a moment of hope in the study. Thokozani cited that her boyfriend beat her and she left him: "Hhayi (no)... I cannot stand to be beaten by a man", she exclaimed... Thokozani rejected the violence that was practiced by some boys who beat the girls. Thokozani resists a patriarchal culture which encourages men to dominate and control women in sexual matters and in decision-making in relationships. Thokozani noted that she terminated the relationship because her boyfriend beat her.

"I loved him a lot... but he beat me ...Ya...I left him."

Thokozani put it clear that she could not tolerate the violent behaviour that was performed by her boyfriend. Thokozani had to take a decision to end the relationship. Thokozani clearly demonstrates that she does not comply with normative femininity, which promotes that a woman should be submissive to her partner and fulfill his desires and needs. Thokozani exercises agency by taking a decision to terminate an abusive relationship, unlike other girls who compromise their agency by staying in such abusive relationships. For the purpose of this study agency is defined as a process whereby an individual take his or her decision to improve a particular situation or condition. I have highlighted various situations and conditions where the participants exercise agency.

The above theme highlighted that the majority of the girls believed that if their boyfriends beat them that was a sign that their boyfriends love them. What was positive was that at least one girl exercised agency by terminating an abusive relationship.

#### **4.3.9 THEME 9: YOUNG GIRLS' UNDERSTANDING OF HIV AND AIDS**

There was a strong sentiment that participants were well equipped with knowledge about HIV and AIDS. The majority of the participants indicated that they talked about HIV and AIDS with their friends. All the participants demonstrated an understanding that HIV and AIDS are dangerous. However, very few participants indicated that they discussed about HIV and AIDS with their boyfriends. Thembekile stated that she talked about HIV and AIDS with her boyfriend.

— .I talk especially with my man ... We discuss about how you get HIV ...”

Thembekile clearly demonstrates that they communicate very well with her boyfriend. When she talks she uses *‘we’* this means that they work collectively to prevent HIV infection. As a result of working as a team, they went together for HIV testing. Thembekile and her boyfriend also worked to create awareness about HIV. They educated people about how HIV can be transmitted and how it can be prevented.

Generally, all the participants had very good knowledge about HIV and AIDS. This is consistent with the study by MacPhail and Campbell’s (2001) on South African youth which found that knowledge about HIV and AIDS was high. While it was clear that the young women in my study had good information about HIV and AIDS and related prevention, what is concerning is that many continue to expose themselves, or to be exposed due to socio-economic issues, to infection. This suggests that more work in behaviour change among young people is still very much required.

## 4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the findings that arose from my research study which sought to explore how young people understand sexual risk in the age of HIV and AIDS. The data obtained from grade 10 and 11 black African teenage girls aged between 15-18 years suggests that understanding sexual risk is complicated by many social, economic and contextual factors which shape the lives of young girls. In an age of globalization and the empowerment of women, it is very concerning that many young women continue to subscribe to the patriarchal ideal, evidence of the deep-rooted processes of socialization embedded in the lives of South Africans. These findings are an eye-opener, suggesting that the 'bom free' generation is not so 'bom free' after all, if so many challenges related to sexuality are still experienced. In the next chapter I will provide the summary of the issues explored in this chapter, and will show how the main research questions of this study were answered. I will also present the implications arising from this study.



## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a consolidation of the main findings of this study. It also provides recommendations in an attempt to raise HIV and AIDS awareness and encourage safer sex practices among young people.

I used the qualitative method to investigate what black African teenage girls regard as sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. In my study, I employed focus group discussions and in-depth interviews to generate data. The participants in the study were purposively selected, as I searched for black African girls who ranged between 16-18 years old. All the participants were South African girls. The study investigated black African teenage girls' understandings of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study was guided by the perspective that gender is socially constructed, based on a growing body of evidence suggesting that femininity and masculinity are constructed differently according to the social conditions in which people are situated (Sathiparsad ,Taylor & De Vries, 2010).

My research study was guided by the following main research questions:

- What do African teenage girls understand as sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- Why do some African teenage girls engage in sexually risky behaviour in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- How do African teenage girls' understandings of sexual risk relate to their gender identities?

Several themes emerged from this study. These themes include sexual coercion as debut; young girls and the use of protection; society, women and sex; multiple sexual partners and sexual risk; poverty and relationships; girls, older men and condom usage; alcohol and sex; violence as love and young girls' understanding HIV and AIDS. Scholarly works on gender, race, class, sexuality

and HIV and AIDS were also included in the analysis and discussion of these findings in Chapter four. I present a summary of findings below, in an effort to demonstrate how the three research questions were addressed in the study.

## **5.2. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As indicated above, three research questions drove this study, below I show through the presentation of findings how the research questions were answered.

