# Geographies of Career Aspirations: Narratives of Rural Teen Parents

**By**

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I, Nana Joyce Kheswa (Student number: 901311850), author of this dissertation entitled ***Geographies of Career Aspirations: Narratives of Rural Teen Parents,*** declare that*:*

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II. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

III. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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Dr Saajidha Sader (Co-Supervisor)               Date

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# DEDICATION

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*Lomsebenzi ngiwunikela kubazali bami abangasekho emhlabeni, oKheswa kaNozulu kaNoMchumane!*

*umama, uNgiphiwe 'Dobbie' Emily; nobaba, uMshumbu 'Majuphe' Nelson.*

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# ABSTRACT

The rights of pregnant and parenting learners have recently taken centre stage, with the recent provisions in the *South African Schools Act* (Act 84 of 1996) and court judgments outlawing practices that discriminate against pregnant and parenting learners. These developments have been significant in that they have allowed space for teen parents to return to schools after pregnancy to pursue their career aspirations. This study sought to understand career aspirations of teen parents, the contextual factors that enabled and/or restricted the realisation of such aspirations and how teen parents navigated and negotiated these contextual factors in their efforts to pursue their career aspirations. The research questions were explored using in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and photovoice. The participants in the study were seven (7) teen parents (i.e. two teen fathers and five teen mothers), aged between 17 and 23, who were currently doing Grade 12 in a secondary school in Ingwe Municipality, Harry Gwala District, KwaZulu-Natal. This study was guided by and framed within the theory of New Childhood Studies, which is a sub-field of Children's Geographies and critical theory. The rationale for deploying this framework was to position teen parents as active social actors in the construction of their own lives.

The findings of the study revealed that all the teen parents who participated in the study had some form of career aspirations, even though they were sometimes uncertain about their ultimate choice. Their career choices had largely been influenced by their experiences of socio-economic deprivation in their communities. This included poor service delivery in both schooling and community spaces, which prevented teen parents from exploring available career opportunities outside of their context. The construction of teenage pregnancy as moral deviance gave rise to a catalogue of challenges for teen parents' pursuance of their career aspirations. However, three factors, namely, understanding the importance of obtaining an education; a supportive family; and personal experience of the difficulties facing their own community, stood out as sources of inspiration for teen parents to return to school and to continue with their studies.

The findings point to the fact that the inclusion of pregnant and parenting teenagers is a significant step towards the protection of the uninhibited enjoyment of the right to a basic education. Given the disadvantaged educational, social, economic and employment background of rural teen parents, career development skills should be incorporated in education to enable them to pursue careers that will assist them to achieve economic independence and become full participants in society.

**Keywords:** teenage parents; career aspirations; teenage pregnancy

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# CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL OVERVIEW

## 1.1    Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background to the study, and present the problem in which the study is rooted. In this chapter, I make brief reference to the key research questions, objectives of the study, as well as methodological and design considerations pertaining to the conduct of the study. Finally, I present a summary of the chapters contained in this dissertation.

## 1.2    Aims and rationale of the study

Pregnancy amongst teenagers is a common occurrence in South Africa, with approximately "47 births per 1 000 girls aged 15-19 per annum" (Reddy, Sewpaul and Jonas, 2016, p.1), a rate that is higher than that found in the 'developed' world. However, it needs to be understood that contrasting the South African situation with the situation in the so-called developed world is quite problematic as it conceals issues that account for such differences. This is particularly important in a study such as this one, where conventional understandings of reality are problematised to unearth alternative understandings of issues.

Numerous studies have attempted to shed light on the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy and explain why these differences may be existing (Reddy, James, Sewpaul, Koopman, Funani, Sifunda, Josie, Masuka, Kambaran & Omardien, 2010). Part of this body of literature have been attempts to refute stereotypical claims by popular media that posit that high rates of teenage pregnancy are driven by the need for teenagers to access social grants in South Africa (Makiwane, Udjo, Richter & Desmond, 2006). Another school of thought has quite problematically posited that teenagers often want to have a child because this potentially strengthens their position in relationships and their ability to negotiate and understand their lives (Singh & Hamid, 2015). That is, it is a way of self-expression. However, no matter what the explanations are, the high rate of teenage pregnancy remains an indisputable and troubling reality, both internationally and nationally. Even more concerning is the fact that various educational interventions and the availability of contraception have largely been unable to arrest this upsurge (Department of Health, 2012; Taylor, Jinabhai, Dlamini, Sathiparsad, Eggers & De Vries, 2014).

Findings of studies by Bhana and Mcambi (2013) and Mkhwanazi (2010) have revealed that teenage pregnancy has often led to teenagers dropping out of school, often without the skills

necessary to access and enter the job market, throwing them in the pool of unemployment and poverty. When this happens, generations that follow the generation of these teenage parents must battle difficult circumstances in trying to fight for a better life for themselves. Therefore, if this continues, it could escalate into an intergenerational obstacle that stands in the way of opportunities for access to the good things in life. However, the impact of teenage pregnancy does not only have an economical dimension; teen parents tend to also blame themselves for becoming pregnant when they learn of the impact this has had on their education, personal life and career aspirations (Singh & Hamid, 2015). Therefore, although the existence of the teenage pregnancy amongst young people cannot be denied or wished away, its consequences on their lives is significant.

Aspirations are crucial in influencing and shaping how teenagers go about making choices in life, and how they understand and experience themselves and ultimately how they negotiate their life outcomes (Schaefer & Meece, 2009). Adolescence is a crucial time in which teenagers' identities are shaped and formed. For adolescents, negotiating the maze of who they are, they are sometimes confronted with and entangled in a network of challenges of growing and becoming, such as teenage pregnancy, which may divert them away from their career aspirations. Challenges of teenage pregnancy and parenthood have often been constructed as factors that affect teen mothers only, totally oblivious of the fact that teen fathers are also affected in that they often must face severe emotional challenges, as they are often disappointed, shocked, and regretful that they have become teenage fathers (Njambatwa, 2013). The understanding of teenage pregnancy as affecting girls only is problematic in that turns a blind eye on a significant proportion of the experience of teen parenthood. In other words, it fails to account for a full circle of the experiences of teen parenthood.

In my work as a teacher, and talking to teenage parents in the community, I have realised that those who continue with schooling and have career aspirations are often faced with numerous challenges such as prejudice from their communities, not being wanted by their peers, absence of support systems in schools, and absence of a uniform protocol for the support of pregnant and parenting learners (Clowes, D'amant & Nkani, 2012). Often, teen parents' aspirations of being able to reach their career milestones are stymied. This suggests that pregnancy has the potential to impact negatively on educational attainment as it may, for instance, make regular attendance difficult for learners, and lead to lack of concentration to school work because of the burden of parental responsibilities, making it difficult for learners to perform well in their studies (Phipps, Salak, Nunes & Rosengard, 2011). As teen parents, the mix of having to manage the delicate balance of caring for their

babies and participating actively in their school work, has a significant impact on their abilities to pursue their career aspirations.

The rationale for embarking on this study is rooted in my experiences as a teacher at a secondary school in the midlands of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. I have been troubled by the observation that teenage pregnancy comes with a host of challenges for teachers and learners, and that often the responses to it tend to contribute to the exclusion of learners rather than the enjoyment of the right to education. Often, the issue of teenage pregnancy is reduced to personal trouble, and this often leads to sour relations between teachers and learners. This has serious consequences for their performance, success and career aspirations. Often, under these circumstances, teen parents who return to school after pregnancy find it difficult to pursue their career aspirations.

The sad reality is that complexities that come with teen parenting often drive some teenagers away from their career aspirations, forcing them to try out shortcuts that often invite more complexities. From an educational point of view, the high expectations and good aspirations that young people have of themselves often come to naught without educational attainment, and do not lead to the achievement of intended career prospects (Barr and Simons, 2012). In my experience, teen parents whose educational performance was higher before they got pregnant, often drop as soon as they assume parenting responsibilities as schools often have no support systems for returning teen parents. This absence of support mechanisms and programmes for teen parents in South African schools could be attributed to stagnancy and/or lethargy of the system in accommodating new realities (Clowes, D'amant & Nkani, 2012).

The extent of lack of support for teen parents presents in numerous manifestations. For instance, teen parents hardly receive support from their teachers, such as assistance to catch up with lessons previously taught; there is little or no access to counselling and support services; and there is no mechanism for optional tasks/tests for teenage mothers (Chauke, 2013; Molapo, 2011). In addition, there is acute lack of information and support structures, which potentially jeopardise teen parents' chances to fulfil their careers aspirations. Although there is a Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa judgment on the application of the *South African School Act 84 of 1996* (Department of Education, 1996) with regards to pregnant learners, which states that a pregnant learner "shall be entitled to attend formal classes at the school, to remain at the school and in her current grade and to be taught, to learn and to be examined" (Supreme Court of Appeal, 2012),  teen parents and their parents still do not take advantage of the relief provided by the judgment. If they do,

they often face prejudiced attitudes from teachers, parents and other learners (Clowes, D'amant & Nkani, 2012).

The aim of this study was to understand career aspirations of teen parents; the contextual factors that enable and/or hinder them from pursuing their career aspirations; and how teen parents navigate and negotiate these challenges in pursuit of their career aspirations. The intention was to open a space for teen parents, both teen fathers and mothers, to share their experiences of teenage pregnancy and parenthood as active social actors in their own social worlds. It is hoped that the study will contribute to scholarly debates on teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations, and how these understandings could be deployed to make the enjoyment of the right to education a reality for these learners.

## 1.3    Background information to the study

This study sets out to explore the career aspirations of teen parents, the contextual factors that obtain, and how teen parents navigate and negotiate these factors in pursuit of their career aspirations. The study was conducted in a rural secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal province. The school was chosen because it is situated in a deep rural setting, at the outskirts of the city, approximately 150km from the city of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, and was believed to be representative of many socio-economically deprived contexts in South Africa.

The school is situated in the formerly Ingwe Municipality, which was disestablished and merged with Kwa Sani Local Municipality to form Dr Nkosazana-Dlamini Zuma Local Municipality, Harry Gwala District, on 3 August 2016. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma Municipality is the largest of the four in the district, accounting for just over a third of the geographical area of the district. There are three major towns in the municipality, namely, Creighton, Himeville and Underberg.

The following is a map of Ingwe Municipality, as it was when the study was conducted, when the municipality had not yet been disestablished and merged with Kwa Sani Local Municipality.

*Figure 1: Map of Ingwe Municipality*

The municipality is largely rural and consists mainly of vast tribal lands, which suggests that land rights are largely communal and there are no individual title deeds.

## 1.4   Research problem

### 1.4.1 Statement of the research problem

The advancement and ultimate achievement of human rights and freedoms, human dignity, equality and non-sexism is at the core of the political significance of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996). To advance these freedoms into education, the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* and the *South African Schools Act* (Act No 84 of 1996) outlaws any form of unfair discrimination based on pregnancy, which then suggests that pregnant and parenting learners can now attend school without interference in terms of this provision (Republic of South Africa, 1996a; Republic of South Africa, 1996b).

However, even though South Africa has put in place mechanisms to ensure that schools are free from prejudice and discrimination, post-apartheid South Africa continues to witness discriminatory practices based on teenage pregnancy. The most recent case was that of Welkom High School and Harmony High School, where School Governing Bodies decided to

suspend learners from school because they were pregnant, using school policies that were in violation of the provisions of the *Constitution* and the *South African School Act* (Act 84 of 1996). This led to the violation of the right of learners to the uninhibited enjoyment of the right to education, and flew in the face of the career aspirations of these learners.

Teen parents who return to schools after pregnancy to pursue their career aspirations often face numerous challenges, including prejudice and lack of support to ensure that they can continue with their education and pursue their career aspirations (Molapo, 2011; Clowes, D'amant & Nkani, 2012; Bhana, 2012; Bhana & Ngabaza, 2012; Shefer, 2012; Shefer, Bhana, Morrell, Manzini & Masuku, 2012; Chauke, 2013). The failure of schools to provide necessary support mechanisms for teen parents who are returning to school is unfortunate as it sustains the vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment. There is a problem when schools reproduce social ills instead of contributing to their eradication. For instance, it is logical to assume that schools have a responsibility to give expression to the legal protections provided by the Constitution and the South African Schools.

The problem that this study attempted to pursue was to explore the  the career aspirations of teen parents who decided to go back to school after pregnancy, the factors that enabled and/or hindered the teen parents to pursue their career aspirations, and how teen parents navigated and negotiated these contextual factors in pursuance of their career aspirations.

## 1.4.2 Key research questions

The main research question that underpinned this study was:  What is the relationship between teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations?  To explore this further, the following sub-questions were devised:  :

- What are the career aspirations for teen parents?
- What are the contextual factors that affect these aspirations?
- How do teen parents navigate and negotiate these contextual factors in pursuance of their career aspirations?

## 1.5    Aims and objectives of the study

The main aim of the study was to explore the relationship between teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations. Therefore, the objectives of the study were to understand:

- the career aspirations of teen parents;

- the contextual factors that enabled and/or restricted the realisation of such aspirations; and
- how teen parents navigated and negotiated these contextual factors in their efforts to pursue their career aspirations.

## 1.6    Research methodology and design

A qualitative research approach was adopted for the study as the aim of the research study was to understand the career aspirations of teen parents; the contextual factors that enabled and/or restricted the realisation of such aspirations; and how teen parents navigated and negotiated these contextual factors in their efforts to pursue their career aspirations. Teen parents from a secondary school in Ingwe Municipality participated in the study to explore the aspects as outlined above.

The research questions were explored using the following research methods and techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews (Dicicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006: 314-321), focus group discussions (Babbie, 2007: 308-9; Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 90-2) and photovoice (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver and Ireland, 2009).

## 1.7    Structure of the dissertation

The study is structured in six chapters. The content of each chapter is summarised below.

**Chapter 1** provides the background to the study, and states the problem in which the study is rooted. In this chapter, the researcher also refers to the key research questions, objectives of the study as well as provides a synopsis of the methodological and design considerations made with regards to the conduct of the study.

 **Chapter 2** reviews literature on teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations as concepts sitting at the core of this dissertation. The discussions in this chapter include the deconstruction and demarcation of concepts within the context of the study reviewing literature on the major debates and studies on teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations. In addition, the chapter also provides theoretical foundations of the study by reviewing, discussing and analysing literature and concepts relating to children's geographies, new childhood studies and critical theory, the notions which are used to guide understandings of teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and

career aspirations in this research study. The chapter closes off by highlighting major issues that emerged in the discussion.

**Chapter 3** provides an exposition of the considerations that the researcher made in relation to research methodology, design, the research tools, limitations and ethical issues relating to the study.

**Chapter 4** presents and discusses findings emerging from the data gathered through the various data-collecting methods as outlined in the previous chapter.

**Chapter 5** consolidates and highlights the key findings of the study. This is followed by specific recommendations, based on the findings, for how the relationship between teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations could be navigated and negotiated to ensure that teen parent could enjoy uninhibited access to their right to a basic education, for them to be able to pursue their career aspirations without interference. The chapter closes off by presenting some possibilities for further research that this study could not address.

## 1.8   Summary

This chapter provided a background to the study, and presented the problem in which the study is rooted. In this chapter, the researcher referred to the key research questions, objectives of the study, as well as methodological and design considerations with regards to the conduct of the study. The propositions investigated were also outlined, and the significance and rationale for the study was discussed.

The next chapter will review literature on teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations as concepts sitting at the core of this dissertation. The discussion will include deconstruction and demarcating of concepts within the context of this study; review national and international experience; and provide a concluding summary of the chapter, highlighting major issues that emerged in the discussion.

# CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

## 2.1    Introduction

The rising incidence of teenage pregnancy has elevated the matter to the top of the national agenda. South Africa can no longer pretend that teenage pregnancy is not happening (Mantovani, 2015), as it has become a societal issue that has had major health, socio-economic and educational implications for teenagers, schools and communities (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Lesoalo, 2009). The by-product of teenage pregnancy in South Africa has been the increasing number of teen parents, making it necessary for academics and education authorities to try and understand the lives of teenage parents and what becomes of their career aspirations.

This chapter also discusses and explains the theoretical and conceptual lens that guided the understanding of teen parents' experiences and career aspirations. The discussion contextualises the lens for purposes of framing understanding regarding the issues and debates contained in this study, and the findings that emerged from views of teen parents, who were participants in this study.

This chapter has two purposes, namely, to review literature on teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations as concepts sitting at the core of this dissertation; and to situate the study within the theoretical framework on Critical Theory, New Childhood Studies and Children's Geographies, and how it identifies with and applies to this study. The discussion will include deconstruction and demarcating of concepts within the context of this study; review national and international literature on teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations. The chapter will conclude by providing a summary of the key ideas that emerged in the discussion.

## 2.2    Deconstruction and contextualisation of key concepts

Concepts exhibit a multiplicity of significations, meanings or understandings depending on the contexts within which they are deployed. Therefore, concepts must not be left undefined, as their meanings and significations are tied to the context in which they are being deployed. The process of deconstructing and contextualising key concepts is critical to this study because it provides a mechanism for ensuring that chances for misreading the findings and debates in this study is minimised. The intention of this section is therefore to contextualise the key concepts that will be used in this dissertation.

## 2.2.1 Adolescent parent and teen parent

Adolescence is the stage when teenagers acquire particular desires concerning their education and future occupations (Domenico & Jones, 2007). In this study, the terms adolescent parent and teen parent are used interchangeably. UNICEF (2008) defines teen parents as those who become pregnant between the ages of 13-19, and thereafter assume the responsibility of parenting. The age range suggests that some teen parents may be learners of school-going age who have fallen pregnant while still at school. These teen parents may therefore have to return to schools after pregnancy to complete their studies and continue to pursue their career aspirations.

Research and, in some cases, policy have tended to conceptualise teen parents as teen mothers, leaving out teen fathers and their experiences of parenthood. Gates and Byrom (2008) have pointed to the silence of research regarding teen fatherhood and, in their study, highlighted the absence of teen fathers in the statistics when compared with teen mothers. They attributed this lack of awareness or blind spot to the fact that pregnancy and childbirth are observable instances which are therefore easier to observe in females than in males. This study moves away from this conception, and adopts a view that understands teen parent to refer to both teen fathers and mothers. Therefore, when this dissertation refers to teen parents, such is for both teen mothers and fathers.

## 2.2.2 Career aspirations

Aspirations could be understood as desires and hopes – a person's orientation towards a set of goals – for a better future (Domenico & Jones, 2007; Migunde, Agak & Odiwuor, 2011). During the teenage stage, aspirations are crucial because they have a potential to provide teenagers with their ideal view of the future they want and the possible developmental steps to these aspirations of adolescents (Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonsalves & Howell, 2004). Like career development, which is the lifelong navigable process of human development starting from directing one's own learning, working, relaxation time and changes aimed at moving towards a personally determined and evolving preferred future career (Rojewski, 1994), aspirations are informed by different forms of socialisation that adolescents are exposed to as well as adolescent's adoption of preferred cultures (Migunde, Agak & Odiwuor, 2011; Domenico & Jones, 2007). It follows then that aspirations are irretrievably connected to a catalogue of factors and circumstances, including the social, economic,

family support, cultural and school-related (Migunde, Agak & Odiwuor, 2011; Mung'ara, 2012).

The concept of aspirations is extended by Silvia (2001) who suggests that it comprises an individual's career oriented ends or intentions, which includes motivational aspects of life. It is one's strong desire, longing, aim or ambition to improve the status quo. Therefore, career aspirations could be defined as a person's desires to pursue a career path. The desire to pursue a career aspiration or path is often defined and shaped by a matrix of factors that impede and/or enable such a longing or desire to be actualised. Therefore, this study understands career aspirations as being a complex, non-linear navigation of a maze of factors to fulfil the desire to be something better. In the instance of this study, teen parents had to work through this maze, using enabling factors and braving restricting factors, to follow a future that they wanted for themselves in terms of their careers. Therefore, the trajectory of this study emerges from the understanding that career aspirations may require teen parents to reflect on and own their past to brave obstacles associated with teen parenthood (Rojewski, 1996).

## 2.2.3 Teenage or adolescent pregnancy

UNICEF's definition of teenage pregnancy makes reference to a situation where a teenage girl, who is usually within the age range of thirteen (13) and nineteen (19) falls pregnant (UNICEF, 2008). The World Health Organization reports that about 16 million girls between the ages of 15 to 19 and two million girls below 15 years give birth annually (World Health Organization, 2014).

## 2.3   Teen parenthood in South Africa

This section of the chapter provides a review of literature relating to teen parenthood in South Africa, to provide a context and situate the dissertation within the broader debate and discussion on teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations.

Teenage pregnancy has been elevated to a global issue; it is therefore not confined to South Africa. However, in South Africa it is a frequent media headline because it is a common occurrence (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012). The graph below, from the General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2015), illustrates the percentage of females within the age range of 14 –19 who were pregnant in 2014, which is a year preceding the survey:
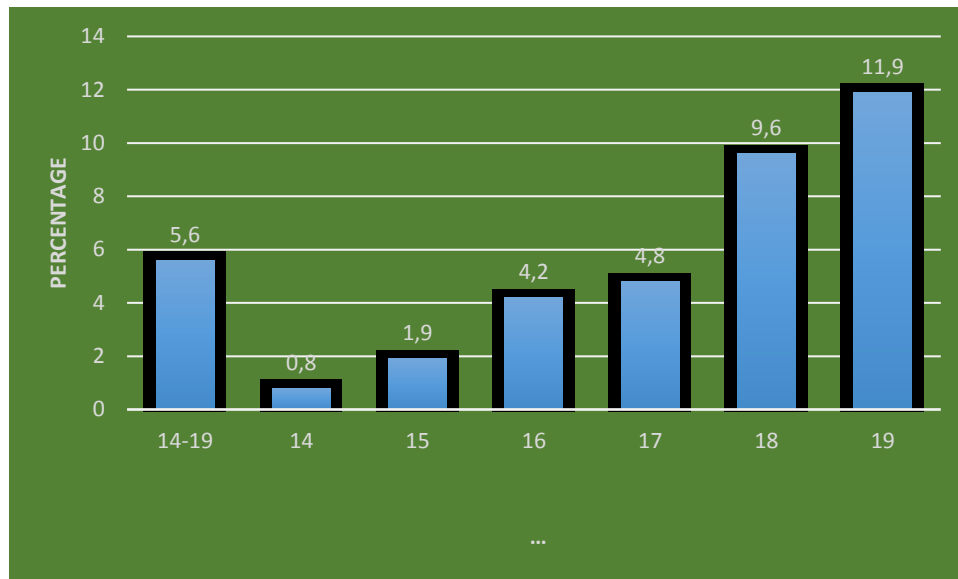
*Figure 2: Percentage of females aged 14-19 who got pregnant during 2011*

The graph indicates that 5,6 per cent of females aged 14 -19 years fell pregnant during the 12 months before the survey was conducted, and that the occurrence of pregnancy tended to increase with age, escalating from 0,8 per cent for females of 14 years old, to 11,9 per cent for females 19 years of age.

Globally, the prevalence of teenage pregnancy is declining, although significant regional disparities persist (Ibis Reproductive Health, 2013). However, the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa remains the highest globally, with South Africa occupying the lowest spot, favourably comparable to many other middle-income countries across the globe (Macleod & Tracey, 2010). National statistics reveal that about a million teenagers fall pregnant annually, with the highest prevalence in schools in the Eastern Cape at 68.81 percent (pregnant pupils per 1 000 recorded), KwaZulu-Natal at 62.24 per cent and Limpopo at 60.36 percent (Thobejane, 2015). This rate of prevalence could be understood as linked to the low socio-economic conditions that exist in the region as a result of historical exploitation of resources, making it difficult for the continent to sustain itself.

Schools have a constitutional duty to promote and protect gender equality. For instance, the Constitution of South Africa prohibits all forms of unfair discrimination based on pregnancy, including the dismissal of pregnant learners by schools. For instance, in a judgment by the Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa, in a matter between the Head of Department: Department of Education, Free State Province and Welkom High School Governing Body and Harmony High School Governing Body, the Court ruled that a pregnant "learner shall be entitled to attend formal classes at the school, to remain at the school and in her current

grade and to be taught, to learn and to be examined" (Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa, 2012). The intention of this judgment was to ensure that schools refrain from expelling and excluding pregnant and parenting teenagers and begin to acknowledge and respect learners' right to education, dignity and privacy (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Therefore, in terms of the above judgment, as long as the right to a basic education is in place, schools shall have a duty to assist, support and protect all learners, including pregnant and parenting learners, to ensure that they enjoy uninhibited enjoyment of the right to education, and where practicable, to offer and assist learners with access to childcare facilities to ensure continued access educational opportunities (Madhavan & Thomas, 2005).

The argument that this study is putting forward is that the relationship between teenage pregnancy, teen parenthood and career aspirations is an important reality in South Africa, for learners, schools, families and communities. There are two primary reasons that drive this reasoning, namely, firstly, teenage pregnancy, as a societal issue, affects learners, schools, families and communities; and, secondly, the link is important in exposing the complexities of the experiences of teenage parents. The following sub-section begins to explore some of these complexities, as a way of locating the study within a broader scholarly debate of the nature of the relationship.

## 2.3.1 Problematizing the construction of teen pregnancy and parenthood in South Africa

Teenaged pregnancy has become a subject of international debate, often portrayed as anomaly in the discourses of sexuality and growth (Furstenberg, 2010). In South Africa, this has led to teenage pregnancy becoming a highly sensationalised topic in the media and public opinion in the past few years (Chiumia, 2014). These discourses have often framed teenage pregnancy as a 'social problem' that disrupts schooling, leads to the deterioration of health, lack of knowledge on reproductive issues and corrosion of tradition (Kakal, 2015). These reasons are justified in that pregnancy and young parenthood are associated with a "dual load of being a learner and becoming and being a parent" (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012: 6).

National and international literature has identified an array of negative results for teen parents and their children across many spheres (Woodward, 2000). This has opened the door for discourses that tend to stigmatise teenage pregnancy, often making it difficult for learners who become pregnant to continue with their education. Such discourses have often constructed and portrayed teenage pregnancy as a form of moral deviance, a product of

juvenile delinquency, inclination to agree to sexual advances and moral disintegration (Department of Education, 2009; Kheswa, 2014). This negative and moralistic framing, which largely emanates from what (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012: 6) characterise as "moral panic" by families and communities, has tended to reinforce blaming and shaming of pregnant and parenting teenagers.

This suggests that teen parents, particularly teen mothers, are often stigmatised and considered deviant and immoral for having engaged in sex and fallen pregnant (Mkhwanazi, 2010; Yardley, 2015; Geronimus, 2004). That is, rather than pregnancy being understood as part of growing, it has been characterised as an anomaly, as something that befalls those who have engaged in deviant, immoral acts. The construction of teenage pregnancy and parenthood in this way is problematic as it individualises and privatises the instance of teenage pregnancy and opens a door for a range of social exclusions, low status and is often associated with limited aspirations (Yardley, 2015). However, it does not only individualise teenage pregnancy; it also constructs it as anomaly in the process of growing and development.

However, this is not to take a view that holds that teenage pregnancy does not carry with it negative consequences for learners. Of course, early childbearing has grave educational, social and economic ramifications for the future of learners and other young people (Yardley, 2015). There is indeed a range of challenges associated with teenage pregnancy and parenting, namely, risk of dropping out school, decline in academic performance, reduced earning potential, reduced career prospects, poor health, and breakdown of relationships, poor parenting skills as well as poor marital outcomes (Rolfe, 2008). Research reveals that these challenges often become a reality for some teen parents (Mangino, 2008), given the fact that, in a heterosexual society, adolescent parents are often unlikely to be supported by their friends, family or partners (Collins, 2010). Without appropriate support systems, the consequences of early childbearing are therefore difficult to carry for young people. The argument put forth in this dissertation is that although teenage childbearing could be regarded as a poor life choice, it must however be understood as part of the process of growing rather than a deviant form of growing.

Therefore, it is the contention of this dissertation that discourses that construct teenage pregnancy and parenthood as deviant and immoral should be challenged (Preston-Whyte, cited by Kakal, 2014), as these have the potential to exclude alternative perspectives of the issue and conceal the complexities associated with the issue. Blaming discourses have the potential to transfer the blame for social ills onto teen parents rather than confronting

structural issues such as poverty, unemployment and inequality (Rolfe, 2008; Kakal, 2014), and only serve to sustain dominant constructions of masculinity and feminity, which are often not useful in addressing social problems. There is evidence that the blaming discourse has potentially hazardous consequences for young people. For instance, pregnant adolescents are often subjected to negative social judgements and marginalised in their schools and communities based on negative constructions of teenage pregnancy and parenthood (Mkhwanazi, 2010). Often, teachers perceive teenage pregnancy and parenting as a sin – a form of sexual reproach or opprobrium – deserving of punishment that often results in exclusion from the academic life of the school (Bhana, Morrell, Shefer, and Ngabaza, 2010). Rather than resolving what is perceived as the problem, such an approach to teenage pregnancy tends to generate more problems. For example, teen parents often drop out of school because of what could be called constructed dismissal from school, where teachers use discriminatory practices to push pregnant teenagers out of the education system (Zachry, 2005). Individualisation of the instance of teenage pregnancy is problematic in a country, such as South Africa, where a constitutional promise has been made regarding access to education (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). This is even more problematic when it is taken into consideration that research evidence shows that, with appropriate support systems, teen parents can manage the delicate balance between parenting and schooling and continue to pursue their career aspirations (Seamark & Lings, 2004; Mangino, 2008).

However, there are instances where teen parents have displayed tremendous forms of resilience and agency against shame, labelling, stigmatisation and negative stereotyping, and have utilised these experiences as the reasons for going back to school to pursue their career aspirations (Yardley, 2008; Chohan & Langa, 2011). For instance, in a study conducted by Chohan and Langa (2011), participants rejected and challenged the negative constructions used against them, and instead reported that parenthood made them more resilient and influential, and provided them with an incentive to take charge of their lives. However, it is important to sound a caution regarding the responses that may be expected from teen parents when faced with treatments from society. There is a huge variation when it comes to responses of teen parents, particularly because teen parents do not arise from common positions of social, political and economic equality (Sayed, 2002). Viewing teen parents as homogenous could have hazardous consequences, and could obscure differences and lead to the exclusion of those that lack the required capital.

Therefore, what this dissertation calls for is the interrogation of the dominant constructions of teenage pregnancy, teen parenthood and career aspirations. The position taken in this dissertation is that face-value constructions of the relationship between teenage pregnancy,

teen parenthood and career aspirations may be problematic and not useful in understanding the phenomenon of teen pregnancy and parenthood.

## 2.4    Career aspirations, career choice and teen parenthood

Aspirations are a strong influence on how young people make their choices about life, and how they perceive and experience themselves and their life outcomes regarding their future career aspirations (Schaefer & Meece, 2009). How young people construct, form and shape their aspirations is an important process in how they grow from childhood to adulthood, and navigate the intricacies of becoming of what they have always wanted to be.

This section of the chapter reviews literature relating to teen parenthood and career aspirations.

### 2.4.1 Teen parenthood and career aspirations

Research reveals that, in the main, teenagers would like to complete their schooling and proceed to post-school education with the hope of making a better life for themselves (Camerana, Minor, Melmer & Ferrie, 1998; Retlabala, Makofane & Jali, 2007; Migunde, Agak & Odiwuor, 2011). Russel (2013) contends that it is often during the adolescent stage that teenagers begin to develop a keen interest in their career aspirations (Retlabala et al, 2007). Adolescence is also a stage where young people engage in the struggle to form their identity and find their place in the social work. Trying to find themselves in the social world may lead to experimenting that results in consequences such as early childbearing.

There is a variety of reasons for why teenagers could become pregnant, namely, lack of and/or ineffective sex education in schools; influences from media; lack of parental guidance; peer pressure; attitudes towards and access to contraceptives and many others (Thobejane, 2015). However, to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, teenage pregnancy also needs to be located within the historical context of the value attached to life. For instance, teenagers may choose to get pregnant based on the value accorded to human life. For instance, during the pre-colonial period, pregnancy was often regarded as a criterion for qualification as a real woman, and infertility often relegated women to a sub-human status, as the test of womanhood lay in the ability to get pregnant (Iliffe, 2005; Inhorn, 2005). Therefore, the historical consideration of teenage pregnancy has potential to assist in understanding teenage pregnancy not only as a matter of personal choice, but as being a product of the "institutionalisation of exclusive heterosexuality" and the resultant gender

inequalities that continue to persist in many communities (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012; Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009: 3).

Now, turning to the focus of this section, Camerana, Minor, Melmer and Ferrie (1998) contend that career aspirations and goals during the adolescent stage are critical motivating factors used by young people to make life-long decisions about their desired career goals. Therefore, career aspirations provide a compass that points and leads young people to the direction of their desired futures. Career aspirations are thus a representation of an individual's orientation toward a desired life purpose, which is often driven by an individual's interests and hopes for their future (Domenico, 2005; Hellenga, Aber & Rhodes, 2002). Literature reveals that, due to the challenges related to teen parenthood, those parents often possess low career aspirations which may limit their future career choices (Futris, Nielson & Olmstead, 2009). For instance, in the study by Gates and Byronn (2008), teen fathers reported that they were undecided about and/or did not know what careers they wanted to pursue. This lack of career knowledge could be attributed to the failure of education systems to provide young people with relevant information about available career options (Gates & Byronn, 2008). The problem with the unavailability of relevant career information is that when young people's career aspirations become limited, this is likely to channel young people to less prestigious or inferior occupations (Xie, Harville & Madkour, 2014; Barr & Simon, 2012; Macleod, 2001), which may not result in any significant improvement in the quality of their lives. In addition, lack of relevant career information may lead to young people choosing careers that are not in demand, making them become a statistic in the pool of the poor and unemployed, compelled to perpetually live off social assistance programmes, which are hardly enough to sustain adequate living standards (Domenico & Jones, 2007).

The position taken in this dissertation is that teen parents, like many other young people, possess career aspirations – that is, they have dreams about what they want to become in life. This understanding is in line with Domenico and Jones' (2007) finding that pregnant and parenting teens have career aspirations, although the achievement of their career aspirations may be marred by challenges. From the context of this dissertation, this points to the significance of ensuring that teen parents who return to schools are encouraged to pursue their career aspirations by inter alia ensuring that they have access to relevant career information. It is also important that the teen parents be provided with a welcoming environment that ensures that they are not discriminated based on their past experience of early pregnancy. This is particularly important in that career aspirations may be eroded where teen parents get exposed exclusionary and discriminatory attitudes in schools (Domenico & Jones, 2007). Given the fact that the labour market and the women's role in

the economy have changed significantly, there is thus a need to take these issues seriously to ensure that exclusionary circumstances are reduced, particularly for teen parents.

What is evident in this section of the dissertation is that specific support mechanisms are required to ensure that teen parents returning to schools after pregnancy can pursue their career aspirations without impediments. This suggests that teen parents returning to school may find difficulty to pursue their career aspirations in the hostile environment that discriminates against expectant and parenting teens. Therefore, the achievement of career aspirations is tied to creation of an inclusive school environment.

## 2.4.2 Career choice

A major turning point in young people's lives involves making a career choice. Career choice often constitutes the beginning of the process of preparing young people for the world of work; hence, the decisions young people make about their career choice plays a significant role in placing young people in a career path that could either include in or exclude them from the wealth of opportunities (Ferry, 2006). Teen parent's career choices are often shaped by the continuous interdependence and intermingling with the context of a family, school and community, where they learn about and explore career options that ultimately lead them to their career choice (ibid). While general perception suggests that choosing a career is a product of an individual decision, research reveals that a wide range of factors have influence on what career choices young people, including teen parents, are likely make. These factors could include background of parents, availability and access to relevant career information, cultural constructions of masculinity and feminity, availability of role models in the community, socio-economic background of families, and the availability of opportunities to pursue chosen career options (Jungen, 2008; Ferry, 2006).

In the study conducted by Ferry (2006), career decisions in wealthy schools were often directed towards preparing students to enter college and other forms of advanced training, while lack of career decision making was the norm in schools from low socio-economic contexts, often because learners were not exposed to relevant information about career options. The lack of decisiveness with regards to career choice in schools from low socio-economic contexts was often exacerbated by the lack of family support in the processes of choosing a career, that is, learners often had to make up their mind without any informed advice (Ferry, 2006). This led to the prevalence of instances of uncertainty about what careers to pursue, which often manifested in adolescent parents postponing decisions associated with career choice.

It is the belief of this study that career choice constitutes a fundamental aspect for the beginning of the journey towards the actualisation of career aspirations, without which career opportunities could hardly be taken advantage of. Choice implies sufficient information about all the available options so an informed decision could be made, and aspiration is insufficient without the ability to make an informed choice. Therefore, the issue of choice of career needs to be located within the abundance of opportunity to choose what is preferred. This suggests that there can be no career choice where information is inadequate.

## 2.5   Educational attainment

Teenage childbearing and parenthood is often negatively correlated with completion of secondary school. That is, it has potential to reduce opportunities for educational attainment, as teen parenthood is often associated with difficulty in balancing demands of schooling with those of parenthood; negative teacher attitudes towards teen parents, particularly teen mothers; lack of appropriate support programmes (both educational and emotional); and the stigma associated with teenage pregnancy and parenthood (Chauke, 2013).  International research confirms that teen parenthood could have a negative impact on educational attainment, particularly where appropriate support mechanisms are not in place and where teen parents are burdened with other responsibilities associated with parenthood (Neely, Baldwin, Beckwith & Williams, 2011).