### **QUESTION 1: WHAT DO AFRICAN TEENAGE GIRLS UNDERSTAND AS SEXUAL RISK IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS?**

The study found the first question quite complicated to directly answer outright. This was mainly because young girls' understandings and perceptions of sexual risk appeared to be tied quite strongly with other social factors around them. For instance, the study found that the majority of the girls had negative sexual debuts as they were violated by their boyfriends during the sexual encounters. This appeared to be much in line with the study conducted by Holland et al (1990) in Manchester which found that many young women experienced first sexual encounter through coercion and force. This also resonates with work by Hallman (2005) who indicates that there is evidence that the first sexual practices that females have are often forced and that women do not like them. In this regard, Jewkes et al. (2009) argue that imbalances in power prevent young women from discussing and doing what they want about sex and that some pregnancies are the results of forced sex because they cannot talk about condoms. Ramazanoglu and Holland (1993) note that the social constructions of masculinity that play an active role in promoting male patriarchy and domination further constrain women as they are still not playing an active part regarding processes of sexual negotiation. It was clear from the girls' narratives in this study that the boys wanted to assert their masculinity through sleeping with virgins as a matter of conquering a virgin (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010).

A strong idea within masculinity is that men are expected to control on sexual matters. As a result some woman are coerced and sometimes even raped by their sexual partners. This places women at a high risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections and even unplanned pregnancies (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). The corresponding idea of femininity is that a woman has to comply and conform to gender norms. For instance, a woman may compromise her ability to negotiate safer sex or refuse sex because she cannot challenge dominant gender norms. I argue that these ideas of both masculinity and femininity put women and young girls at risk.

The findings of this study also highlighted that the majority of the girls did not use a condom consistently. The participants suggested various reasons why safer sex was not practiced. Many girls agreed that condoms should not be used with a regular partner because one would have known the person for a long time. However, the young women stressed that condoms should be definitely used with strangers. This concurs with the study conducted by MacPhail and Campbell (2001) which found both males and females expressed that condoms should not be used on steady partners but condoms should be used on casual partners. The study also found that all the girls associated love with trust. They trusted their boyfriends. In this study, girls were often willing to risk their lives by not practicing safe sex, despite the risk of HIV infection and other related diseases and unplanned pregnancies, all because they claimed to trust their boyfriends. This is consistent with the study by Reddy and Dunn (2007) which highlights those girls' understandings of love was linked to trust and that often girls were prepared to compromise their safety irrespective of the risks involved. Holland et al. (1909) note that other girls believed that once they developed trust with their boyfriends, the condom was not necessary and this showed seriousness in the relationship.

The study also highlighted that some participants practiced unsafe sex because they wanted to please their boyfriends. As one participant confessed, she had sex just for him not for her. She gave all the powers to her boyfriend. This evidence shows that social expectations around patriarchy make young girls vulnerable. Leclerc-Madlala (2001) also argues that young African girls' cultures often teach them to be submissive. Leclerc-Madlala (2001) further argues that young women are prepared for a future of muted wifhood. It is her duty to show love by

meeting all of her husband's needs, including his sexual need: when, where and how he wants sex.

The girls revealed that they were aware that they could be infected by their boyfriend because they were not using condoms, but there was nothing that they could do because their boyfriends were against the use of condom. The girls argued that they are in love with their boyfriends and had to show this love through sex. Demanding condom use would undermine the true love they had with their boyfriends, they argued. They preferred to practice unsafe sex rather than safe sex. This was also consistent with the study conducted by Reddy and Dunne (2007), which revealed that there was a strong need for girls to be in love; hence this made them compromise their agency in a relationship.

The study also revealed that a minority of girls used the condom consistently. The girls argued that they negotiated condom use with their boyfriends. These girls showed assertiveness; they exercised sexual agency by practicing safe sex (Bhana & Anderson, 2013). This research study also found that some girls were determined to maintain their virginity. As one of the girls noted, abstaining until marriage was important. In this regard, Mudaly (2012) reminds us that the notions of love, trust, virginity and marriage are among some of the most central constructs in traditional ways of what it means to be considered a good girl. This is in line with Leclerc-Madlala (2003), who argues that in many parts of Africa a strong symbolic and cultural value is attached to virginity and virgin girls.

In addition to the above, this study also found that many girls argued that they saw the carrying of a condom as taboo and thus could not carry a condom due to negative repercussions and labels associated with girls who carry condoms. The girls in this study expressed that they were scared to carry condoms because they thought that their boyfriends would perceive them as girls with loose morals. This is much in line with the study conducted by Varga (2003) which highlighted that both male and female participants viewed girls who suggested condoms as inappropriate and believe this reflected loose morals. This is also supported by the study conducted by MacPhail and Campbell (2001) which found that male participants stated that they wouldn't trust girls who carried condoms.

Further, this study highlighted that many girls argued that a woman must be innocent and passives on issues relating to sexual matters while men on the other hand must be active about knowledge involving sex. This resonates with the study by Reddy and Dunne (2007) which revealed that girls perceived the issues such as knowledge of condom use and condom carrying as unacceptable because it interfered with the notions of women innocence.