In South Africa, the National Income Dynamics study in which the relationship between teenage childbearing and school achievement was explored, findings pointed to the fact that girls who fell pregnant had double the chances of dropping out of school and approximately five times the likelihood of failing in matric due to the complexities associated with teen parenthood, and parenthood in general (Kakal, 2014). This finding resonates with what was found in United Kingdom, in a study conducted by Dickens, Johns and Chapman (2012), where it was revealed that schooling for teen parents was more compromised than that of learners who delayed pregnancy and only had children later in life.

This therefore points to the possibility that teen parents may face additional difficulties in pursuing their career aspirations, which suggests that there may be a need to explore options for building support for teen parents and institute effective programmes to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy. However, this will require an open mind that is capable of interrogating dominant discourses to find alternative discourses that divert from blaming and begin to approach teenage pregnancy and parenthood in a more sensitive and constructive

manner. In other words, there is a need to demystify teenage pregnancy and to begin to view it as part of a growth process rather than moral deviance.

## 2.6   Factors that affect career aspirations of teen parents

Education could be regarded as the most important device for ensuring the empowerment of the marginalised sections of society. The basis or foundation of career aspirations is access to quality education that can ensure that young people can form ideas about career aspirations. Career aspirations constitute a significant proportion of what makes identities of young people (Lupton & Kintrea, 2008). That is, career aspirations are a product of interactions with a range of people from various corners of society. Therefore, young people's career aspirations, who they want to be in terms of their careers, are therefore influenced by the spaces and places in which young people find themselves.

A whole range of factors in these spaces and places account for the ultimate career choices that young people make and/or do not make in their lives. These factors include, inter alia, life context, personal aptitudes and educational attainment (Ferry, 2006), as well as variables such as socio-economic status, educational attainment, family background and cultural values, gender, parental expectation, parental education, schooling experience, peers influence and one's personality and attitudes (Stead, 1996; Domenico & Jones, 2007; Leavy & Smith, 2010; Barr & Simon, 2012; Shumba & Naong, 2012; Willan, 2013; Russel, 2013). These factors have the potential to affect career aspirations. Krumboltz (1979), in Peterson, Sampson, and Reardon (1991) contends that external conditions, which generally reside outside the sphere of control of young people, could have an influence on young people's career aspirations and decisions. These external factors could include the availability of jobs after post-school education; availability of and access to educational and training opportunities; inclusivity of job entry criteria, labour laws and policies; family circumstances and access to resources; and human capital development opportunities available in the community (Peterson, Sampson & Reardon, 1991: 77; Stead (1996).

The following sub-sections provide a discussion of the factors that influence young people's career aspirations. It is the understanding of this study that the following factors are at the core of the mix required to form informed career aspirations, and that they are worth considering for purposes of this study.

## 2.6.1 Family socialisation as a source of career aspirations

The family is first and primary institution in which initial forms of socialisation and identity formation occur (Harro, 2013). Therefore, the family can, amongst other things, influence career aspirations and decisions of young people, including teen parents, because of the family's significance in socialising individuals in what they can dream of becoming (Sithole, 1997; Harro, 2013). Within the family, a child is often socialised into the dreams and aspirations that are steeped in the norms and values of the family. Within the family circle, parents and significant others play a significant role in shaping the identity and dreams of a child (Harro, 2013). Albien and Naidoo's (2016) study revealed that parents were the most powerful sources of career information within the family, where parents had relevant levels of education.

Conditions and circumstances that occur within the family also have a strong influence on what young people aspire to do in life. For instance, issues such as family background, income and parents' educational aspirations often have an impact on adolescents' career aspirations (Moloi & Chetty, 2010). In Ashby and Schoon's (2010) study of family impact on career aspirations, it was revealed that adolescents from wealthy families tended to aspire to prestigious careers, sustain their educational attainment and perform better in examinations than those from families from lower income brackets. This suggests that the standard of living of the family may serve to provide a standard to which children are likely to aspire. However, this is not to suggest that this will always be the case, as there may be variations due to individual, circumstantial and contextual uniqueness. Ashby and Schoon (2010) argues that parents as well as adolescent parents need to be encouraged to aim higher for the benefit of their children, if the family is to serve as a positive socialising agent. However, this should be handled with caution as it might put excessive pressure, and have detrimental consequences, on children who could be expected to outperform themselves.

Research also reveals that dominant discourses about how families are conceptualised and understood could have an impact on career aspirations. For instance, findings of study conducted by Garg, Mellanson and Levin (2007) in Canada, revealed that children from single-parent families were likely to have negative attitudes towards school, which could result in lower educational aspirations compared to those from dominant types of families. This might suggest that single parents are often burdened with parenting responsibilities and often experience the highest level of family demands and challenges (Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Ochonogor, 2014). This suggests that single-parent families may therefore not be regarded as real families, and could therefore be viewed as an anomaly in communities that

value heterosexual types of family. This could lead perceptions that single-parent families are deficient as child-raising devices (Hill, 2006).

It has been indicated somewhere in this dissertation that teenage pregnancy is often viewed as moral deviance, deserving of punishment. Pregnant girls in South Africa have often had to leave school, either being forced by parents and/or from pressure generated by the stigma and shame associated with teenage pregnancy. Li and Kerpelman's (2007) report on parental influences in young women' career aspirations, has reported that feedback from parents is critical for young people as it may encourage and/or discourage them from following particular life paths. For instance, parents could, out of anger and shame, send messages that teen parents are not good enough for education, and that all that they are good at is childbearing. This could have hazardous consequences for the career aspirations of teen parents. For instance, Kerpelman (2007) asserts that identity challenges in adolescence may lead to adolescents engaging in survival behaviours to release pressure exerted on them by their families, which may steer them away from thinking positively about themselves. This underlines the significance of the influence of the family in strengthening and/or weakening adolescents' visualisation of their future.

Research also reveals that families have an influence on decisions regarding what careers are valued and which are devalued (Ochonogor, 2014). Family talk and beliefs families hold about acceptable and worthwhile types of careers have significant influence on what careers young people ultimately choose. The stigma associated with teenage pregnancy and parenthood may allow families space to disqualify teen parents from choosing careers, and in some cases careers may be imposed on teen parents as punishment for having fallen pregnant. For instance, teen parents may be influenced by their parents to pursue particular kinds of careers, which may not take account of their interests and what they would like to become (Stead, 1996; Tillman, 2015).

Another issue is that of spatial (in)justice. Lupton and Kintrea (2008) assert that geographical location of families and communities have an impact on career aspirations young people can access. Their study into deprived communities revealed that teen parents had high career aspirations, wanted to further their studies and had high hopes for their future. However, contextual challenges that affected their families and communities often made these aspirations seem unrealisable for these young people. The consequence was that these aspirations became far-fetched and the young people were compelled to abandon them for something more realisable, which often was incapable of lifting them out of the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment. This study further highlighted that their awareness of career

options appeared to be restricted because they were not exposed to different role models and sources of career information, which severely limited their drive and passion to explore and experience life outside that that was available in their communities (Lupton & Kintrea, 2008). The situation in their communities effectively discouraged higher expectations of themselves, and what they could imagine for themselves. That is, their geographies in terms of what they thought was possible for them was determined and shaped by the circumstances that worked against alternatives views of the self (Lupton & Kintrea, 2008).

However, it is important to indicate that teen parents have agency, and can brave the circumstances that seek to pull them down. For instance, Diab, Flack, Mabuza and Reid (2012) pointed out that teen parent's motivation and sense of purpose to change things in their communities may impel them towards alternative forms of existence, and implore them to take a decision to become agents of change in their communities. For instance, teen parents from economically deprived areas may be motivated by a strong desire to choose careers that put them in a better position to address challenges of poverty and underdevelopment in their communities. In other words, teen parents may, with relevant cultural and social capital challenge the circumstances that make it difficult for them to pursue their (career) aspirations.

This section highlights the fact that, in understanding the lives of young people, and teen parents in particular, attention must be paid to the contextual realities of families and communities, the influences of the family, and the ways in which teen parents navigate and negotiate the maze of influences in their attempts to pursue career aspirations.

## 2.6.2 Cultural values

Cultural values have been identified as one of the key aspects in the development and formation of career aspirations (Stead, 1996; Shumba & Naong, 2012; Urdan, Solek & Schoenfelder, 2007; Mwoleka, 2011). Cultural values could be described as those values that are aligned with or held by a particular social group (Mwoleka, 2011). Although individuals may be constrained by cultural values; they are not governed by culture; people have agency to act, think and feel ways in relation to culture (Reid, 2010), and therefore internalize, externalise and/or adapt cultural values. That is, individuals may navigate, negotiate, shape and be shaped by versions of culture to make choices and decisions as to what they deem to be good for themselves. This implies that culture is more of a dynamic than a static phenomenon, but has potential to and could be an important aspect of decision making, including decision making about career choices. In fact, career theorists such as

Blustein (2006), Peterson and Gonzalez (2005) and Richardson (1993) contend that career aspirations and decisions are entrenched and steeped in the socio-cultural matrix.

This study holds that some aspects of the decisions about what career to pursue are rooted in the socio-cultural configurations of context (Schoon, Parson, Rush & Law, 2010; Willan, 2013), and may serve to enable and/or enable aspirations of teen parents towards prestigious careers. It is therefore crucial to understand how cultural values contribute in the (re)configuration of career decisions of teen parents, and how these enable and/or limit them in their efforts to achieve their career aspirations.

## 2.6.3 Financial constraints

In South Africa, all South Africans have a right to a basic education, and the Bill of Rights of the Constitution places the duty on government to ensure that education is available and accessible (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The following graph illustrates the percentage of learners five years and older who were attending school and did not pay school fees between 2002—2014, through the policy of no-fee paying[1] schools:
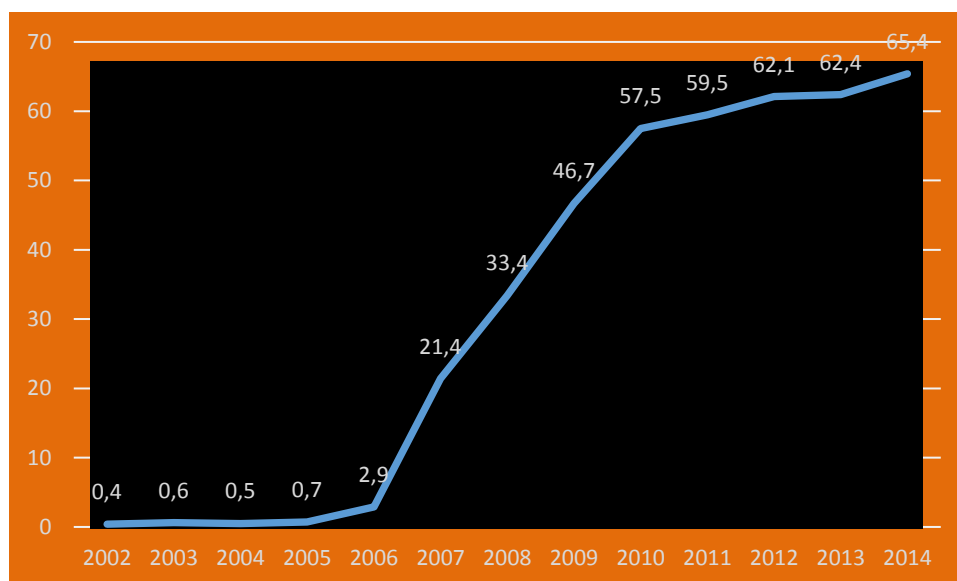


*Figure 3: Percentage of learners five years and older who attended schools and who did not pay tuition fees between 2002 and 2014*

The graph above reveals that attendance of no-fee paying schools has grown significantly over the past ten years. The percentage of learners who are five 5 years and older attending

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[1] In South Africa, schools from poor socio-economic contexts (i.e. Quintile 1-3) are declared no-fee schools, and do not have to charge school fees. Instead, government uses a prescribed formula to make funding available to these schools.

no-fee paying schools increased from 0,4 per cent in 2002 to 65,4 per cent in 2014. In addition, approximately 7,2 per cent of learners benefitted from fee exemptions[2] and/or partial bursaries in 2014 (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

However, although significant progress has been made in this regard, challenges remain in area of the cost of education. The following graphical representation illustrates percentage distribution of the primary reasons for why people within the 7 to 18 age range were not attending an educational institution, by sex, in 2014:



| | No money for fees | Poor academic performance | Family commitments | Education is useless | Illness and disability | Completed education | Working at home | Getting to school | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 22,9 | 21,4 | 1,00 | 11,6 | 13,2 | 8,3 | 9,1 | 0,6 | 12,0 |
| Female | 24,00 | 14,3 | 21,8 | 7,3 | 7,8 | 7,4 | 4,5 | 0,3 | 12,6 |
| RSA | 23,5 | 17,7 | 11,6 | 9,4 | 10,4 | 7,8 | 6,7 | 0,5 | 12,3 |
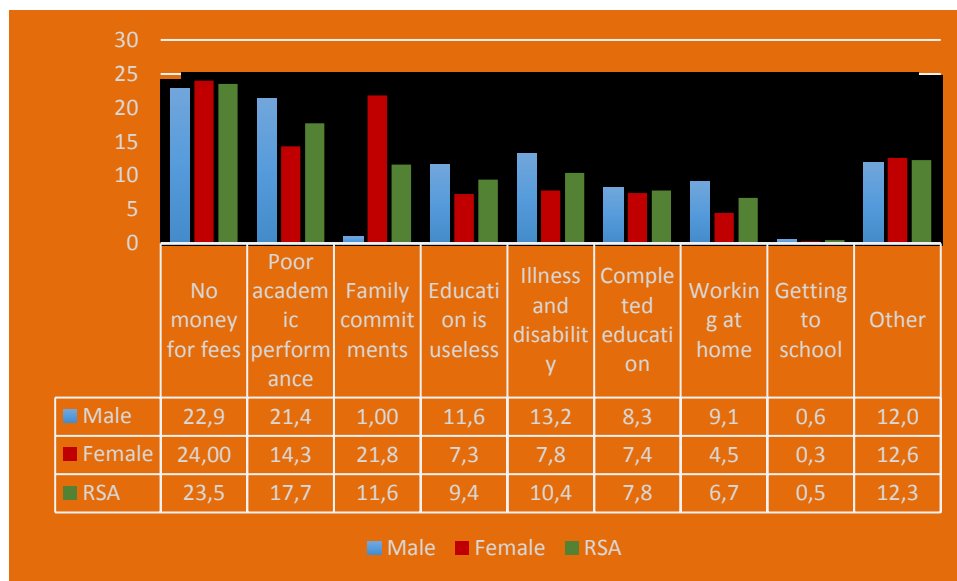
*Figure 4: Percentage distribution of the main reasons given by persons aged 7 to 18 years for not attending an educational institution, by sex, in 2014*

The above graph shows that the main reason why learners could not attend school was because of no money to pay school fees. Females were more likely to be prohibited by lack of money to pay school fees from attending school. Often, these learners are from areas where communities are regarded as wealthy, with fee-paying schools, or where the no-fee school policy is not properly enforced. In addition, poverty and unemployment remains one of the biggest concerns in South Africa. For instance, by the end of 2015, the unemployment rate in South Africa stood at 24,5 per cent (Statistics South Africa, 2016). Often, this combines with other variables to produce a produce a toxic mix of experience for many South Africans. For instance, within the context of this study, this is compounded by low

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[2] Once parents have agreed on school fees for the following year, all parents are legally required to pay school the set school fees. Where parents cannot afford the set school fees or cannot pay the full amount, they must apply at the school for a full or partial school fee exemption.

parental education levels where education was not regarded as a priority and thus there is little academic support from parents for their children (Surty, 2011).

Mbanjwa (2006), cited by Shumba (2012) found that restrictions on career choice in socio-economically disadvantaged schools often manifested in the form of lack of funding, lack of information about available careers, poor academic achievement and dissatisfactory career counselling programmes. Often the result was that the poor financial base of learners determined and limited their career choices, locking them in the careers that were often not prestigious (Ngesi, 2003).

This study believes that financial hurdles play a major role in channelling learning to and away from career choices, is therefore worth considering when exploring the experiences of teen parents. For instance, in South Africa, 5,6 per cent of females aged between 14–19 years fell pregnant during the 12 months before the survey in 2014 (Statistics South Africa, 2015). This indicates that there is a significant percentage of teen parents in South Africa. Often, not only are learners confronted by a lack of information, they are also excluded and marginalised from education, training, employment and society, with many of them unable to register for their chosen careers or dropping out of tertiary institutions because effective support mechanisms are not available (Ngesi, 2003; Ferry, 2006; Vincent, 2012).

## 2.6.4 Schooling experiences and academic achievement

The school is a social system in which the aims and aspirations of society are to be advanced. Therefore, what the schooling system provides, and what career aspirations are encouraged and/or discouraged, is rooted this relationship. Succeeding in secondary school is a key to career path. However, challenges remain in ensuring access quality education for many learners. In other words, although significant progress has been made in ensuring that learners attend school, the goal of access to quality education remains unrealised for many learners (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Collins (2010) indicates that schools have a crucial role in ensuring that there is educational and social support for teen parents. One of the initial ways is to ensure that all leaners, including parenting learners, remain at school and that they have access to quality education programmes. Therefore, the schooling system has a responsibility to ensure that all learners are exposed to a basket of opportunities for success, are encouraged to have high aspirations and to complete their education (Collins, 2010).

Lupton (2006) and Feinstein, Duckworth and Sabates (2004) further highlighted the importance of relations between teachers and students as a basis for learner achievement in schools. Teachers are key players in the success of the schooling system and have an inevitable influence on the development of learners and what they believed they can achieve for themselves. As evident in Brooks' (2006) review of resilience literature, the role of the teachers extends beyond knowledge transfer; they in fact exert considerable influence on the development of such resilience through the way in which they set up teaching and learning experiences. Therefore, teachers and school context could be regarded as amongst the key determinants of school success (Shumba & Naong, 2012).

Low expectations of students on the part of teachers, and rejection from friends have potential to provide a fertile ground for tendencies of self-fulfilling prophecy, and these often minimises opportunities for success for learners who are already at the margins of school life. The school may therefore serve as one of the major factors influencing what aspirations and choices learners have for their future. The influence of the school is even more relevant for learners who already face (possible) exclusion based on their unwanted identities, such as teen parents who often face adversity when they return to school to continue where they left off in pursuing their career aspiration (Willan, 2013).

Barr and Simon (2012) pointed out that cultivation of teen parent's educational ambitions by school officials, policy makers, and other individuals who shape teen parent's life's chances may not be enough to allow these young parents to fulfil their educational goals and close the achievement gaps with peers who delayed pregnancy. Irvin, Meece, Bryun, Farmer and Thomas's study (2011) underlined the significance of the role of the school in ensuring that there is a welcoming atmosphere and effective support mechanisms for teen parents to support their efforts to pursue and achieve their career aspirations. This was particularly important in the sense that the study found that school practices, teacher attitudes towards parenting adolescents, teachers' level of education and the nature of the curriculum offered revealed disturbing trends that served as a barrier to the learners' career aspirations. What was significant here was the fact that the teachers' attitudes, values and beliefs and stereotypes teenage parents about had direct negative impact on learner's aspirations for the future. Bhana and Nkani (2010), Bhana, Clowes, Morrel and Shefer (2011), Shefer, Bhana & Morrel (2013), have all found that despite school policies, such the South African School Act (Department of Education, 1996) that protects the rights of teen parents and pregnant learners, some teachers, especially school principals, still discriminate against teen parents. That is, they still associate teenage pregnancy and parenthood with sexual promiscuity and moral deviance. However, a few schools have adopted caring and

supportive attitudes towards this category of learners, and ensuring that pregnant and parenting teenagers have access to education, a crucial aspect of exposing to better opportunities in life.

There is evidence that teachers have sometimes refused to support adolescent parents who have missed classes because of child care responsibilities (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). Learners who have parenting responsibilities, are often exposed to adverse peer relationships and a school environment that is hostile to their presence, often pushing them to drop out as the only option available for them if they want to survive emotional and physical trauma. For instance, a study conducted by Zachry's (2005) in Texas found that pregnancy was a leading reason for schools to limit adolescent mothers' educational attainment. Zachry's (2005) study highlighted the fact that adolescent parents often mentioned reasons for dropping out of school that are linked to how school operates, which was related more with policy environment of the school and their previous schooling experiences than just pregnancy. Zachry (2005) argued that the rigidity of some school administrators concerning the school's attendance policy hindered adolescent's educational attainment.

School culture, the nature of the curriculum offerings in schools and how information regarding career choice is provided to learners might exclude learners from being able to take advantage of the available educational opportunities to advance their aspirations for the future (Buthelezi, Alexander and Meabi, 2009; Migunde, Agak & Odiwuor, 2012; Shumba et al, 2012). Therefore, as noted in the study by Bhana (2008), teen mothers are often subjected to exclusion and prejudice, whilst teen fathers often remain invisible and proceed with their schooling. This reflects how society structures itself to decide who is in and who is out in terms of access to educational opportunities, by promoting and/or colluding with practices that perpetuate gender discrimination (Bhana, 2012; Unterhalter, 2012).

Unterhalter (2012) has also pointed out that teen mothers were often exposed to a culture of out casting, shaming and silencing when they returned to schools. Another challenge with support programmes for teen parents, where these were available, was support from government and non-governmental organisations that mostly focus on adolescent mothers at the expense of teen fathers who remain unsupported (Finney & Morton, 2012). Unterhalter (2012) argued that this is largely due to the way in which these institutions thought about who is responsible for pregnancy, and often boys remained invisible in dominant conceptualisations, and were therefore off the hook. This instance of inequitable sharing of responsibility is problematic on several fronts. Firstly, it disproportionately

distributes the responsibility for sharing the consequences of pregnancy, and this often at the expense of teen mothers. Secondly, it denies teen fathers opportunities to take responsibility and participate in the processes of experiencing the baby. Lastly, it has hazardous consequences for gender equality and equity, and compromises efforts to ensure access to quality education for all.

This study takes the view that learner achievement is a product borne out of how the society, education system and schools organises themselves to ensure that all learners, whether they are teen parents or not, are encouraged and supported in their efforts to pursue and achieve their career aspirations. Therefore, efforts to ensure access to quality education for all must converge to ensure that the anomalies pointed out in this section are eliminated, and that the discord between the rhetoric of access to quality education and the schooling experiences of teen parents is eliminated.

## 2.6.5 The experience of teen parenting

Research has revealed numerous challenges in education that are associated with the experience of teen parenting (Kheswa, 2014; Chauke, 2013; Njambatwa, 2013; Vincent, 2012; Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012; Molapo, 2011; Mangino, 2008; Domenico, 2005; Hellenga et al, 2002). These studies reveal that teen parenthood is often associated with a catalogue of challenges, and teen parents could therefore be regarded as susceptible to numerous vulnerabilities in the education system. Vincent (2012) has pointed to the challenges relating to balancing the demands of being a mother or a father with those of being a learner, given inadequate support systems for these learners. The report from the Social Exclusion Unit in the United Kingdom identified three challenges associated with early child bearing, namely, low expectations, lack of access to relevant information about their choices and mixed messages to teen parents. Vincent (2012), therefore, concluded that because of these challenges teenage parents may have low educational and employment aspirations, and many may therefore end up dependent on social system.

In his research on adolescent parenthood, Russel (2013) reported that teenage mothers often found themselves in conflicting space within education, employment and parenting, with discourses which constructed them as learners who deserved to be rejected and excluded from spheres of productive life as moral deviants. Russel (2012) concluded that due to the inferior education that these learners subsequently had access to, they were likely to be channelled towards education and training options that may not be what they wanted for themselves and that may not be an appropriate means for socio-economic

empowerment, by facilitating their financial and emotional welbeing. On the contrary, Smith Battle (2007) has opposed the construction of teen parents as helpless victims, arguing that adolescent parents are individual with agency, who are quite capable of re-evaluating their situations and work towards attaining their educational goals if provided with appropriate support mechanisms. For instance, Smith and Battle (2007), in their study, found that some teen parents utilised their experience of teen parenthood to reinforce their interests in education, and that these were instrumental in assisting them to utilise education to pave a way for a better life for their children, expand their possibilities for employment and move them away from becoming perpetual dependents of the social security system.

Zachry (2005) characterises this phenomenon as transformation where adolescent parents realise that success and freedom for them and their children will come from personal drive and commitment to succeed. However, this study cautions that the assumed agency of teen parents should not be generalised to define what may be expected of all teen parents. What this study contends is that a lot depends on the mix of contextual realities present in the lives of teen parents, thus, it may not be true for every teen parent. However, the fact that teen parents may have agency to refocus their lives on pursuing their education may be a useful foundation for providing interventions and support mechanisms that assist such agency to be utilised productively.

## 2.6.6 Framing discourses of health, wellbeing and irresponsible fatherhood

Teenage pregnancy is often constructed as a public health issue (Kakal, 2014). From this view, becoming an adolescent parent implies taking a development journey. This therefore attracts a concern for the physical well-being of the teen parent, which opens the door for the construction of teenage pregnancy an obstetrical problem; a concern for the emotional impact of the teen parent, her family and the wellbeing of the infant from unplanned pregnancy. This further results in the characterisation of teenage pregnancy as a psycho-social and paediatric problem (Nash, 1990), which exacerbates challenges that beset the experience of teen parenthood. The framing of teenage pregnancy as a medical problem defies its social location, as a phenomenon that results from and may have social consequences for teen parents. For instance, there is a rich body of literature to suggest that adolescent parents are unlikely to be supported by their friends, family or their children's fathers, and that this has severe consequences for mental and physical health and may render them vulnerable to a range of social problems, such as substance abuse, depression and suicide (Chohan & Langa, 2011).

The medicalisation of teenage pregnancy does not only have consequences for teen mothers; it also has consequences for teen fathers. For instance, some teen fathers have never lived with their children, and this deprives these children assumed fatherly love and forces teen mothers to struggle alone without the presence of their boyfriends in the raising of the child. Research shows that teen fathers often experience intense feelings when they hear about their imminent fatherhood (Bhana, 2008), and that teen fathers may therefore not necessarily be willingly absenting themselves from the responsibility of parenting, but they may be being silenced and excluded by the heterosexual system (Gates & Byronn, 2008).

In South Africa, this could partially be attributed to the exaggerated focus on girls of the South African School Act and the deafening silence of this ACT in relation to boys (Bhana, 2008), a policy error that places a responsibility of pregnancy and parenthood disproportionately on girls. Such a failure of policy, rather contributing to the efforts to eradicate gender inequality, it sustains and perpetuates the failure of the schooling system to provide the necessary support to learners. For instance, one of the participants in Bhana, et al's, (2010) study on teenage parenting, reported complex challenges they faced as teen parents and appealed to researchers to refrain from constructing young fathers as bad because, for this participant, being a teen fatherhood often brought with it feelings of anxiety and pain, especially where the teen father knew that he would be unable to provide for the well-being of the child. In Yardley's (2008) study, as stated before, teen parents felt stigmatised by the media and public and in their use of public services. In their responses, they displayed resistance to these framing discourses, and dismissed such discourses as unrepresentative of their lives.

The above turns the discourse of irresponsible teen fathers on its head, as it suggests that although teen fathers may not ready to be fathers, they acknowledged their responsibilities for the child and were willing to be part of the child's life (Willan, 2013). Often, teen fathers from severely economically disadvantaged backgrounds often decide to drop out of school to seek employment to be able to support the baby (Ibid). In some cases, these teen fathers are compelled by their families, who are of the view that they must take responsibility for pregnancy, to drop out of school and look for employment to support and take care of the baby(Ibid). Therefore, there might be a need to ensure that teen fathers are provided with structured opportunities to reflect on and discuss their new roles as fathers as well as the challenges of having to balance the demands of school and parenting lives (Harrington, Deusen & Ladge, 2010).

The value of education in assisting teen parents to brave these framing discourses cannot be overemphasised. For instance, Lemmer's (2011) study on how women from deprived background constructed and accorded meaning to their empowerment, placed emphasis on the significance of education as an vehicle for equipping women with necessary knowledge, skills, and self-assurance, especially those from disadvantaged communities. Participants in this study accorded similar importance and value to education as a vehicle for escaping from their poor socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, the legislative move to allow pregnant and parenting teens to continue with their education constitutes a significant step in ensuring that this category of young people is not excluded educationally. The step gives expression to the value accorded to education as a vehicle for human development.

This study believes that it is the responsibility of schools and other relevant institutions to mitigate the impact of the framing discourses discussed in this section, given the fact that evidence exists to suggest that career aspirations of teen parents are often high, and that they have desire to complete their education (Phillips, Salak, Nunes & Rosengard, 2012; Bell, Glover & Alexander, 2013). This suggests that schools, with learners who are willing to pursue their career aspirations despite an adversity and challenging circumstances under which they find themselves, have their work cut as they have something to work from.

## 2.7    Critical Theory, Children's Geographies and New Childhood Studies

Critical Theory, Children's Geographies and New Childhood Studies collectively aim to challenge traditional notions and understandings of childhood and children. Critical theory is based on the idea that individuals' actions are socially constructed and therefore socially constrained. This suggests that individuals make decisions which could have been influenced their socialised practices and social expectations, norms, values and ideas. The key philosophical tenet of critical theory is emancipation and empowerment of individuals from shackles of oppression. Emancipation is a process by which oppressed people become empowered (through conscientisation and other means) to deploy their agency to transform their circumstances. Emancipation thus occurs when individuals can identify and analyse oppressive circumstances in society and reflect critically on their life experiences, with the intention of eventually challenging the oppressive situation.

Critical theorists believe that education is a fertile platform for enabling regimes of critical thinking and conscientisation that could eventually lead to emancipation and social transformation. As evident in Freire (1970), critical theory has paved the way for the broadening of the understanding of social justice principles of equity, human rights, fairness and justice, as well as interrogating embedded patterns of privilege, power and oppression. For instance, in the case of the current study, patterns of oppression would manifest in the framing discourses used to construct and understand teenage pregnancy and parenthood. Often, experiences of teen parents are of individuals who are constantly marginalised, excluded and othered in a society that constructs and views teenage pregnancy and parenthood as moral deviance. The theoretical knowledge of critical theory was also the lens with which I understood  Children's Geographies and New Childhood Studies.  Therefore the perspectives evident in Children's Geographies and Childhood studies allows space for the experiences of teen parents to be heard and understood with a view of transforming the relations of power as these play out in the lives of teen parents. For instance, the intention is to take advantage of the legislative advancements regarding the education of pregnant and parent teens to ensure that the constitutional promise of access to quality education becomes a reality for teen parents as well.

The New Childhood Studies perspective is therefore an attempt to build from Freire's thinking in that as a field it intends to challenge normative notions of childhood and children. Traditional approaches have often described childhood and children as a lack of some attribute(s) that society regards as important. Normative understandings of childhood and children have thus defined children as those who lack capabilities, skills, and powers of adulthood (Archad, 1993). That is, childhood has been constructed as a lack of some important attribute and, in the process, this has cast children as individuals who need some form of intervention and who cannot be trusted to make up their own minds about their situation(s) on anything. This view has often defined childhood as a preparatory stage for adulthood, rather than a stage in the process of personhood, and has in the process failed to resist the temptation of regarding children as less knowledgeable, naturally incompetent, incapable, fragile, passive and in need of control (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998).

New Childhood Studies is a departure from the traditional notions of children and childhood in some important ways, namely, childhood is understood as a social construct and children as active social actors (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Prout & James, 1990; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Prout, 2002). The notion of New childhood studies dismisses the notion of children as passive objects and/or empty vessels waiting to be filled with wisdom from adults, and constructs them as competent and capable agents with the ability to shape their

own identities, experiences and destinies (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Prout & James, 1997; Mayall, 2010). From this view, children are constructed as active social actors who have agency to take control of their own affairs, with the appropriate kinds of support mechanisms and institutions. For instance, teen parents are often understood as helpless victims of the circumstance, where there is some willingness to empathise with their situation. However, from a point of view of New Childhood Studies, teen parents are active participants in their own lives, who can resist oppressive notions of teenage pregnancy and parenthood. New Childhood studies is, therefore, a call to reconsider conceptions of children and childhood to align these with the transformative agenda (Tisdall, 2009).

Children's Geographies, which is a sub-field of New Childhood Studies, is an area of study in the field of human geography that focuses on the places and spaces of children's lives from an experiential, political and ethical point of view (Prout & James, 2007; Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). Children's space is therefore a fundamental concept in the discipline of Children's Geography (Wyness, 2003), as it incorporates the social, where children's relationships with each other and with adults take place (Van Blerk, 2005). Therefore, with the framework of Children's Geographies, children are provided space for participation and ownership of the world in which they live. Horton and Kraft (2006) have argued that children's geographies, as a framework for understanding children and childhood, has been ignored in academic research primarily because things that matter to children are often different from those of adults. For instance, teen parents' needs have often been dismissed and/or ignored by some individuals (such as teachers, their peers, school principals and researchers), casting teen parents as moral deviants who blew up their life chances. This treatment of teen parents could be understood and characterised as a continuing violation of their rights and the abuse of social power and authority (Young, 1990). This continued violation of human rights potentially subjects teen parents to continual prejudiced treatment in the very spaces (e.g. home, school and community) that are supposed to be welcoming for them. In other words, their status and experience in these spaces and places resemble that of uninvited party guests.

The notion of Children's Geography, like Critical Theory and New Childhood Studies, seeks to understand, engage and improve children's lives through challenging oppression and facilitating redistribution of social power with regards to children in childhood places and spaces. This is particularly important given the fact that social spaces are normatively created by power relations. As social spaces, schools and homes are never neutral, but are charged social spaces that set an agenda in which control, discipline, learning, and development in childhood spaces is a central concern. That is, schools and homes form

central components of power laden spaces, where issues of inclusivity, exclusivity, justice and injustice intertwine in a complex network to produce experiences of teen parents (Van der Berk & Dunkley, 2004). Given the above, the notion of children's geographies can do more to open spaces for teen parents to voice the importance of their presence in the social places and spaces (such as the school, home, or community). This study aims to foreground teen parents' geographies of teenage pregnancy, parenthood and career aspirations to try and understand and appreciate the complexity of teen parents' lives. This suggests that the study therefore aims to position teen parents as knowledgeable social actors and fully constituted social subjects, whose voices need to be heard and considered in society. However, the intention is not simply to liberate voices of teen parents, but to utilise this dissertation to open possibilities and create a platform for their voices to be heard. This approach is founded on the thinking that that children are meaning producers, who need to be listened to as capable partners rather than objects of study (Young & Barret, 2001; Kellet, 2005; Skanfors, 2009). This suggests that this study views teen parents as social actors, experts and agents who are capable of shaping structures and processes around them, and who for that reason, need to be listen to so their lives could be known and understood (Moss, 2001).

Therefore, the decision to use Children's Geographies as a lens stems from the intention to position teen parents as co-participants in the study, who can transform the spaces and places where they are situated. Guided by New Childhood Studies that privilege children's agency (teen parents' agency in this study), I seek to understand how they navigate and negotiate enabling or constraining factors in their attempts to pursue their career aspirations in the places and spaces they occupy.

## 2.8   Summary

What stands out in this chapter are the challenges faced by teen parents who have been brave enough to go back to school, and the systemic deficiencies in embracing this as an opportunity to serve the needs of these learners. Often, returning teen parents experience rejection and exclusion instead of a welcoming atmosphere, where they are encouraged and assisted to achieve their educational goals. The framing and construction of teenage pregnancy as moral deviance and the heterosexual framing of teenage pregnancy potentially contributes to the exclusion of teen parents, despite legal advancements in ensuring that they have continuous access to education. The resilience that some teen parents are likely to display therefore presents as a lost opportunity in an education system that is unwilling and/or unable of embracing it as an opportunity to practice freedom (Freire, 1970). What

also emerged from this chapter is that there if a need to trouble and problematise the normative understandings of the experience of teen pregnancy and parenting, and how this plays out in how teen parents who return to school after pregnancy are supported in and/or obstructed from pursuing their career aspirations.

This chapter further situated the research within the New Childhood Studies, using the notion of children's geographies. The notion of Children's Geographies is about children's voices and agency, and seeks to understand experiences of children as subjects in the social world, rather than obsessing with their abilities to perceive space (Holloway, 2014). That is, the intention is to examine and challenge normative notions in the construction of children and childhood, and the accompanying discursive co-construction of the meanings of childhood and space (for instance, how the home, school and community are framed as spaces of childhood). The understanding in this study is thus that the absence and/or silencing of children voices emerges from flawed understandings that view children as 'adults in the making rather than children in the state of being' children (Brannen & O'Brien 1995:730). It is about tracing children's exclusion from public spaces based on the notion that they are 'not yet' and therefore will only be heard when 'they are'.

To infuse these debates and discussions into the key questions at the core of this study, the next chapter will present the methodological considerations that I made in conducting the study – that is, how I went about taking decisions about how the key issues of this study were to be investigated. Therefore, the following chapter will outline the methodological and design choices made, and provide a rationale for the choices that I made in this regard.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the methodological choices and decisions adopted for carrying out this study. Methodology considerations refers to the paradigmatic orientation, how participants were selected, methods and techniques for generating data, the steps that were taken to ensure that the study is conducted ethically, credibility and trustworthiness, examining the limitations and blind spots of the study (Bogdan & Biklein, 1992; Sarantakos, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012).