This research study revealed that the majority of the participants indicated that any condom use was initiated by their boyfriends. Many girls in the study perceived condom initiation as the responsibility of the boys. In this regard, Leclerc-Madlala (2001) confirms that women are generally not socialized to initiate sexual activity. The task is considered to be part of a man's role. Mudaly (2013), Reddy and Dunne 2007 and Leclerc-Madlala, 2002) argue that women and girls are often expected to comply with the norms in society which dictate how a woman should behave concerning sex. These authors argue that, these places many young women at high risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases because social norms make girls not to consider practicing safe sex.

Also consistent with existing literature, the study found that the majority of the girls argued that it was not right to have many sexual partners. Girls with many sexual partners were branded as *isifebe*, a girl with loose morals. However, interestingly, and contradictory to their statements on monogamy, the girls suggested that it was necessary for the girls to have many boyfriends so that they (boys) can also provide for the needs. It was justified that the other partner should be someone who has a job so that he should provide for the needs in case if the other partner cannot afford. Despite the value attached to female fidelity, many girls described feeling pressured to have several partners both as a form of social security and as a way to gain the respect of female peers. These girls in my study transgressed the femininity norms which prevented them from having more than one sexual partner. They risked being labeled as *izifebe*. This suggests that gender role norms are beginning to change. These girls showed assertiveness; however, if the condom is not used consistently, this behaviour may put them at a high risk of HIV infection and other transmitted infections and even unplanned pregnancies. In this case Jewkes and Morrell (2010) argue that dating multiple partners makes girls vulnerable to sexual risk. The study by

Varga (2003) found that the girls were aware of the risk of having multiple sexual partners. As one of the participants emphasized, she ensured she never made a mistake of not using a condom with the other partners that she did not trust. It is quite clear that this behaviour of condom inconsistency puts women at a great risk of HIV infection.

Quite unsurprisingly, this research study suggests that some girls found it acceptable for the boys to have many sexual partners, but it was unacceptable for a girl to have many sexual partners.

It is clear therefore that while girls understand fully what sexual risks are, they nevertheless are constrained by a culture of patriarchy in engaging in sexually risky behaviours. This makes it quite a challenge to conclude most conclusively as to what they regard as sexual risk as they appear to clearly understand risks associated with engaging in unprotected sex. However, social pressures result in girls temporarily suspending their perceptions of risk, in order to please their male partners.

## **QUESTION 2: WHY DO SOME AFRICAN TEENAGE GIRLS ENGAGE IN SEXUALLY RISKY BEHAVIOUR IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS?**

As already established above, a culture of patriarchy plays a profoundly important role in influencing young girls to engage in sexually risky behaviours. Linked to this is the issue of poverty. This research study found that poverty drives some girls to engage in risky sexual behaviours, which place them at high risk of HIV infections. As one of the girls in the study confessed, she found herself sleeping with a boy because that boy used to give her a lift when she was going to school and the boy also gave her some pocket money for school; she placed herself at risk as an act for survival. This is much in line with the study by MacPhail and Campbell (2001) which revealed that young women and girls engage in sexual relationships in exchange for lifts from school, gifts and subsistence cash. In this study, the girls argued that it became very difficult for a girl who was trapped in poverty to insist on condom use because the man who provided the needs often refused to use a condom. This is confirmed by Hallman

(2005) who asserts that young women's low socio-economic status hamper their ability to protect themselves and this places young women at risk of contracting HIV and AIDS.

This research study also found that some girls were coerced by their boyfriends to have sex with them and they had no choice but to accept coercion in order to access financial security, supporting the findings of Hallman (2005). Another related matter concerned the involvement of younger girls with older men (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). This is much in line with other studies which indicates that relationships between young women and older male partners are common across sub-Saharan Africa. This study revealed that some girls formed relationships with older men for basic needs or for wants or for both. This is consistent with the findings of Hallman (2005), who argues that financial pressures often drive women and girls into age-disparate sex for potential economic gain. This is also consistent with the study conducted by Nkosana (2007) which found that material gain was the main factor motivating girls to be involved with older men.

This study found that the girls 'dependency' on these older men became a barrier when it came to the issue of condom use. The girls' dependency made it difficult to request their partners to use a condom during sex. Just because the older men provided the needs for the girls, then the older men expected to benefit from the girls. The benefit was free sex without a condom. The study also revealed that some girls exercised agency by exploiting these older men to get what they want. As the girls argued, some girls were involved with older men for the purpose of gaining money and material. They further argued that some girls they attended with at the same school were boasting about having money, expensive cell phones and expensive clothes. This is consistent with the research conducted by Leclerc-Madlala (2010), which revealed that some women claimed that their sugar daddies had improved their lives, as a result sugar daddies earned tags such as 'sponsors' or 'investors' or 'ministers'. Though the girls exercise sexual agency by exploiting the older men or 'sugar daddies', this behaviour put the girls at risk because the challenge here is that older men or sugar daddies may refuse to use a condom. In circumstances where the girl has to depend on older men or sugar daddies for the provision of the basic needs, the girls usually have limited ability to insist on condom use, because that request might jeopardise the relationship and the girl may be scared that she might lose the

person who provides for the basic needs. This clearly places young girls at risk of contracting HIV.