The research questions for the study were as follows:
- What are the career aspirations for teen parents?
- What are the contextual factors that affect these aspirations?
- How do teen parents navigate and negotiate these contextual factors?

In this section, I present the methodological considerations that I made in conducting the study – that is, how I went about taking decisions about how the key issues of this study were to be investigated. Therefore, the following chapter will outline the methodological and design choices made (which includes context of study as well as sampling techniques and data generation tools), and provide a rationale for the choices that I made in this regard. Lastly, I consider the limitations, ethics and issues of credibility and trustworthiness were pertinent to the study.

## 3.2 Qualitative research

This study adopted a qualitative research tradition. Qualitative research is useful in addressing the questions of what, how and why (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012). The intention of this study was to understand career aspirations of teen parents and their experiences of enabling and restraining factors that they had to navigate to pursue their aspirations. Bogdan and Biklein, (1992); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) and Creswell (2012) indicate that human behaviour and practice could be influenced by context; thus, the understanding of the influence of context becomes critical. Qualitative research is useful in allowing researchers space to examine the political, social, historical and personal attributes that shape and are shaped by how individuals construct their social world (Bogdan & Biklein, 1992; Dickson, 1995; Creswell, 2012).

Therefore, the use of qualitative research in this study served as a vehicle for me to obtain an in-depth understanding of the career aspirations of teen parents and they navigated and negotiated contextual factors to pursue these aspirations. Qualitative research also helped me to study, capture and approach reality from the inside (school, home, community/society), and understand it from the viewpoint of the teen parents' geographies rather than impose my preconceived ideas on what their experiences were (Sarantakos, 2005).

## 3.3   Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry constitutes a methodology and an analytical strategy to obtain ideas from participants. The notion of narrative refers to spoken or written expressions (Polkinghorn, 1998). When a qualitative problem requires exploration and understanding, narrative inquiry, as a form of qualitative inquiry that generates storied data on the experiences of individuals, is used (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). As teen parents narrated their experiences, this opened a window to their subjective experiences, not as individuals who are 'not yet adults', but as active social actors in their own social world. As I was interested in exploring and understanding the various aspects of experience of teen parenthood and career aspirations as they were told by teen parents, adopting the narrative approach assisted me to get to the depth of the life stories of teen parents.

Narrative inquiry allowed me to shift the lens in which I constructed teen parents, from viewing teen parents as objects of research, to foregrounding their voices and positioning as co-participants in the process of research. In underlining the importance of narratives, Stead and Watson (1998) and Kramp (1995), assert that stories are part of our memories, through which we could reflect and connect to our past, present and future. For teen parents, this implied that as they began to tell their stories, they reflected to their past(s), thread its connections with the present and finally, projected on what future they imagined for themselves, and how they navigated and negotiated different constrains imposed by context in their efforts to pursue their career aspirations.

From the point of view of Polkinghorn (1988), narrative inquiry provided a device for affording teen parents an opportunity to reflect on the critical events (i.e. milestones) of the thread of their lives, and how they navigated and negotiated their individual threads as a bridge into their futures. These included how they understood the meaning of the experience of teen parenthood, what such an experience meant for them, and how best they had negotiated it. I was thus able to access how teen parents (both teen mothers and fathers)

managed the complexities of the intersection of schooling, parenthood and career aspirations. In this, the voices of teen parents were afforded prominent, authority and credibility (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

## 3.4 Mapping the research context

This study was conducted in a high school that is in a remote area of rural KwaZulu-Natal that falls under the Ingwe Municipality, which falls under Harry Gwala District Municipality, bordering Eastern Cape and Lesotho. Ingwe Municipality is the second-largest municipality in the district. The municipal headquarters are in Creighton, 112km south-west of Howick and 176km north-east of Kokstad. The town of Creighton is the administrative centre for the municipality and serves as the commercial centre for surrounding municipalities. The greatest proportion of Ingwe Municipality is taken up by tribal lands.

The report by Statistics South Africa (2011) indicate that the population for Ingwe Municipality is at 100 548, with 23 073 households. The average household size was 4.2, and 56.5% of households are female-headed. Education levels for individuals 20 years and older are as follows: no schooling: 13.8 %; matric: 17.7%; and higher education: 4.0%. The official unemployment rate stands at 39.3%, and youth (i.e. 15-34 years of age) unemployment at 48.5%.

Learners came largely from poverty stricken communities where there is a high rate of unemployment. Most families worked on nearby farms whilst others were employed as domestic workers. The participants had to travel long distances to and from school. My participants had to leave immediately after school to relieve parents from baby-sitting and to perform household chores left for them. This made it impossible to conduct the research after school hours. Special arrangements had to be made hence the interviews were to be conducted in school, after lunch (13h30), on the days agreed upon.

At the time of the research, the learner enrolment at the school was at 151, with a post establishment of 7 educators, including the school principal and the head of department. The school is classified as a Quintile 1 school, which means that it is a poor school. School buildings and ablution facilities are in a dilapidated state. There are 8 classrooms, two offices, one for the principal and the other one for the head of department. Other classrooms were converted into a staffroom, a kitchen and a makeshift library and textbook storage facility. There are five poorly constructed corrugated iron toilets. The school does not have water supply, and there is no library or library spaces in classrooms.

The condition of the school's poor infrastructure resembles conditions in the other schools in the area. There are huge infrastructure backlogs in the schools.

## 3.5   Negotiating access

Locating a school that was willing to allow teen parents to participate in the study was an arduous exercise, as teen parents were concerned about academic pressure and time before their end of year examinations. This was the only school where teen parents in matric were willing to participate and could find the required space to fit participation in the study into their already tight schedules. This, rather than being construed as problematic, pointed to the fact that teen parents were quite capable of taking decisions about time allocation between their studies and other activities. However, even after obtaining consent from the school and participants, there were challenges with their availability for interviews, as Grade 12 was writing September preparatory examinations, and had to sit for their final examinations soon thereafter. The constant cancellation of appointments was evidence that participants, being under a tremendous pressure, had opted to prioritise their studies. Although this resulted in challenges on my part (for example, I had to renegotiate times with the gate keepers), I was fully aware that prioritising their studies was the most appropriate decision that teen parents could have taken under the circumstances rather than continuing to participate in the study at the expense of their studies.

## 3.6   Selection of participants

Given the small number of parenting teenagers per school population in a specific grade purposive sampling was used.  Purposive sampling is useful and applicable where participants are selected based on some defining characteristic(s) that make them the holders of the data required to respond to the key questions of the study (Lee, 1993; Cohen et al, 2011; Creswell, 2012). That is, participants are selected with a specific purpose in mind, which is to meet the requirements of the study (Neuman, 2003; Davies, 2010). Therefore, participants for this study were selected based on their suitability for the study. In this study, I needed participants who were teen parents from a rural context, and who were doing Grade 12. The rationale for these criteria was that the participants who met these criteria would be able to speak from experience about teenage pregnancy, teen parenthood and career aspirations. I selected participants from Grade 12 learners because Grade 12 is the last year of secondary school education, and it where learners need to have made up their mind about what career aspirations they would like to pursue post-school.

Participants were stratified in terms of gender, with two teen fathers and five teen mothers, ranging from ages 18 to 23. Stratifying participants in this way was an important consideration for the study as voices of teen fathers are often excluded in research about teen pregnancy and parenthood (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012). All the seven participants were black South Africans and their home language was IsiZulu. The teen father who was 23 years would have been excluded in this study because of his age, but because there were only two teen fathers in Grade 12 at the time, he was thus included. However, on the other hand, the fact that he regarded himself as a teen father and that he was still at school at his age held a promise that would be able to share rich experiences teen parenthood and career aspirations. Among the participants, two were a couple (i.e. teen mother and father), who parented a child.

In qualitative research, one is concerned with in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being investigated rather than trying to produce generalised results; therefore, a smaller number of participants is usually selected (Durrheim, 2006; Smith, Bowers & Brown, 2010). Although a selection of seven (7) participants may be regarded as small in quantitative terms, it was quite acceptable in qualitative terms, as each participant provided the researcher with tons of rich and valuable information. In other words, the use of smaller number of participants did not compromise or make the research findings less credible.

## 3.7   Methods of data generation

I made the decision to use research methods and techniques that would as far as possible allow participants to speak from their heart about their experiences of teenage pregnancy, parenthood and career aspirations. I wanted to use methods that would allow a degree of openness in the sense of allowing participants to voice their perspectives (Bergold, 2007; Bergold & Thomas, 2010). The rationale for this decision was based on the thinking that children are active social actors in their own social worlds, and that they are not simply research objects.

The following section provides a discussion of the research methods that were adopted to generate data that would be able to respond to the key research questions of the study.

### 3.7.1 In-depth semi-structured interviews

The intention of the study was to listen to the voices of experience of teen parents regarding teenage pregnancy, parenthood and career aspirations. Therefore, interviews were adopted as one of the data generation methods to dig into and access their perceptions, understandings and experiences regarding teenage pregnancy, parenthood and career aspirations (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The decision to use interviews as a method for generating data assumed that the perspectives, understandings and experiences of teen parents about teenage pregnancy, parenthood and careers aspirations constituted an integral part of the focus of the study. The choice of semi-structured interviews provided a balance to guide the discussion while allowing participants to take control of what they were willing to share about their experiences of the intersections of teenage pregnancy, teen parenthood and career aspirations. In other words, in line with the notion of Children's Geographies adopted in this study, the assumption was that teen parents, who are participants in this study, can exploit the space (to control and guide the research process) provided by the semi-structured interview. Therefore, interviews, as a data generation method, held a promise to provide a space for teen parents to provide a meaningful and purposeful expression of their perceptions, understandings and experiences (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002:7).

An interview schedule or guide (attached as **Appendix 2**), which consisted of closed- and open-ended questions was used to elicit data from participants. Closed-ended questions were used to elicit data on the biographical aspects of data (such as ages and other related information) from teen parents. Open-ended questions allowed me to generate data in the form of detailed opinions or experiences on teenage pregnancy, parenthood and career aspirations. However, it must be pointed out that not all the questions in the interview schedule were asked; the list of questions therefore served as a guide to remind me of the important things to cover, but not necessarily to follow slavishly. Therefore, although the schedule looks extensive, it does not indicate the number of questions that were asked.

As clearly described by Cohen, et al (2011), the interview process is not rigid, but is an open situation that allows for greater freedom and flexibility. In other words, the semi-structured interviews provided me with an opportunity to discard questions that were found to be ambiguous and/or ineffective in generating data that was relevant to the focus of the study, and to replace them with new, and add missing ones (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 316). This meant that, if new information was offered that was not initially reflected in the interview

guide, the researcher could follow up with additional prompts and pursue new issues and aspects as they emerged.

To alleviate participants' fears and insecurities, individual interviews were utilised as rehearsal for participants to think about issues that would be raised in the focus group interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Being a face-to-face conversation, interviews offered a degree of privacy to reflect on their experiences for participants, given that revisiting some of the parts of this past was a painful and difficult experience for some participants. Having such a face-to-face encounter with the participants allowed me to establish rapport with them (Neuman, 2003). Semi structured interviews helped me to explore similar themes with each participant and draw comparisons across participants.

The participants were interviewed one by one on different days to allow myself with time to reflect on what had emerged from each interview, and make adaptations where it was necessary. A period of about 30 to 60 minutes was allocated per participant, and participants could respond in the language with which they were most comfortable. The reason for this was to ensure, as far as possible, that participants, as English second language speakers, did not have to struggle with language in the sharing of their experiences. The participants preferred a mixture of English and isiZulu, although IsiZulu seemed to take up a greater proportion of their responses. All interviews were audiotaped (with the participants' permission) and transcribed verbatim.

## 3.7.2 Photo-voice

Photovoice is commonly used in the field of education, and involves the use of photographs to stimulate and motivate social action. Photo voice was used not only to generate new forms of knowledge but also because of the increasing emphasis on elevating and foregrounding teen parents' perspectives and ensuring that their voices are heard (Heath et al, 2007).

Participants were each given a disposable camera and a spool with twenty-seven (27) exposures to "take pictures of what for them best defined their experiences in terms of teenage pregnancy, teen parenthood and career aspirations". It would be expected that cell phones would have been a much better option to capture images. However, all the participants did not have access to a cell phone. As the researcher this would have proved too costly if I was to purchase one for each participant despite knowing that cellphones are capable of producing quality images. It is for this reason that the decision to use a

disposable camera was made. Photo-voice was used for its assumed strength of allowing participants space and opportunity to identify and represent their own social realities (Wang, 1999). The belief was that through choosing, discussing, and reflecting on their photographs, I would be able to come to a clearer understanding of their circumstances and experiences.

However, one of the criticisms of using photographs in research is not simply that they can be falsified, but that they are highly subjective in that cameras do not take pictures, people do (Byers, 1968; 1966). Within the context of this study, the intention of using photo was however based on this very point: the intention was to shift ownership of the data generation process, from the researcher to the participants or the researched, and to allow participants space and freedom to identify and represent their realities without the interference and guidance from the researcher, although to a certain degree because the influence of the researcher can hardly be completely obliterated.

In this study, the stimulus was: "I would like you to take photographs that would allow me to understand your everyday schooling and home life as a teen parent who is in matric and planning for a future career. The photographs must tell a story about your parenting lives, or the motive of your career aspiration and how you have dealt with the challenges that you have met on your way to becoming what you want to be".

In designing the process to be followed in using photo-voice as a method for generating data, I was guided by the work of Wang (1999) and the empirical studies by Jacobs and Harley (2008) and Morojele and Muthukrishna (2012). Below, I outline the steps that were followed:

- I explained the research project to participants once more – its aims, focus and purpose.
- I then introduced the participants to the disposable cameras and provided them with information on how to use the cameras.
- I explained the ethical issues related to photo voice, for example, that they had to obtain permission from people who might be affected by the photographs that were about to be taken.
- I requested them to take photos that would tell a story of their parenting lives or career aspirations.
- Participants were instructed to take the photographs over a period of seven days.
- When the exposures were received, the researcher developed the photographs.

Photo voice therefore provided a space for teen parents to tell their stories in their own terms and opened a dialogical space for them. This was critical for the participants to exercise their agency as active social actors in their own social worlds. However, one of the disadvantages that I encountered was that some participants took photographs that were of a poor quality that could not be used effectively.  Using photovoice also had the potential for revealing the identity of participants and thus photographs where people are shown have been made fuzzy to prevent identification and ensure anonymity.

The photographs taken were then used in the focus group session to generate discussion as explained under the following section on focus group interviews.

## 3.7.3 Focus group interviews

Focus groups were used for their strength in allowing use of group interaction to generate data on topic or topics under discussion, which would have otherwise been impossible to access outside of a group context (Morgan, 1988). Therefore, unlike individual interviews, focus group interviews allow participants to hear each other's responses and to make additional points on these (Patton, 1987). Focus group interviews were therefore useful in allowing the teen parents space to reflect as a group on the social realities that featured in their geographies of teenage pregnancy, parenthood and career aspirations.

The photographs taken during photo-voice were used as a trigger for discussions in the focus group session to generate discussion. Participant had to choose any three of their best photos and explain to the group what the photo captured and why was it taken. This was to be used as a trigger for a focused group discussion and for the researcher to probe for further understandings in line with the key research questions of the study. Photographic images stimulated ideas that could not explored in the individual interviews which encouraged teen parents to share unique personal experiences with each other during the focus group interviews (Bogdan & Biklein, 2007). That is, the voice behind the photograph brought meaning and triggers memories of place and time for participants (Barker & Weller, 2003).

During the focus group interviews, participants could share and discuss their feelings, thoughts, experiences, meanings and understanding, attitudes, opinions, knowledge and beliefs about the complexities of the intersections of teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations (Sarantakos, 2005; Smith & Bowers-Brown, 2010); Creswell, 2012). The focus group interviews lived up to standard set by Bogdan and Biklein

(2007) and Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) in that they could stimulate and foster talk among participants. This allowed me a privilege of access into their social world, as active social actors of that world.

Careful facilitation of the group conversation was important to ensure that the conversation line maintained purpose and direction. Group interviewing also provided an added benefit of balancing power relations to a degree and diluting the influence and domination of the interviewer to foreground voices of teen parents. An added advantage was the fact that the research study was conducted during the time in which the participants had to prepare for their examinations, and focus group interviews could generate tons of data within the shortest amount of time.

Before the commencement of focus group discussions, I requested permission to tape-record the session, which was granted. In addition to tape-recording, I took notes where necessary, particularly on the issues that were not possible to capture with the use of the recorder. The session lasted for approximately an hour, largely due to the participants' willingness to contribute and sometimes with points of view being repeated, although in a rephrased format.

## 3.8   Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically arranging data and searching for meanings and understandings attached to and behind data (Cohen et al, 2011). Polkinghorn (1998) has suggested that when the researcher is doing an in-depth analysis of participants' narratives, the researcher need to reason narratively and use themes when shaping data. Therefore, I began analysis with familiarising myself with the data through reading notes and listening to the audio transcripts from in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. I embraced the fact that analysis is an iterative and recursive process as I read, re-read and studied my data. I went back and forth through the data that I had already read to find new and alternative ways of understanding the meanings in the data.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) characterises qualitative data analysis as an inductive process of organising data into types and identifying links among categories of meaning. Interviews were designed based on key research questions. The questions were arranged into subsections with headings. This arrangement provided a useful method of coding and categorising data, as process of putting data into an analytical form so that it can be manageable (Creswell, 2011; Jessop, 1997).

This study made use of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Themes were used as "patterns of responses that reflect something important about the data in relation to the research questions" (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.82). The flexibility of thematic analysis provided an advantage in that it made working with and manipulating data easier (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006) were applied in the data analysis process, the processes were adapted to the uniqueness of this study. The final identification of themes was therefore informed by relevant literature that I had reviewed and by the data that had been generated.

Using the notion of Children's Geographies in the analysis of the data, I endeavoured to foreground the voices of the participants, and to recognise their presence and ability to critically reflect on their own lived realities (Mayall, 2010). Therefore, in my analysis, I generously quoted verbatim chunks from my interactions with them. In the case of photo-voice, I opted for images that they have taken rather than textual descriptions and explanations from my own interpretations of the images.

## 3.9   Credibility and trustworthiness

It is important for researchers to address questions of credibility and trustworthiness for a research study (Angrosino, 2007). To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, instruments that were used in the study were first piloted in a similar context, and adapted according to the findings of such piloting process. This helped to minimise process challenges and to ensure the feasibility of the study before it was undertaken. Therefore, the piloting process helped to eliminate possible errors that could hinder the generation data that would produce credible and trustworthy findings. As a researcher, I could then critically reflect on and anticipate almost all the possible issues that could arise during the research process.

As suggested by Lewis (2008), I had to be cautious in the way data generated was transcribed and interpreted, as this might affect the reliability of the findings. Participants' responses were transcribed verbatim, quoted verbatim in the study and then interpreted for meaning. Images taken by participants during photo-voice, rather than my own descriptions and explanations based on my own interpretations of them, were used as they are in the study. As most of what participants had said had been said in both English and IsiZulu, the languages I understood, there was no need for me to translate before beginning with the analysis. This was useful in that poor translation would not only have jeopardised and compromised the credibility of the findings, but it would have amounted to a takeover of what

teen parents could have said themselves and distorted messages in the voices of teen parents. Such a distortion would have contradicted the rationale for the use of the notion of Children's Geographies in understanding the experiences and views of teen parents.

During the interviews, I used a research assistant who assisted me in the taking of notes to backup recorded data.  Furthermore, interviews were audio recorded to ensure that there was a verbatim record of data generated, and that there was no space for selective listening and recording. This was important in maintaining the integrity of the voices of the teen parents in the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Triangulation of data was ensured using multiple forms of data generation methods. This provided a degree of corroboration of evidence to enhance the credibility of the data.  This was not only important in corroborating for veracity; it was also important in improving the accuracy of understanding of what teen parents, the participants in the study, were saying. Member checking was also used where participants could read through the transcribed data and indicate whether it was a true reflection of what went on in the interviews.

## 3.10  Limitations and blind spots of the study

Only one school was approached to participate in the study; thus, there may be participants and voices from other contexts who would have had invaluable input who were however excluded from the study. The school that agreed to participate worked under extreme time pressures as this was a busy time of the year, and the researcher had to adapt their ways to be accommodated in the time available for participants.

Another constraint of this study was with regards to the number of participants (i.e. seven teen parents) coming from the same school, from a specific geographical area, selected for this study. This suggests that findings might have been different if the study were conducted in a different context. However, as with all qualitative research, findings are not intended to be generalised to other settings but to obtain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of a specific set of participants (Gavin, 2000). However, it is possible that obtaining views of teen parents from other races would have provided different understandings (Wolcott, 1994), but this study did not intend to focus on the racial aspects of the lives of teen parents.

## 3.11 Ethical considerations

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) assert that problems may emerge during the process of doing research that may compromise the protection of research participants. As a result, the following ethical considerations were observed.

Firstly, informed consent was sought from the participants (see **Appendix 6**). Informed consent can be defined as an instance in which appropriate information is provided to prospective participants to enable them to make informed decision about their decision to participate in a research study (British Educational Research Association, 2004; Wiles, Heath, Crow & Charles, 2005). In other words, participants must be provided with adequate information (i.e. participants must understand what they are agreeing to) of what the study would entail, in order for them have a clear understanding of the implications of their participation in the study (CFE Research, 2014). Therefore, obtaining informed consent could be regarded as the first step towards the protection of participants in a research study.

A letter (attached as **Appendix 5**) was sent to parents and guardians of the participants, in order to obtain consent for their participation in the study. This was done despite the fact that the participants were no longer regarded as minor. The rationale for doing this was to ensure that the participation of these learners had the support of parents and guardians. All parents and guardians gave consent for their children to participate in the study. Thereafter participants were provided with adequate information about the study. Participants who were willing to participate in the study were requested to sign a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate (attached as **Appendix 6**).

As the researcher this was important to obtain as teen parents are still considered a vulnerable group and I had to be aware of the manner in which they could be disempowered by the research process. This was in keeping with the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the study. In addition, I took special care in ensuring that participants continued to be willing to participate at various stages of the data collection phase. This was to ensure that they were the co-producers of the knowledge and that their voices were central to the research.

Secondly, permission to carry out the research study was obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (attached as **Appendix 8**). This occurred after ethical clearance had been obtained for the study through the internal ethics protocols of the University of

KwaZulu-Natal. The ethical clearance certificate is attached as **Appendix 7.** For permission to conduct research at the school, a letter of request to conduct this study was written to the school principal and the School Governing Body (attached as **Appendix 4**). The study was supported in all these instances.

Prior to the commencement of interviews and the taking of photographs, participants were reminded not to divulge or share any form of information that arose from the discussions that had occurred. The rationale for doing this was to ensure that participants were aware that their protection was also attached to their responsibility not to share information with outsiders who had little to do with the study and could cause them potential harm. In addition, participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and not compulsory, and that they were at liberty to withdraw from the research at any point, if they felt uncomfortable to continue (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). However, the participants were made aware of the importance of their participation in the study as a way of providing a space to teen parents to contribute to the efforts of ensuring that their experiences and views are properly understood. Thus the interview transcripts were made available to them for verification as a true reflection of what they had meant in the interviews and focus group interviews. Participants were also informed that the findings of the study would only be used to fulfil the degree requirements and potentially be published.

To ensure anonymity, I therefore used pseudonyms, deleted all the information that could easily identify them, made photographs of people fuzzy and ensured that the data was securely locked up in a cupboard (Cohen et al, 2011; Heath et al, 2009). I also ensured that only my supervisor and myself had access to the data, the participants' names and the names of their schools. Overall, the study was guided by principles of non-maleficence, beneficence and justice (Wassenaar, 2006).

## 3.12  Summary

The discussions in this chapter highlight the fact that the choices researchers make about methodological and design considerations often stem from their own ideological convictions. These choices therefore are by their very nature charged, rather than neutral and objective. Therefore, any ideological stance adopted by a researcher provides a template for the researcher's decisions relating to design issues of the study. So, ideological assumptions lead to choices about what key research questions are to be investigated, how data is to be generated, and how findings are to be understood.

Linked to the above, the choice of which methods to use for data generation also has its origins in the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the researcher. However, this is not a clean, linear process, but rather a messy process that requires careful weighing of options as whatever data generation methods are eventually deployed, they have their advantages and disadvantages, their strengths and loopholes, which need to be carefully considered before they are deployed as data generating devices.

This chapter therefore provided a map of how methodological and design issues were managed in this study, and why particular choices were made in specific instances.

The following chapter will present and discuss the findings that emerged to try and make sense of the findings in line with the study's key research questions, literature review and the theoretical and conceptual framework.

# CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses findings emerging from the data gathered through the various data-collecting methods as outlined in the previous chapter. It is important at this point to restate the focus of the research study, namely, to understand: the career aspirations of teen parents; the contextual factors that enabled and/or restricted the realisation of such aspirations; and how teen parents navigated and negotiated these contextual factors in their efforts to pursue their career aspirations. Arising from this focus, I therefore present and discuss findings in line with the key themes that emerged, and in doing that, I was guided by the key research questions of the study, namely:

- What are the career aspirations of teen parents?
- What are the contextual factors that affect these career aspirations?
- How do teen parents navigate and negotiate these contextual factors?

## 4.2 Understanding the context in which participants lived

As underlined in the previous chapter, context is a critical factor in understanding of the geographies of participants, and in trying to understand how and why their spaces and places are shaped and shape their subjective experiences. This study was conducted in a remote rural area in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Rural areas in South Africa are characterised by sparse populations, subsistence farming, extreme poverty and deprivation, lack of basic services such as water and sanitation (Chetty, 2010). Generally, the after-effects and the ways in which the apartheid government handled issues of development and service delivery are still visible in these areas in the form of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. Within the context of this study, high levels of unemployment were a daily reality for many families in the area, who live off meagre incomes as farm workers and domestic workers.

Often, participants had to walk long distances to and from school due to the lack of public transport as well as scholar transport services. Therefore, the participants often had to brave storms and scorching sun, and their parents had to hope that they would come home safe at the end of each school day, throughout the year. Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane (2011) points to this reality as one of the most visible violations of people's lives, both in terms of the time it takes to move from one place to the next. Although education is dubbed as an important mechanism for social change, educational experience in rural areas seems to

resemble the quality of life in the context in which it is located. Therefore, for the participants in this school, quality living is likely to remain as an unfulfilled constitutional promise unless a miracle happens.

The biographical statements of the participants are attached as **Appendix 1**. The biographical statements were constructed by the participants themselves. The rationale for sharing the biographical statements is to provide insight into  who the participants are, from their own voices rather than my own descriptions according to my own understanding of what is meant. The intention is to provide them to a willing reader, who feels they need them to enhance their understanding of what is reported in this study.

The following subsection presents a mapping of the reality of rural life, and what it meant for the aspirations of teen parents. The intention is to provide a glimpse into these realities and how this links back to career aspirations for those who have homes and families within this context.

## 4.3   Discourses of underdevelopment: The story of the forgotten people in rural areas

In South Africa, people living in rural areas are excluded from opportunities to uplift their standard of living (Balfour, Mitchell & Moletsane, 2011). This is what emerged from the voices of teen parents regarding what access to basic services meant for them in rural areas. Zane tells the story of the experience of living in a rural area as a sad story of being forgotten, of delays, and of having to wait for what should be readily available:

> *"It feels sad to live in rural areas because you don't get help soon".*

This illustrates the relegation of rural communities to the periphery of the development agenda. It is about denial of the opportunities to participate in their own lives, where the agency of community members is severely compromised. This depicts people from rural areas as a forgotten people, who are at the mercy of others. For teen parents, such as Zane, it means social disadvantage and exclusion from mainstream socio-political life as a substance of their everyday lives. For them, rural area represents a forgotten social space, a situation they must teach themselves to live with to be able to get by day by day.  It is a space where there is inadequate or no support systems, where they must work through the confusion of being forgotten to get to their aspirations. It is a place where career aspirations fade with the realisation that they are irreconcilable with the reality of rural life.

However, it is important to elevate the fact that rural areas have a history of being a forgotten space when it comes to development. The development approach adopted by the apartheid government constructed poverty and underdevelopment in rural areas. The backlog that could accumulate over centuries will continue to show in the quality of life of people in rural areas.

The story of sadness is about the dignity of people from rural areas. Below is the picture of Zane's home and the picture of the home that Zane would like to have. The disparity between the two is significant; it represents a long walk that Zane must take to enjoy the benefits of democracy. Zane is a learner and must study and succeed under the conditions as she describes below:



*"This photo (left) is my home. I stay here with my baby, sisters and brothers. As you can see, this house could collapse at any time. If it is raining, we have to put a basin in order to catch water drops from leaks so that things, including our school uniform and books, do not get wet. I don't want my life to end like this. I want to end up in my own big house with my child one day. I want to focus at school*.

Rural life is about lack of, having to go through the without, being neglected and being far away from everything except the reality of poverty, unemployment and suffering. Participants described life in their community as follows:

*"…rural areas and people are neglected…people are suffering …"* – Thando

*"… we are far from hospitals … we sleep without food …our lives are a curse"* - Zane

*"…toilets are made with corrugated iron that look like shacks and are dangerous …"* – Samo

The continued underservicing of rural areas is a worrying reality given a history of poor delivery of basic services in these areas. Spatial justice is critical in ensuring that all South Africans can have access to the benefits of democracy. Democracy should be understood for what it is – that it goes beyond voting to questions of access to basic services. In this sense, democracy is about making people's lives better through the efficient and equitable delivery of basic services. If democracy does not make people's lives better, particularly lives of people from the marginalised sections of our country, then such democracy is no democracy. In the context of this study, the areas in which participants live, must be such that the aspirations of young people in these areas are realisable. In other words, the impediments that make it difficult, for instance, for young people must be identified and addressed, if the constitutional undertaking to provide a better life for all is to be realised even for young people from these areas.

## 4.4    A long walk to school: Scholar transport is out

Access to scholar transport for purposes of accessing basic education is a constitutional right. The National Learner Transport Policy determines that a five (5) kilometre walk for a child in a rural area is dangerous as learners are susceptible to poor security due to distance, vegetation, dangerous animals and criminal elements (Department of Transport, 2015). However, for teen parents who participated in this study, living in areas meant having to walk distances of longer than five kilometres from home to school. This is however not surprising as the National Learner Transport Policy was only gazetted in October 2015, after a significant battle by civil society organisations to secure its release (NGO Pulse, 2016).

For instance, for Ndeki, the experience of having to walk long distances to and from school caused problems beyond issues of safety; the experience had serious implications for her health and ability to do her school work, as "…*due to the long-distance I am walking to and from school, I sometimes come home tired, having a terrible headache.*" The problem with long distances to school is that children are required to cover a distance that should ordinarily be covered by a car. In other words, although policy stipulates that no learner may be expected to cover a specific distance on foot, this remains a reality for many learners such as Ndeki. Also, learners could be exposed to other challenges, including having to find activities to while away time on their way to and from school, which may be activities that could be detrimental to and compromise their future.

## 4.5 Career aspirations and choosing a career

In this study, all the participants had some form of career aspirations, even though they were sometimes uncertain about their ultimate choice, as reflected and represented in the following narratives:

"*I want to be a social worker or paramedic.*" (Thando)

"*I want to be a social worker, but I am very much interested in being a detective, if not then, lastly, I will be a teacher any of the three.*" (Mpumie)

"*At my young age, I wanted to be a social worker but now I have changed … I want to be an advisor in agriculture.*" (Ndeki)

"*I want to be a detective*" (Fundie)

"*I want to be policemen*" (Samo

"*I want to be a teacher*" (Linda)

"*I want to be a social worker*" (Zane)

The above statements reveal that even though some participants were not certain or were indecisive about what career they would eventually follow; all the participants had at least taken some time to think about their career prospects. That is, they all understood the importance of working towards a specific career direction. This reveals that although they had taken on a parenting role, this had not distracted them from thinking about how they wanted to take their life forward. This suggests that they were prepared to pick up the pieces and make something of their lives, if they were given an opportunity to do so.

## 4.6 Career aspirations, systemic barriers and human agency

Career development, as defined by Rojewski (1994), is a lifelong process through which almost every individual goes. Aspirations have a fundamental role in influencing adolescents to make particular choices about their career development path, and ultimately who they would like to be in future. The key assumption here is that everyone, including participants of

this study, must aspire to be educated, have career goals and aspirations, and wish to live a better life.  Phillip et al (2011) have argued that whilst this may be a goal for many teen parents, many challenges exist that prevent this possibility from being realised.

Findings of this study reveal that teen parents who participated in this study were confronted with a catalogue of challenges. However, despite the challenges that they were constantly facing in pursuing and realising those aspirations, participants were trying everything possible to create a picture of their career path. It could be argued that this could have, among other variables, provided an incentive for them to go back to school and finish what they had started before pregnancy. The following section presents and discusses some of the challenges that these young people experienced, how they impacted on the career aspirations of teen parents, and how teen parents navigated and negotiated these obstacles towards achieving their career aspirations.

## 4.6.1 Challenges facing teen parents in their attempts to pursue their career aspirations

### 4.6.1.1  Career education and guidance

Career education and guidance has a potential to promote social cohesion and active citizenship by inspiring and supporting individuals in making informed decisions about their choice of career (Prelovský, no date) to improve the quality of their lives. Bardick and Bernes (2005) have discussed the importance of access to career planning programmes, especially for the vulnerable social groups, which may, in the context of this study, include teen parents. Young, Marshall, Domene, Arato-Bollivar, Hayoun, Marshall, Zaidman-Zait, & Valach (2006) points out that information about career goals or aspirations exposes students to various career opportunities available in the labour market for them to be able to make well-versed decisions about which careers they would like to pursue.

Findings from this study revealed lack of systematic and regularised exposure to career education and guidance, and participants often encountered difficulties regarding access to information about different career options that were available in the labour market. Findings suggest that their school did not plan career guidance activities as part of the school curriculum, and therefore left teen parents with no choice but to go out and seek information about career options from sources outside of the school. The difficulty with these sources of career information is that they may not be able to provide adequate career guidance and education given the context of rural areas. However, in the absence of systematic career education programmes, these sources served as the only hope for career information for the

participants, as could be discerned in the responses of teen parents below, when they were asked how they knew about the career options:

*"When we went to Bulwer and Impendle for career exhibitions, they explained to us about all available careers we can choose from. They told us about applying through CAO and NSFAS that can finance us if we want to go to tertiary … I also talked to the Social Worker at Underberg. She promised to bring me some information on social work and bursaries"* – Thando

*"I tried to talk to the farmer, the Stock Inspector, who came home to inspect my father's stock, but we didn't talk much because of the time. Even though I wanted to further this conversation and asked certain questions, I didn't see him again"* – Ndeki

*"I will go to Thandanani to get more information so that I can be knowledgeable about what to do in order to be a social worker. I can even do practical work there. When I am working closer to them, the orphans, I will be happy"* – Zane

The above narratives indicate that participants often had to venture out of their schools to be able to obtain the information that they could use to plan the career paths and achieve their aspirations. In most instances, they had to consult people who were already practising the careers to which they aspired – people who had already walked the career path they were seeking to pursue to obtain an understanding of what they needed to do if they wanted to pursue such careers. The problem with this way of sourcing career guidance information is that this may limit their choices to careers that are already available in the community. In other words, it is likely to fall short in assisting young people to explore a rich variety of career options. However, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the teen parents deployed their agency to assist themselves. That is, the teen parents were acting to improve their situation and were actively involved in constructing a positive future and life meaning for themselves.

## 4.6.1.2 Exclusionary attitudes and practices at the school

The school is central to the (re)construction of geographies of young people. Schools as contact zones are spaces where values, ideologies and practices traverse to shape how power relations play out in the lives of people (Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). As social spaces, schools are never merely neutral locations; they set a trajectory in which control of the

childhood space is the central issue. Therefore, schools do not only shape children's knowledge and behaviour; they also play a fundamental role in constructing social identities as well as structuring and shaping access to opportunities.

Participants in this study believed that there were certain school practices and experiences that played an inhibitory role and prevented them from pursuing their career aspirations. Narratives of participants reflected these instances and experiences as follows:

> *"We are a laughing stock.  Even from the nearby schools, our school is a joke for taking us back"* – Fundi

> *"At school, if some teachers are fed up about our bad behaviour as teen parents, they become rude to us. … they call us 'wives' (abafazi) because we have babies. They say that we are not serious; …everything we do is linked to our pregnancy. For them, we will never be learners like all the other learners …we will always be marked by our pregnancy. We just want to learn and pursue our career aspirations. Is that too much to ask?"* – Mpumie

> *"Ey! When that teacher called us "abafazi" we were angry. When she even said that the babies are crying for the grannies at our homes, yet we don't want to learn, that upsets us. When I felt pregnant, I did not know I was going to fall pregnant. I was young. I am not okay that I fell pregnant, and I don't want to be reminded of it every time I take a step. I thought teachers are supposed to allow learners to learn, not make fun of them."* - Thando

Schools, as power laden spatialities, are controlled by teachers and significant others who have power over these places. For teen parents, the opportunities for agency were reduced in the sense that there were systemic barriers and obstacles that were constantly placed in their way each time they were trying to take a step towards achieving their career aspirations. The problematic dimension of this is that it is teachers who were mostly presenting as a barrier. This is contrary to what teachers are supposed to be doing, and it suggests that teachers who were doing this might have been happier to see these learners not returning to the school after pregnancy. The attitudes of teachers represented in the above excerpts exemplify an abuse of entrusted power and the intent to use such power to serve undesirable ends. In this study, some teachers unfortunately served as part of the exclusionary forces, which could result in the teen parents being forced to abscond and bunk

classes unnecessarily, or even drop out of the school to secure some relief, which will negatively impact on their career goals or aspirations.