A key component that appeared to contribute to girls engaging in risky sexual behaviours was alcohol use. The study revealed that the girls were clearly aware of the risks linked to mixing alcohol and sexual activity, but that they often did this as a way to have fun. However, the girls also argued that getting drunk made them vulnerable to unwanted sexual advances, HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections or unplanned pregnancies. As one girl in the study confessed, she was under the influence of alcohol when she first had sex with her boyfriend and unfortunately she got pregnant. The study revealed that the girls who drank alcohol became targets of boys for sex. The girls stated that the boys added drugs into alcohol and let them drink it in order to have sex with them when they were heavily drunk.

This research study also revealed that the girls perceived advantages in combining alcohol and sex. All the girls stated that alcohol liberated them to express their feelings in sexual activities. This shows that girls in this study transgressed gender norms which dictate that a woman must fulfill man's sexual desires. The girls in this study exercised sexual agency by expressing their sexual desires.

Though the girls in this study viewed alcohol as liberating them in sexual intercourse, Livingston et al. (2012) argue that alcohol diminishes the ability to practice safe sex. Woolf, King and Maisto (2011) confirm that alcohol diminishes girls' agency to negotiate safe sex. It becomes difficult to take good decisions if you are under the influence of alcohol. Livingston et al. (2012) further argue that the advantages of alcohol diminish rather than encourage sexual agency and as a result some girls end up practicing unsafe sex.

The above suggests that girls engage in risky sexual behaviour because of socio-economic issues, including poverty and patriarchy. Girls also engaged in risky sexual behaviour in order to elevate their status in society as, through engaging in unsafe sexual practices with older men, they become able to access material gains and then show them off to other girls at school. It becomes



clear that apart from socio-economic reasons that girls also engaged in risky sexual behaviours due to intoxication.

### **QUESTION 3: HOW DO AFRICAN TEENAGE GIRLS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF SEXUAL RISK RELATE TO THEIR GENDER IDENTITIES?**

Gender was found to play a profoundly important role in shaping the girls' understandings of sexual risk. From sexual coercion to attempting to please a boyfriend through the relegation of condom use (as discussed above), it became clear that girls were responding to a patriarchal order, and that their partners also conformed to this patriarchy. What was even more shocking was how embedded this patriarchy was, especially considering the issue of violence, which was normatively accepted by the girls in the study. The study found that the majority of the girls believed that if their boyfriends beat them that symbolized that their boyfriends loved them. This is consistent with the study by Strebel (1993) which indicated that some girls sometimes expected to be beaten by their partners, seeing this as a symbol of love. The girls went as far as questioning those men who did not beat their girlfriends as 'dangerous' as they often did not know what these men were thinking. Considering that these are young girls, only in secondary school, this was a very shocking and concerning finding. If girls, already at such a young age, believe that it is acceptable for men to beat women, how much more for older women?

What was pleasing was to note that not all the girls in the study viewed 'violence as love'; the study revealed that a minority of the girls argued that a boyfriend who beats his girlfriend should be left. One of the girls even revealed that she left her boyfriend because he beat her, therefore the girl dumped him. The girl exercised agency by terminating an abusive relationship. This suggests possibilities for hope.

A positive finding also is that girls appeared to be well equipped with knowledge about HIV and AIDS. However, the concern was that this knowledge did not necessarily appear to be linked with any behaviour change in part due to the social, cultural and institutional learnings the girls had received about what it means to be a woman. As much as the girls have more knowledge

about how to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections the gender norms becomes a barrier to apply the knowledge. For instance, how can you insist on condom use if it becomes a taboo to talk about sex as a woman, being labeled as loose or promiscuous if you carry a condom as a woman, expected to behave in a particular manner that is accepted by the society? These challenges hinder some African women and girls to practice safe sex.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT**

In this study, as noted above, I investigated black African teenage girls' understandings of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. I wanted to understand the deeper meanings attached to sexual risk as well as the reasons behind such meanings. I was also interested in understanding why some young black African girls engage in risky sexual behaviours and how sexual risk is linked to their gendered positioning. The study highlighted that social constructions of femininity and masculinity play a major role in limiting girls' sexual agency for either refusing sex or practicing safe sex (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 1993). The study also revealed that some girls were coerced by their boyfriends and no protection was used. This is connected to notions of masculinity that promote the idea that men cannot control themselves in sex, and as a result they demand sex, which is performed on to their terms. More often than not the condom is unlikely to be used, and this places women and girls at high risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). In addition, the girls are usually faced with circumstances whereby they need to comply with the notions of femininity which promote that women are expected to submit to the men's sexual desires. In this sense a woman has to comply with sexual behaviours that promote male domination and restrict woman's sexual agency. In such circumstances most women lack power to suggest condom use and to refuse sex.