The attitudes of these teachers towards teen parents reflect hostile attitudes that could mirror the experience of many teen parents who decide to go back to school after a pregnancy. This suggests that simple things such as regular school attendance could be contested where compulsory attendance is enforced without good understanding of the reasons behind absenteeism for some participants. For instance, Thando and Mpumie in this study felt that they were being discriminated against by their teachers who were making their lives difficult instead of encouraging them to be part of the school. That is, instead of teachers using their access to social power to include teen parents, they used their entrusted power as a mechanism for making school life difficult for teen parents.

The above findings reveal the fact that teachers could serve as agents of social exclusion, particularly when it comes to vulnerable social groups such as teen parents. Teachers, as reported by participants in this study, used their power and authority to denigrate participants, calling them names and labelling them in negatives ways. Teachers are part of school life for children, and therefore, what they do matters for the construction of geographies of children, which suggests that spatial disciplining of the school is a critical factor in the making of the child. However, such making of the child should be shaped and structured in a way that it benefits rather than exclude children. For participants in this study, school experience was shaped by teachers' faulty beliefs about pregnancy and education. The fact that teachers used pregnancy as a marker, to target learners for exclusion, is a matter of concern in a country whose constitution has elevated the importance of a human rights culture.

However, participants in this study were not resigned to the situation of abuse by teachers, they tried to push back in different ways, as reflected in the excerpts below:

*All teen mothers were there. We wanted her to explain why she called us "abafazi". We did not come back to school to be abused; we came back to receive an education. It seems the teacher got the message. She then apologised to all teen mothers for calling us "abafazi"* – Thando

*"Hha, us, we called her and put her here (pointing). We wanted to know why she called us 'abafazi' because we are not. We are children who got pregnant, and we are*

*back to learn. We know we made a mistake; that is why we have come back to pick up where we left off."* - Ndeki

These narratives reveal displays of agency by teen parents, taking back some of the control even in the most tightly teacher controlled spaces. The responses of participants represent possible ways in which teen parents came together to wage a struggle against injustice, and acting in defence of their rights. Their resistance against this form of control and domination resulted in the formation of strategic alliances which reflected participants' agency and power to resist further ostracism. From this instance, it might be acknowledged that those we view as powerless may not always be so. In the instance of this study, teen parents could exercise their power, although in limited ways, to protect themselves from mistreatment by teachers.

However, the understanding that vulnerable groups will always be able to push back must not be used or accepted as a given, as some of them may not be able to push back because of fear and disillusionment and ultimately drop out of school if learning continues under these circumstances. The problem with this is that it will further perpetuate cycles of unemployment, underdevelopment and poverty for the already socio-economically deprived social groups. Therefore, schools need to ensure that the right to a basic education for teen parents returning to schools after pregnancy is not violated, but that they are afforded opportunities to continue with their education.

### 4.6.1.3  Availability and utilisation of resources

What happens in schools potentially has an impact on career aspirations, particularly the issues relating to availability and access to resources (Migunde et al, 2012). Therefore, if career dreams of disadvantaged young people are to become a reality, there is a need to provide them with sufficient resources that would assist them to pursue their aspirations. However, inequities in South African education still prevail, particularly in socio-economically deprived contexts such as schools in rural areas, where equity in terms of distribution of resources is inadequate. At school and family level, not having sufficient resources or having redundant resources, were major challenges for the participants in this study:

> *"You won't believe that there are computers kept in the storage in this school. We have no access to them because two teachers who knew how to teach computers were taken away from the school. This means that we have to go and do computer lessons outside school, yet we could have done it here in our school. When I was*

*in Grade 8, an EMS teacher used computers to teach us. It helped a lot. Sooner those teachers were taken away because they said there are few learners here."* – Ndeki

*"The school library is always locked. If you want to go there, you have to speak to the security guard. But there is no library there. You cannot get any information. It is just a library by name but nothing can help you to get knowledge there. There are old Afrikaans and other books no longer in use."* – Mpumie

*"That school library is tired and outdated"* – Samo

*"There are three libraries in small towns but still the closest library is 48km away. It is far. We cannot afford transport costs to go there, even if it is once a month, we won't have that kind of money."* – Thando

Lack of resources in schools not only made it difficult for the participants to access information about careers; it also had severe consequences for learning and teaching and the future of these teen parents. A lack of access to relevant resources deprived learners of effective learning opportunities. For instance, where families do not own a computer, it would present a major restriction because time available for surfing the internet in public places (such as internet cafes) may be limited and distances to these places may be vast. This has serious implications for career paths and the choices that teen parents must make to pursue those career choices.

## 4.6.1.4  Curriculum offerings and subject choices

Access to relevant curriculum offerings in schools is a significant factor for ensuring that learners have access to available opportunities. Curricula are, therefore, part of the social and political structure that determines who is out and who is in. Therefore, it is important to consider curriculum offerings in schools as a factor for entry into the world of work and opportunities to improve the quality of life.

## 4.7 Curriculum access, subject choices and career aspirations

### 4.7.1 Life Orientation as a vehicle for career guidance and education

The BANKSETA has established a partnership with the Department of Education to provide career awareness programmes, especially in areas where there are scarce skills (Gounden, 2013). In this programme, Life Orientation teachers have a responsibility to ensure that learners have access to key information about careers that are available in the banking sector. However, participants in this study reported that Life Orientation had instead focussed on providing them with information about healthy living, '*stress management*' *(Thando)* or "*open my mind about health and life as a whole*" (Linda) or *"physical exercises that keep us strong"* (Samo). Participants were concerned that although knowing about these issues was important, it would have been better if they were also provided with information regarding careers, which they regarded as the key in their struggles out of poverty.

Participants believed that the opportunity that was provided by the programme was often lost as what teachers taught did not lead to information about career opportunities in the banking sector, which they viewed as a key area, *"I just wished to know from the teacher, is there any Agricultural institution here in KwaZulu Natal, but she didn't know"*. The assumption was that such a weakness in the education system deprived them of opportunities to venture into new career paths, which were not traditionally part of the career choices of people who were coming from their area. These narratives suggest that teachers must ascertain whether their teaching addresses the needs of those who are being taught, and rethink their teaching and content where there are discrepancies. That is, teaching must be understood as a response to needs rather than a ritual that must be practised for its own sake.

### 4.7.2 Issues pertaining to subject choice

Subject choice is an important consideration as it has potential to channel young people to and away from some career options post-school. Narratives of participants in this study suggested that subject choice was a significant factor, which participants believed impeded their decisions about their career paths, and often limited their opportunities to explore their career aspirations. The following excerpt illustrates some of the challenges that teen parents reported in relation to subject choice:

*"I want to be an advisor in Agriculture, an Agriculturalist. The only problem is my subjects. I have just found out that they don't match with the careers in Agriculture. Without Agricultural Science in this school ... my chances to become a farmer are slim … I did ask about it when we attended career exhibition. All subjects needed for this career are not offered in this school. They told me that if I want to do Agriculture, I must at least pass Life Sciences with level 5, Mathematical Literacy with level 7. Then I can qualify for entry at the University"* – Ndeki

The above narrative suggests that there were significant challenges relating to subject choice, and the source of these challenges lies in the subject offerings in the school. The narrative suggests that the curriculum offered at the school was not in line with some of the challenges that were facing the community in which the school is situated on the career needs of the participants. This raises significant questions regarding the reconciliation of what gets offered in the school and what young people require to work towards their career aspirations. In other words, the significant question concerns where the curriculum that school offers come from and what it seeks to address. That is, how the curriculum is informed by and adapted to meet the local needs of the community in which the school is situated. For Ndeki, Agriculture is the way to go because Ndeki's community is rural and there is vast land for agricultural activities. So, Ndeki's career aspirations are in line with the local needs of the community, but Ndeki's school does not offer subjects that address or respond to these needs. In this way, it does not matter how relevant Ndeki's career aspirations are for her community, they conflict with what is available at the school.

The issue of subject choice in this study was linked to school choice. The issue of school choice was complicated by the fact that the secondary school was the only one in the area. So, if a learner chose that school, they automatically chose subjects offered at the school. Being the only secondary school, there were no alternatives available for young people. The assumption of choice when it comes to school choice is sometimes oversimplified and is often blind to its associated complexities. For instance, for many rural communities, parents are compelled to send their children to a nearby school because it is the only school in the area, or they cannot afford to send their children the school that would best serve their career aspirations in terms of subject choice. That is, in these areas, career choice is severely limited by school choice, and results in limited career choices for young people from these communities. The following narratives provide a glimpse into the challenges regarding the issue of school and subject choice:

*"We didn't choose these subjects … It is just one stream … We all have to do same subjects … At tertiary, they ask if you have Physics…and you don't because your school did not offer it …"* – Samo

*"We tried to apply for what we like. They told us we don't fit because the subjects we are doing are not relevant"* – Mpumie

*"Sometimes these subjects do not give us good points in varsity. What I can say is; we can only be taken in the FET colleges. That's where we fit with these subjects, not in the University, and FET education is not generally good…people go there and come and sit at home …"* - Thando

*"All those subjects, Physics, Business Studies, Agriculture and Accounting were cancelled because the principal said the failure rate was too high in the school. The reputation of the school will go down but its him …"* – Mpumie.

Sometimes, for instance as far as Mpumie is concerned, the challenges of subject choice are because of the decisions taken by management to save their face; decisions which largely do not consider the career aspirations and needs of learners. For example, in the case of Mpumie, the school principal took a decision to discontinue offering Physical Science, Business Studies, Agriculture Science and Accounting. The school principal did not do this to improve service offered by the school, but he did this to protect his position and reputation as a principal, and to avoid having to be held accountable for the high failure rate in these subjects. So, to escape the requirement of having to be held to account for the high failure rate in these subjects, rather than improving results in these subjects, the school principal unilaterally decided to discontinue offering the subjects at the school. Participants reported that *"…there was no discussion or consultation when this decision was taken although it affected career choices of many children from the community…"*. As can be discerned from the above, such a decision disadvantaged several children from the community, from the current generation and those that are still coming, as it severely limited their career choices.

This is not surprising as Van Ingen and Halas (2006) have described schools as power-laden spatialities, where power play is the order of the day. In the instance of this study, the school principal used entrusted power to protect his position and reputation at the expense of the career aspirations of learners, serving only his narrow personal interests. This is an example of how schools may sometimes exclude and marginalise parents and learners in

decision-making processes on issues that directly affect them. The school principal's failure to regard parents and learners as legitimate participants in the decision-making processes pertaining to this issue, jeopardised and limited career options for the young people that this school was supposed to serve. The likely effect of this decision is that it contributed to the challenges that the community, including participants, were already wrestling with, such as poverty and unemployment. This decision potentially limited the scope of choice and channelled learners to specific career paths, which could potentially restrict their opportunities and trap them in the already undesirable socio-economic paths which they might have avoided had the choice to do so been there.

## 4.8 Boyfriends and girlfriends: Balancing relationships and career aspirations

Teen parents often must manage the balance between their relationship and education. Teen parents in this study reported facing various challenges which often affected their career planning and exploration. Teen mothers often faced personal and societal barriers that affected them emotionally, making it difficult for them to respond positively to and cope with the demands of academic life, which had negative consequences for their career aspirations. Unresolved issues in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships were evident in this study. Participants often had to deal with these issues over and above their academic work. The narratives below represent some of the emotional challenges faced by the participants:

*"Mam, when I came from the clinic, I showed him a card confirming that I am pregnant and he is going to be a father. I told him that he should leave school and look for the job so that he can support the child … Mam, he didn't believe it. He asked what I am going to do because I am poor. He suggested that I should abort the baby because his family will be furious at him more especially his uncle, he will definitely chase him away. He kept on suggesting this and pushing me to do it. I was devastated, not knowing what to do. I thought about killing myself many times, but I couldn't do that. I was protecting my child in my stomach. My child didn't deserve the pain. She is not the one in fault, we are. It is our mistake. We brought her here in this earth. I need to love and protect her. I was angry, I wanted to beat him"* – Zane

*"Ey, the challenges! Ey, Ma'am, boys cannot be trusted, they are not good sometimes. My boyfriend denied that the baby is his. It was bad. At home, my mother and granny did not understand that my pregnancy was denied at first, but*

*later they accepted me. It made (me) feel like I was a joke in the whole community like I don't know who the father of my child is. People were talking about me, but it is in the past now"* – Mpumie

A participant in Bhana, Morrell, Shefer and Ngabaza's (2010) study voiced out that being a teen father creates anxiety and pain, more especially if the teen father knows they will be unable to provide for the well-being of the child and they are still in the process of making their career aspirations a reality. Zane and Mpumie were left to see to providing for their growing babies without their fathers. The absent fathers of Zane's and Mpumie's babies seemed to know that they could get away with it, as they did not seem to have been deterred or bothered by the consequences that could attend. This might be attributed to the fact that society tends to view teenage pregnancy as a crime the consequences of which should be apportioned to the girl. Opting for instructing the girl to terminate the pregnancy and denying fathering the babies was used as a means to escape responsibility. These might have been easier options as society does not normally frown upon them. However, the understanding of the termination of a pregnancy as a solution to the problem of pregnancy plays into the hands of a heterosexualised society, and is blind to the complexities of such a route, for both teen mothers and fathers. For instance, if a girl terminates a pregnancy on the instruction or advice of their boyfriend, it is often not understood as a couple having taken a decision to terminate, but as a girl's attempt to get rid of a pregnancy for devious reasons. That is, in a heterosexual society, the very decision to terminate constitutes an anomaly as society often believes that it owns women's bodies, and that women have no say on what must happen to their bodies.

The narratives of the two teen mothers above also suggest that they had to live not only with the embarrassment of their boyfriends denying fathering their babies, but also the burden of having to provide, both physically and emotionally, for their babies without the support of their boyfriends. The situation seems to have overwhelming and debilitating for Mpumie, and this might explain why she did not challenge her boyfriend's response to dissociate himself from the news that she was pregnant with his baby. However, it could be noted that although she could not challenge her boyfriend's attitude towards the pregnancy, she was prepared to challenge her circumstances by her decision to go back to school to continue with her education. Rather than debilitating, Mpumie's experience of adversity seemed to have invigorated and strengthen her resolve to remain positive about what she wanted for her future. This suggests that some individuals may be able to draw strength from unfortunate events and use this as their source of and reason for pushing forward.

Power is often seen as a negative construct and an instrument of oppression, but for Zane and Mpumie, power was deployed productively to resist and challenge the attitudes and actions of their boyfriends, although in ways that are quite distinct. Zane openly challenged her boyfriend's decision, suggesting to him that the child was his responsibility as well. Zane told her boyfriend "… *he should leave school and look for the job so that he can support the child"*. This was an attempt to push back walls of male domination and entitlement, and open a space for participation as an active social actor in her life. This seems to have compelled Zane's boyfriend to change his mind, as the narrative goes:

> *"Hey Ma'am, now, sometimes he goes as far as fetching the child from the crèche to my home or his house for a visit. He loves her now. Even here at school, he asks if the child have food, soap, etc. His mother pays for the crèche. Sometimes he comments that he feels sorry about telling me to abort, should he have known that things will be just easy in his family."* – Zane

Zane's story is one of the stories of teen parenthood that has a happy ending. It is a narrative that suggests that teen fathers may respond negatively because of the negative constructions of teenage pregnancy and the fear of what it means to be a father as a young boy. Usually, the consequence of teenage pregnancy is often the loss of the right to education and a place to stay, which has negative implications for the career aspirations of teen parents. With such a threat of loss, teen parents are often required to choose between their careers and the baby. This may be easier for teen fathers, but this option is not always available for teen mothers, as a pregnancy makes them visible to the society that regards teenage pregnancy as social deviance. For them, the pregnancy is not only a responsibility; it is also a physical attribute that is incapable of being hidden, at least permanently.

## 4.9    Construction of teenage pregnancy as moral deviance

Teen mothers did not only face challenges with regards to their relationships with their boyfriends; their families also did not take kindly to the pregnancy – they placed the blame for pregnancy at the door of teen mothers. The narratives below point to some examples of how families reacted to the news of teenage pregnancy:

> *"O, my father is very strict. When I was pregnant, I went away to stay with my sister until I got the baby. My father said that the only thing he doesn't want in his house is my baby, not me. I am his child. He insisted that I must come back and*

*finish Grade 12 but I mustn't come with my baby. That is why I stay at home without my baby"* – Ndeki

*"My granny chased me away for three days when she found out that I was pregnant. Thereafter, she became guilty and forgave me and let me came back. The whole family was angry at me. They told me that I have got what I wanted, then I have to stop going to school and look after the child on my own. I didn't finish school that year. I had to raise my baby until the following year"* – Thando

The above responses demonstrate the fact that the construction of teenage pregnancy as moral deviance often leads to families wanting to dissociate themselves from pregnant teenagers. Therefore, families are often hostile and not supportive to teenagers who fall pregnant, and pregnancy is often blamed on the girl who is believed to have become an embarrassment to the family. What these narratives highlight is that teen mothers are often thought of as having brought shame to the family, and to absolve and dissociate themselves of collective shame, families often respond in ways that make it difficult to support the girl, resulting in the girl being left in the cold without support – often from both their boyfriend and family. Often, a family of a pregnant girl feels the need to demonstrate to the heterosexual community that they are not party to the pregnancy. In order to do this, they may go to extraordinary lengths in their efforts to prove to their communities that the pregnancy is not their fault.

The way society has constructed the incidence of teenage pregnancy as shame has undoubtedly contributed to the reactions of some families to the incident of teenage pregnancy, as it is human nature that people would not like to be associated with what society regards as moral deviance. Often, women are regarded as responsible for raising children, particularly girls. If the responsibility to raise a child is understood to lie only with the female parent, then a pregnancy of the girl is likely to be blamed on their mother. Therefore, the construction of teenage pregnancy as deviance and failure of motherhood, does not only ostracise the pregnant girl, but it also results in the feelings of guilt for the mother of the girl, who is made to believe that they have failed in their duties to raise their daughter in a proper way. This may have been the case with these two participants and their families.