Despite the challenges faced by the girls in this study, what is positive is that there was evidence that some young girls challenged these dominant gender norms. These young girls transgressed and deconstructed gender norms which hindered their sexual agency. As a result some girls exercised sexual agency by choosing to practice safe sex, in spite of all social pressures that were encountered by young girls.

## 5. 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for change in attitudes amongst all members in the community towards the ‘normality’ and inevitability of male patriarchy. Furthermore, punishment for those who assault women into forced sex needs to be more enforced and police have a key role to play in this process.

Support groups need to be in place in order to provide proper counseling for the girls who experience rape and coercion. Social workers must also be placed in schools in order to tackle such cases. The school and the community should work collaboratively to protect girls in such circumstances. The school and the community have to establish forums so that they can have platforms to discuss about sexual issues that affect learners, both boys and girls.

The school has to ensure that workshops on gender equality are conducted for both boys and girls in order to equip them with the necessary skills so that they can be able to cope with gender issues.

Furthermore, constructions of femininity need to be challenged because they make it difficult for young girls to ensure their sexual well-being. Effective programmes need to be in place that works with both girls and boys to challenge male domination and patriarchy in society. Important strategies of intervention need to be established that will involve shifting dominant patterns of masculinity and femininity to broader pathways directed towards love, trust, loyalty and understanding. Ending inequalities is a key to the strategy of ending girls’ continued vulnerability towards sexual risk in South Africa. The parents and the school can play a major role in teaching a child about ‘socialization.’ The teachings should promote equality in power relationships and gender roles.

Schools play a key in setting a platform for gender interventions. My findings point to the importance of exposing young girls to a variety of way of being women and raising awareness on

the dynamics and operations of (gendered) power as well as focusing on women's right to leave without violence.

Opportunities must be created within the schooling system that will be able to foster gender equality and ensure that daily practices of knowledge values and skills are fundamentally gender-friendly. If such an environment is created, boys and girls should develop relations based not on domination and subordination but on equality. The curriculum can also be used in addressing gender-related issues.

HIV and AIDS educational initiatives must involve training teachers to be gender sensitive, with HIV life skills education focusing on sex, on the lives, cultures and identities of young people. Such an approach may encourage young people to protect themselves.

HIV prevention educators could provide counter narrative to challenge a hegemonic masculinity that positions females as submissive and sexual providers, and male sexual behaviour as biologically driven.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS**

There were a number of limitations to the study. Firstly, it only involved one township school, and this might be problematic to generalize the findings. Generalizing, however, is not the purpose of the study.

Secondly, the findings represent only the Grade 10 and 11 learners, and this might not be a true reflection of the entire school. More research, with a bigger sample, preferably a nationwide study, would be appreciated so that the results can be generalized nationally with great confidence.

Thirdly, the sample of this study was drawn from one township, Kwa-Mashu. In particular this was only carried out in Kwazulu-Natal. Therefore it is not representative of the entire population of learners in this country. However, it could be argued that what obtains in this circuit could

also be applicable elsewhere in the region as possibly elsewhere in the country. Further studies need to be conducted in the other provinces.

Fourthly, another possible limitation concerns the skills of the researcher as an interviewer. Kumar (2005, p. 32) notes that “the quality of data depends upon the quality of the interviewer”. My skills as an interviewer might have impacted negatively on the data that was gathered. The interviewer has to possess relevant interviewing skills and has to have experience. I realised, when I was analysing data, that some of the questions needed more probing in order to draw more from the interviewees.

In spite of the limitations mentioned above, I believe to a certain extent that this study has achieved its objective of getting to understand the black African teenage girls’ understanding of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed at exploring and understanding the underlying factors that contribute to black African teenage girls’ understanding of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. Since South Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV and AIDS in the world, this study though conducted in a small scale, it can contribute to existing knowledge around understanding the issue of HIV and AIDSs within the context of young African girls.

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10 June 2014

Ms Thombi Bhengu (891310173)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0184/014M

Project title: African teenage girls' understandings of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS

Dear Ms Bhengu,

**Full Approval Notification – Committee Reviewed Protocol**

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above was reviewed by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, and has now been granted Full Approval.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

Dr Sheneka Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Dr Thabo Msibi  
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P. Marajele  
cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mkhembu

**Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**

Dr Sheneka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Cowan Block Building

Postal Address: Private Bag 254001, Durban 4020

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 2567/2568/2569/2570/2571/2572/2573/2574/2575/2576/2577/2578/2579/2580/2581/2582/2583/2584/2585/2586/2587/2588/2589/2590/2591/2592/2593/2594/2595/2596/2597/2598/2599/2600/2601/2602/2603/2604/2605/2606/2607/2608/2609/2610/2611/2612/2613/2614/2615/2616/2617/2618/2619/2620/2621/2622/2623/2624/2625/2626/2627/2628/2629/2630/2631/2632/2633/2634/2635/2636/2637/2638/2639/2640/2641/2642/2643/2644/2645/2646/2647/2648/2649/2650/2651/2652/2653/2654/2655/2656/2657/2658/2659/2660/2661/2662/2663/2664/2665/2666/2667/2668/2669/2670/2671/2672/2673/2674/2675/2676/2677/2678/2679/2680/2681/2682/2683/2684/2685/2686/2687/2688/2689/2690/2691/2692/2693/2694/2695/2696/2697/2698/2699/2700/2701/2702/2703/2704/2705/2706/2707/2708/2709/2710/2711/2712/2713/2714/2715/2716/2717/2718/2719/2720/2721/2722/2723/2724/2725/2726/2727/2728/2729/2730/2731/2732/2733/2734/2735/2736/2737/2738/2739/2740/2741/2742/2743/2744/2745/2746/2747/2748/2749/2750/2751/2752/2753/2754/2755/2756/2757/2758/2759/2760/2761/2762/2763/2764/2765/2766/2767/2768/2769/2770/2771/2772/2773/2774/2775/2776/2777/2778/2779/2780/2781/2782/2783/2784/2785/2786/2787/2788/2789/2790/2791/2792/2793/2794/2795/2796/2797/2798/2799/2800/2801/2802/2803/2804/2805/2806/2807/2808/2809/2810/2811/2812/2813/2814/2815/2816/2817/2818/2819/2820/2821/2822/2823/2824/2825/2826/2827/2828/2829/2830/2831/2832/2833/2834/2835/2836/2837/2838/2839/2840/2841/2842/2843/2844/2845/2846/2847/2848/2849/2850/2851/2852/2853/2854/2855/2856/2857/2858/2859/2860/2861/2862/2863/2864/2865/2866/2867/2868/2869/2870/2871/2872/2873/2874/2875/2876/2877/2878/2879/2880/2881/2882/2883/2884/2885/2886/2887/2888/2889/2890/2891/2892/2893/2894/2895/2896/2897/2898/2899/2900/2901/2902/2903/2904/2905/2906/2907/2908/2909/2910/2911/2912/2913/2914/2915/2916/2917/2918/2919/2920/2921/2922/2923/2924/2925/2926/2927/2928/2929/2930/2931/2932/2933/2934/2935/2936/2937/2938/2939/2940/2941/2942/2943/2944/2945/2946/2947/2948/2949/2950/2951/2952/2953/2954/2955/2956/2957/2958/2959/2960/2961/2962/2963/2964/2965/2966/2967/2968/2969/2970/2971/2972/2973/2974/2975/2976/2977/2978/2979/2980/2981/2982/2983/2984/2985/2986/2987/2988/2989/2990/2991/2992/2993/2994/2995/2996/2997/2998/2999/3000

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Schedule**

#### **Individual Interview**

1. Let's talk a little bit about your sexual debut. How old were you when you first had sex? Tell me a little bit about this.
2. Have you had sex with more than one partner? Explain
3. Do you have a boyfriend? So do you have sex with him? Do you use protection? Explain
4. Do you ask your boyfriend to use a condom during sex? Tell me about this.
5. What about your friends? Do they have protected sex? Talk to me about this.
6. Can they ask their boyfriends/partners to use a condom during sex? Are boys okay with this
7. Do your friends have sex with different partners (boys)? Explain
8. Do you think it's okay to have multiple sexual partners? Explain
9. Do your friends or other girls in your school date older boys or men? Tell me about this. Do you do this?
10. Do your friends or any of these girls have sex with older boys or men? Talk about this
11. Do your boys want to break with girls if they (girls) refuse to have sex with them? Has this ever happened to you? Tell me about this.
12. Have any of your friends ever been forced or pressurized to have sex? What about you?
13. What about HIV and AIDS? Do you and your friends ever talked about this? What are some of the things that you talked about?
14. What are your views on condom use and abstinence?
15. Let's talk about teenage pregnancy? Have you ever fallen pregnant?
16. Has this ever happened to your friends or girls in your school? Tell me about this.
17. What pressures do you think exist for girls to have unprotected

Thank you for your participation.

**Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any stage without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves.**

## **Appendix B Interview Schedule**

### **Focus group**

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where do you live? Who do you live with?
4. Do your parents work? What type of work do they do?
5. What about your area/ community? Tell me a little bit about the area that you live in.
6. Do you like school? Explain
7. Do you have many friends at school? Explain
8. Do you have a boyfriend? Tell me about this.
9. Where and how did you meet?
10. What are some of the things that you like about your boyfriend?
11. What do you and your boyfriend do for fun?
12. Do you love your boyfriend? Why do you say this?
13. What are some of the qualities that you look for in a boy?
14. How many boyfriends have you had? Have you ever had more than one boyfriend at a time? Explain
15. Is it ok for your boyfriend to date other girls? Talk about this.
16. What about other girls? Do they date more than one boy at a time? Explain
17. In your school/community, is it okay for girls to date more than one boy at a time? Is this acceptable?  
Explain
18. How are girls expected to behave in your school or community?
19. Do you know if your friends have sex with their partners? What about you?
20. Do you or your friend use protection during sex? Why?
21. Do you know any girls in your school or community who have fallen pregnant while they were still in school? Tell me a little bit about this.
22. What about HIV and AIDS? Do you know about HIV and AIDS? In your opinion, why do you think so many girls in your age group (16-18) engage in unsafe sex with their partners?
23. Do you and your friends ever talk about sex or HIV and AIDS? Tell me what are some of the things that you talk about.

Thank you for your participation.

**Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any stage without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves.**

## Appendix C

W677

P.O. Umlazi

4031

Dear Parent

I am an M Ed student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. I wish to ask for permission to undertake a research study described below at Vuyiswa Mtolo High School. This letter outlines the intention of the study, a description of participants' involvement and participants' rights. I have also attached a detailed research proposal for your perusal.

**The purpose of this study is to explore African teenage girls' understanding of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS.** The study is part of the requirements for the thesis portion of the Master of Education degree at the University of the KwaZulu-Natal. I will be using purposive sampling in this research to recruit participants from the school. This study focuses on what these young girls regard as sexual risk. Moreover, this study explores why some girls may expose themselves to risk by engaging in unprotected sex and subscribe to patriarchal practices that put them at risk. I will select two classes in grade 11 for a rich data. I will explain about the proposed study, the purpose of the study, the procedures, and the ethical issues. I will explain that confidentiality will be maintained. Then I will request for the volunteers to come during the break time. During the break time I will give further details to the students regarding the project. The students who wish to participate in the study will be selected. I will require 10 - 15 female students aged between 16-18 years, purposively selected from grade 11 class. Informed, explicit and clear consent forms will be signed by participants and each participant will receive a copy of the consent form. The purpose of the study and how the data will be used will be clearly explained. All data will be kept confidential and anonymous, with pseudonyms used for participants and school.

If students decide to participate in this study, three interview sessions of one–two hours each will be held with each student. The first interview will be to get the participant comfortable, as this is a sensitive topic, by introducing the subject and my own position as a researcher. The second will be a semi-structured interview to answer my research questions and third interview will be to get more feedback and to allow the participants to read through the transcripts for confirmation of accuracy. Participants will be interviewed in a place where they are most comfortable to them so as to share openly their stories

without feeling like they will be judged. I will also obtain the assistance of my supervisor and the ethics office in case any matters- concerning. These interviews will be tape-recorded, with permission from participants, for analysis purposes. The participant will be free to withdraw at any stage of the research process if he/she feels uncomfortable.

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor using the following contact details:

**Contact details**

<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Name and Surname</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>	<b>Email address</b>
Researcher	Miss Thombi Bhengu	0848480174	thombitbhengu@gmail.com
Supervisor	Dr Thabo Msibi	031 260 3868	Msibi@ukzn.ac.za
Humanities and Social Science Ethics Committee	Dr Shenuka Singh	031 260 3585 031 260 8350 031 260 4557	<a href="mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za">ximbap@ukzn.ac.za</a> <a href="mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za">snymanm@ukzn.ac.za</a> <a href="mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za">mohunp@ukzn.ac.za</a>

Should you be willing to grant permission for this study to be undertaken at the school, I would appreciate it if you can complete and sign the return slip below at your earliest convenience.

With thanks in advance as you consider this request.

Yours sincerely

Thombi Bhengu

Student Researcher

-----**To be returned to the researcher**-----

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information, and my questions about the research project have been sufficiently addressed. I consent /do not consent (please circle appropriate) to the study being conducted at Vuyiswa Mtolo High School.

Principal Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix D**

### **Learner Consent Form**

#### **Dear Participant**

I am M. Ed student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal; I would like to thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. This form outlines the intention of the study, and provides a description of your involvement and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this study is to explore African teenage girls' understanding of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study is part of the requirements for the thesis portion of the Master of Education degree at the University of the KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **Procedures**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will also be asked to participate in two or three interviews lasting for approximately one to two hours each. The first interview will be to get you comfortable, as this is a sensitive topic, by introducing the subject and my own position as a researcher. The second will be a semi-structured interview to answer my research questions and third interview will be to get more feedback and to allow you to read whether the transcriptions represent your utterances during the interview process. With the interviews will take place in a place where you feel most comfortable, and will occur at a time determined by you in consultation with me. This is to ensure that you are not inconvenienced in any way. These interviews will be tape-recorded for analysis purposes. You will be asked to give consent to this recording. In order to fully protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms in my transcripts and data dissemination processes. All information you give during the interview process will therefore remain anonymous and confidential. I will refer you for counseling, and further support, should you require these services, to either the school counselor or KwaMashu Community Health Centre.

Participation is completely voluntary and you have a right to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to you. There will be no financial incentives for participating in the study; what is important however is that you will have an opportunity to share your experiences with a caring, supportive individual.

The following people may be contacted should further clarity be required.

**Contact details**

<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Name and Surname</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>	<b>Email address</b>
Researcher	Miss Thombi Bhengu	0848480174	thombitbhengu@gmail.com
Supervisor	Dr Thabo Msibi	031 260 3868	Msibi@ukzn.ac.za
Humanities and Social science Ethics Committee	Dr Shenuka Singh	031 260 3587 031 260 8350 031 260 4557	ximbap@ukzn.ac.za snymanm@ukzn.ac.za mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

-----**To be returned to the researcher**-----

**Statement of Consent:**

I am below 18 years of age. I have read the above information, and my questions about the research process have been sufficiently addressed. I consent /do not consent (please circle appropriate) to take part in the study. I also consent /do not consent (please circle appropriate) to the discussion being tape recorded.

Participants Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E**

### **Learner Consent Form**

#### **Dear Participant**

I am M. Ed student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal; I would like to thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. This form outlines the intention of the study, and provides a description of your involvement and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this study is to explore African teenage girls' understanding of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study is part of the requirements for the thesis portion of the Master of Education degree at the University of the KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **Procedures**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will also be asked to participate in two or three interviews lasting for approximately one to two hours each. The first interview will be to get you comfortable, as this is a sensitive topic, by introducing the subject and my own position as a researcher. The second will be a semi-structured interview to answer my research questions and third interview will be to get more feedback and to allow you to read whether the transcriptions represent your utterances during the interview process. With the interviews will take place in a place where you feel most comfortable, and will occur at a time determined by you in consultation with me. This is to ensure that you are not inconvenienced in any way. These interviews will be tape-recorded for analysis purposes. You will be asked to give consent to this recording. In order to fully protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms in my transcripts and data dissemination processes. All information you give during the interview process will therefore remain anonymous and confidential. I will refer you for counseling, and further support, should you require these services, to either the school counselor or KwaMashu Community Health Centre.

Participation is completely voluntary and you have a right to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to you. There will be no financial incentives for participating in the study; what is important however is that you will have an opportunity to share your experiences with a caring, supportive individual.

The following people may be contacted should further clarity be required.

**Contact details**

<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Name and Surname</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>	<b>Email address</b>
Researcher	Miss Thombi Bhengu	0848480174	thombitbhengu@gmail.com
Supervisor	Dr Thabo Msibi	031 260 3868	Msibi@ukzn.ac.za
Humanities and Social science Ethics Committee	Dr Shenuka Singh	031 260 3587 031 260 8350 031 260 4557	ximbap@ukzn.ac.za snymanm@ukzn.ac.za mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

-----**To be returned to the researcher**-----

**Statement of Consent:**

I am below 18 years of age. I have read the above information, and my questions about the research process have been sufficiently addressed. I consent /do not consent (please circle appropriate) to take part in the study. I also consent /do not consent (please circle appropriate) to the discussion being tape recorded.

Participants Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix F**

### **Learner Consent Form**

#### **Dear Participant**

I am M. Ed student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal; I would like to thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. This form outlines the intention of the study, and provides a description of your involvement and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this study is to explore African teenage girls' understanding of sexual risk in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study is part of the requirements for the thesis portion of the Master of Education degree at the University of the KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **Procedures**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will also be asked to participate in two or three interviews lasting for approximately one to two hours each. The first interview will be to get you comfortable, as this is a sensitive topic, by introducing the subject and my own position as a researcher. The second will be a semi-structured interview to answer my research questions and third interview will be to get more feedback and to allow you to read whether the transcriptions represent your utterances during the interview process. With the interviews will take place in a place where you feel most comfortable, and will occur at a time determined by you in consultation with me. This is to ensure that you are not inconvenienced in any way. These interviews will be tape-recorded for analysis purposes. You will be asked to give consent to this recording. In order to fully protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms in my transcripts and data dissemination processes. All information you give during the interview process will therefore remain anonymous and confidential. I will refer you for counseling, and further support, should you require these services, to either the school counselor or KwaMashu Community Health Centre.

Participation is completely voluntary and you have a right to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to you. There will be no financial incentives for participating in the study; what is important however is that you will have an opportunity to share your experiences with a caring, supportive individual.

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-----**To be returned to the researcher**-----

**Statement of Consent:**

I am below 18 years of age. I have read the above information, and my questions about the research process have been sufficiently addressed. I consent /do not consent (please circle appropriate) to take part in the study. I also consent /do not consent (please circle appropriate) to the discussion being tape recorded.

Participants Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_