## 4.10 Socio- economic background

The gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa remains a serious challenge. For the teen parents who participated in this study, opportunities to pursue their career aspirations in tertiary institutions were bleak given the low socio-economic backgrounds of their families. It was indicated at the beginning of this chapter that the community from which teen parents came was characterised by severe socio-economic deprivation. All the participants of this study reported that financial constraints presented as a barrier to their educational attainment, and that although they were determined to finish their education, challenges remain that often rendered this difficult. Orphans such as Zane depended on social security grants provided by the Department of Social Development. The financial constraints experienced by Zane and her family impacted negatively on her schooling experience and had a negative effect on her career aspirations. For her, the only option was for her to delay furthering her studies and look for a job to finance her studies. This is what she had to say about the financial circumstances of her family:

> *"We do not have money at home. I know I won't get a cent to further my career. To get the money, I can work then I can bank the money for going to school." – Zane*

Having to work to finance tertiary studies often delays the liberation of poor people from the shackles of poverty. However, sometimes it goes to the extent of shattering dreams for pursuing their studies because well-paying jobs are usually not available for people with only matric. So, what may happen is that they might sink in the financial distress of the family, with no possibility of saving money for their education as what they are paid may not be sufficient to sustain their families and save for an education. Thus, as much as Zane had career aspirations, they may not be realised, particularly given the overstretched National Students Financial Assistance Scheme (NSFAS), which can hardly finance all deserving students.

Linda, on the other hand, had gone out to find information as to how he could finance his tertiary education. Although this may not be guarantee that he would be granted financial assistance, he had hoped that his dream of obtaining tertiary education will be realised because:

> *"There is financial help available from our municipality for learners who want to continue their tertiary studies. When I attended career exhibition, I filled the form asking for financial help in order to continue with my studies. Even at home they*

*will try to pay for me. I can even ask for NSFAS and bursaries for assistance"* – Linda

Linda was positive that things would fall into place when time comes for him to obtain a tertiary education as he believed there were financial aid programmes targeting people like him, and that his family would also be able to make their proportional contribution. This suggests that although financing of tertiary studies remained a challenge for teen parents, teen parents who participated in this study had some ideas about how they were going to navigate this maze of complexity in constructing a future for themselves. However, it needs to be acknowledged that a situation that requires young people to go out and look for money to finance their studies, particularly for undergraduate studies, is not ideal as it may be burdensome and debilitating. At this level, young people need to focus on developing the early stages of their careers without having to worry about how this would be funded.

Ndeki's story is different in that she came from a family that could afford to pay for her education, although with the condition that they did not want to be associated with the baby:

*"My father still does everything for me and gives me school money. I am still his responsibility. I know he will pay for my education at varsity…but he does not want my child. That is his condition for allowing me to continue with my education…"* – Ndeki

Ndeki's story is of a family that has access to some financial resources, but that is not ready to tackle the construction of teenage pregnancy as moral deviance. However, there is a positive dimension of this story: Ndeki will have the opportunity to pursue her career aspirations, and she might have to delay being together with her baby until she can provide for herself. This could raise emotional concerns for her, but it is different from being condemned to poverty for the rest of one's life.

## 4.11 Factors that enabled teen parents to pursue their career aspirations

### 4.11.1 Understanding of the importance of getting an education

In the apartheid past, there was no legal protection for young girls who had fallen pregnant to continue with their education, and they were excluded from education as soon as their pregnancy was noticed (Timaeus & Moultrie, 2012). The new democratic *Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996* as well as the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) now

protects the rights of all pregnant girls in school, including teen parents. This provides a legal guarantee for learners not to be discriminated against based on pregnancy. Participants viewed this development as significant in ensuring that they were not excluded from receiving an education. The focus on education was informed by the degree of importance that teen parents attached to education as a source of hope for a better life for themselves. For instance, participants believed that obtaining a National Senior Certificate was an important step towards achievement of career aspirations. They believed that good matric results were a vital first step in the pursuance of their aspirations, and that everybody needed to obtain at least matric to open opportunities for further study and better job prospects.  This is how they expressed their views about the importance of education as an enabling device:

> *"Nowadays good jobs are only available and obtainable if you are educated. It is not easy to get a proper job without training or education. Matric certificate is the key, without it no job, only suffering for the rest of your life"* – Samo

> *"I want a better future. If you are not educated, and are without Grade 12, you are nothing. Life is not good without matric. You won't get a job because opportunities for jobs won't be available. My aim is to learn, finish school and training, then get a good job"* – Ndeki

> *"If you are doing matric, you see where you [are] going. You see your future and think about it … you can see that your future and dreams are about to come true"* – Linda

The above excerpts illuminate the extent to which teen parents understood the significance and value of obtaining an education, as they believed that without an education, "*you are nothing*". They believed that obtaining an education served as a gateway to the good things in life. That is, they believed that obtaining an education had the potential to imbue one with the ability to take advantage of available opportunities such as "*good jobs*". They felt that being without an education would most definitely lead to perpetual suffering, and being unable to provide for one's own needs. It is this belief in the power of obtaining an education that encouraged them to go back to school and finish what they had started.

Participants believed that obtaining an education was even more critical for learners from socio-poor economic contexts, as it "*… was the only way for poor people …*". For the participants, obtaining an education was not only a choice; it was a must, particularly for

people from adverse circumstances like them. That is, they believed that education was life changing, and that obtaining an education could change the situation of poor people, as Samo puts it below:

*"I want to be independent and responsible. I don't want to be a burden to my parents forever. I want to get a better job when I complete school so that I can be able to support my parents and my child"* – Samo

Samo's understanding is that access to a job would empower him not to be a 'burden' to his parents, and that it would provide him with the autonomy and independence necessary to be able to support his child and his parents. It is this understanding of education that encouraged Samo to return to school and pursue his career aspirations. For him, there could be no independence without education for poor people. Samo understood that being a parent came with responsibilities to provide for one's own children. Therefore, for him, obtaining an education and having a stable career would not only result in personal independence and pave the way to freedom, but would also enable him to improve the quality of life of his family and ensure that his children have a much better chance than he had.

The photo-narrative below, which echoes Mpumie's views about the importance of education, illustrates Mpumie's understanding of the value of education and her strong desire to continue with her education:



*"This is my house. When I finish my studies at tertiary, I want to build a nice house for my mother. That will be the way to thank her for giving me a second chance to*

*go back to school after getting pregnant. I will be thanking her also for staying, supporting and raising my child while I was still at school."*

For Zane, education carried with it the possibility of being able to change one's situation into something better, that is, education served as an enabler and a weapon to wage his struggle out of poverty and underdevelopment. He believed that the current situation of his family was largely because they had not received an education. This is how she describes the link between lack of an education, his family situation and how his family regarded education:

*"No one is educated at home. I want to break this chain of less educated people at home. Before my mother died, she insisted that we should learn…The life I am living is very bad"* – Zane.

Linda felt that the value of obtaining an education needed to be spread to other young people coming behind him. The idea of the importance of spreading the word about the value of obtaining an education may be emanating from, for instance, that he might have seen how other young people have improved the quality through obtaining an education. He therefore believed that young people must be taught and made aware of the value of education, as a mechanism to access "*a better future*":

*"… I will talk to learners … I will teach learners about the importance of schooling and education. They will be aware of what is expected to make a better future. If you are educated, you can make the place you live in progress… I will motivate and encourage them to see how important school is"* – Linda.

The sense of responsibility to make others understand the value of education features prominently in this narrative. This suggests an understanding of poverty and underdevelopment as a collective burden the emancipation from which requires collective responsibility. For Linda, once a person has received an education, they have a responsibility to spread the word about how education helped them to be where they are. In other words, Linda believed that the value of education as a means with which people's circumstances could be changed for the better, needed to be spread to other people who are in similar circumstances. The responsibility to spread the word may also be emanating from what obtains in Linda's context with regards to access to information about educational opportunities, that is, for Linda, once a person has obtained an education, they must share with others how they have done it, because centres that could provide such information are scarce and/or non-existent in rural areas.

What is clear from these narratives, in general, is that teen parents believed that education could serve as an escape route out of poverty and suffering for poor people. Thus, their understanding of the value of an education seems to have been one of the most important reason for why they had decided to return to school to complete their secondary education. For them, a person, at least in their context, was nothing without an education, and they believed that they could not going improve the quality of their lives without an education. This strong belief in the value of education is what, amongst other variables, seems to have kept them focussed on their studies and their struggle for a better life. In other words, it is what might have encouraged them to get education despite their difficult circumstances and challenges associated with teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

## 4.11.2    Support from family members

A family in which an individual finds themselves has a probability to influence their path in life. That is, the messages they communicate about life expectations are powerful sources of the directions that individuals eventually choose or do not choose to follow in life (Tillman, 2015). Some participants in this study mentioned their families as powerful sources of encouragement and inspiration that encouraged them to go back to school and pursue their career aspirations. This suggests that their families encouraged and supported them in their efforts to get their lives back on track. Family support served as a source of inspiration that enable them to rise above their circumstance and pursue their career aspirations. The following excerpts indicate the different ways in which the families encouraged and supported participants to pursue their career aspirations:

*"My family knows that those who did not pass well in matric do not continue to tertiary and that it is hard for them to get a job. They are supportive and make me see that it is important to pass matric with good symbols in order to pursue a teaching career"* – Linda

*"At home, my mother motivates me and reminds me that she sent me to school to learn because she doesn't want me to work hard in a farm just like them"* – Samo

*"My uncle is curious to know about my future aspirations. He wants to see me improving. He was the only one who supported me and told me to ignore the incident when I was stressed by the father of my child who denied the baby. My uncle told me to concentrate on my studies until I pass matric"* – Mpumie

*"My grandparents make sure that I do my homework"* – Thando

Evident in these narratives is the importance of family as a source of encouragement and support for teen parents for them to be able to go back to school and pursue their career aspirations. This is important, particularly for teen parents from difficult socio-economic circumstance, where there are few or no roles models and sources of inspiration. This suggests that a teen parent from whom a family has turned their back might have very little or no support to get back onto their feet to continue with their education. As can be discerned from the above narratives, this kind of support took various forms from physical, emotional, financial and social support. This is important consideration for a family that might define support as financial support. These narratives view support for teen parents as residing beyond material concerns. The narratives locate the ability to provide support within reach of any individual, irrespective of their socio-economic circumstances. That is, the narratives turn to its head the belief that the ability to provide support is the preserve of the chosen few.

The support from parents, uncles and the broader family inspired and motivated teen parents to focus and study hard so that they could make a future for themselves. This is in keeping with the findings from Li and Kerpelman's (2007) study, which found that family support was vital for encouraging teenagers to follow their career aspirations with diligence and to ensure that they could self-actualise. Within the context of this study, family support provided teen parents with the drive, resiliency and determination to rise above their circumstances and strive towards achieving academically. This is what implored them to continue with their studies despite the adversities that were present in their lives. Thus, it could be argued that positive relationships within the family unit has potential to provide teen parents with the cultural and social capital that could reduce feelings of vulnerability and exclusion that they might have been subjected to during their experience of pregnancy. In addition, the emotional and social support given by the family heightened their own sense of responsibility for their future career choices and inspired them to achieve. Therefore, family support could serve as a shield against the negative attitudes and prejudice transmitted from the heterosexual society.

### 4.11.3    Personal experience

Findings of this study reveal that the career choices participants in this study sought to pursue were often instigated and informed by their own experiences of the general living standards in their own community. The career choices of becoming a teacher, paramedic,

social worker or policeman are choices that might reflect the intention to care for others. These choices, it would seem, might have been encouraged by the participants' experiences of their own context, and the belief that their situation might have been different had there been adequate provision of basic services in their area. The experience of difficulties with access to health services, for instance, could have led teen parents to believing that the bad that happened in their lives could have been avoided. The following narratives describe the difficulties that could have been avoided, had there been adequate service provisioning in the area, and how teen parents believed they could use their education to resolve some of the challenges in their community:

*"My mother died while she was waiting for the ambulance to take her to the hospital. It didn't come in time. … When my mother passed away, I was taken to a home, the Battle Centre, by the social welfare. I stayed there for three years. I saw how orphans were treated. They were taken care of, in terms of food, education, clothing, even safety. We were even taken out to enjoy ourselves. It was like a real home. I used to be delivered to School Viva (pointing at the nearby primary school) by bus morning and afternoon … If I become a social worker, I will work at Thandanani Children's Home. I want to help other children who are orphans like me. I know how badly people treat you if you have no parents. I sometimes slept without food. People look down upon you. I want to help children who are like me"* – Zane

*"I want to help people to live better and help them deal with problems they come across with. I want to fight crime in the community and protect people. I hate to see thugs/thieves do as they wish, violating people, raping them, and walking freely because people are scared. I want to deal with them."* – Mpumie

*"We are far from hospitals … Actually, we are far from everything, except suffering. …It is painful that people wait long hours or the whole day for the ambulance to come.  Other sick people die while waiting for the ambulance.  It is very painful. You call the ambulance in the afternoon and the ambulance comes the next morning…. If I work as a paramedic, things can be quick.  They will get help from us.  At least I can try to order more ambulances. I can help the sick people in the community.  I can save them from death"*- Thando

*"Police stations are far, it takes long for them to come when called which gives criminals enough time to run away.  If I work here, I will keep patrolling with a police van and catch all the criminals"*- Samo

*"I wish to come back and work into this place, where I was born. When I finish my studies as an Agriculturalist, I will come back to my home. I like nature and planting. Most of the youth do not want to work with soil. They say it is dirty. I am different, I like animals. People here in rural areas depend on subsistence farming for food. Development comes very slowly here. I want to see this place develop. They will get help with food and animals when I am done with my studies."* - Ndeki

As active agents, teen parents wanted to transform their reality, and through their choices of being a social worker, policemen and paramedic for example, they believed that they could make a difference in their community. They were aware of the lack of basic services that was evident in their community, and had realised that success lay in getting an education in order to be in better position to overcome these challenges. It could be deduced that the teen parents who participated in this study were actively involved in shaping and reshaping their realities. Instead of being paralysed by the debilitating context in their community, they utilised their circumstances as a source of inspiration to pursue their career aspirations and transform the reality of their community. What could be concluded from these narratives is that there was a strong link between the teen parents' career aspirations and choices and their willingness to return to their community to practise their professions. The narratives reveal that career aspirations of young people could be influenced by the places and spaces in which they have lived their lives. That is, participants' motives to choose these careers may have somehow originated from their sense of responsibility for and to their community.

## 4.12  Summary

The intersctions of teenage pregnancy, parenthood and career aspirations, as was evidenced in this study, is a complex phenomenon. For instance, the fact that teenage pregnancy is often constructed as moral deviance raises a catalogue of challenges for teen parents. For instance, it fractured relationships of teen parents with their families, and often collapsed support systems, which were required to carry the burden of teenage pregnancy in a heterosexual society. In some cases, parents loved their daughters but wanted to have nothing to do with the baby. When a teenager got pregnant, some families crucified the mother for having failed in her duties of raising their daughter.

However, the problems were not only located within the family. Other problems resided within the school contexts, with teen parents having to be subjected to the hostility of teachers, who seemed to believe that teenage pregnancy was linked with everything that

teen parents were doing in their schoolwork. Often, teen parents had to push back to ensure that they could continue with their education. The hostile attitudes of some teachers towards teen parents contradict the spirit of the Constitution, which provides that learners may not be discriminated against based on pregnancy. Thus, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that teen parents who decide to return to school to pursue their studies can do so without interference.

Three factors stood out as sources of inspiration for teen parents to return to school to continue with their studies, namely, understanding the importance of obtaining an education; a supportive family; and persona experience of the difficulties facing own community. These issues link back to the role of the family and school as sources of the troubles to which teen parents were subjected.

The next chapter is a presentation of the conclusions, implications of the key, and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1    Introduction

The intention of this study was to understand the career aspirations of teen parents; the contextual factors that enabled and/or restricted the realisation of such aspirations; and how teen parents navigated and negotiated these contextual factors in their efforts to pursue their career aspirations.  The previous chapter presented and discussed findings that emerged from the data gathered through the various data collecting methods as outlined in chapter 3.

The purpose of this chapter is to consolidate and highlight the implications of the key findings that surfaced in the study. The aim is to reflect on the value of the theoretical framework, the research methodology as well as the contribution of the study towards personal and professional development.  This will be followed by specific recommendations, based on the findings, for how the intersection of teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations could be navigated and negotiated to ensure that teen parent can enjoy uninhibited access to their right to a basic education, for them to be able to pursue their career aspirations without interference. The original contribution of the study will be discussed. The chapter will close off by presenting some possibilities for further research that this study could not address.

## 5.2    Consolidation and summary of the key findings

### 5.2.1 Objectives of the study

To address the research problem, the objectives of the study, as indicated under 1.5 above, were to understand:
- the career aspirations of teen parents;
- the contextual factors that enabled and/or restricted the realisation of such aspirations; and
- how teen parents navigated and negotiated these contextual factors in their efforts to pursue their career aspirations.

### 5.2.2  Summary of key findings

The reader is reminded that to address the research problem, the following three key research questions for the study served as a guide.

- What are the career aspirations of teen parents?
- What are the contextual factors that enabled / or restricted the realisation of these aspirations?
- How do teen parents navigate and negotiate these contextual factors in their efforts to pursue their career aspirations?

Findings revealed that all the participants had some thoughts about what career paths they wanted to pursue, despite the fact that they were still uncertain about what career they would eventually follow. Findings revealed that the complexities of living in a rural area that is deprived of relevant sources of career information and guidance contributed significantly to this uncertainty. For example, the available source of this information was employees who were already working in the careers in which teen parents were interested. This mix of issues combined to limit the career options available for the teen parents, as options depended largely on what was available, which may also not be necessarily be relevant to the challenges facing the community and/or the careers teen parents wanted to pursue. However, what the findings point to is, what Kaufman, et al (2000) has alluded to, that despite the challenges they were facing, teen parents had strong ambitions, motivation and aspirations. Teen parents in this study demonstrated agency despite the contextual factors that hindered their aspirations (Vincent, 2012). Findings of this study reveal that the career choices participants chose, had their roots in their own experiences of the general living standards in their own community. In other words, the conditions in their community led to them choosing to pursue particular career options that they believed would lend themselves to being used to address some of the challenges in the community.

It must be pointed out that despite the agency displayed by the teen parents, the environment that did not have adequate exposure to relevant career information potentially hampered access to opportunities available in the career market. However, what could be noted from the findings is that participants pushed boundaries beyond what was practically available in their community. For instance, sometimes teen parents pursued sources that were outside of their community in order to obtain the information that they required about career opportunities. In many rural areas, schools are often poorly resourced, with poor infrastructure and no access to information technology. In some cases, people from these areas feel helpless, and cannot pursue their aspirations. However, teen parents in this study did not accept their situation; they push normative boundaries to create new possibilities for themselves, most without the resources available to teens in other contexts. This is in line

with what Stead (1996) argued that teen parents often have to brave complicated challenges to pursue their careers.

Findings of this study also point to the fact that normative constructions of teenage pregnancy often combined with these issues to produce a toxic mix for these teen parents. For instance, findings pointed to the fact that teenage pregnancy was often constructed as moral deviance in this community, which raised a myriad of challenges for teen parents. Teen parents had to experience fractured relationships with their families, which exacerbated their experiences of pregnancy. These normative constructions took a range of forms, from parents loving their daughters but wanted to have nothing to do with the baby, to families who were not willing to allow teen parents to go back to school. However, the construction of teenage pregnancy as moral deviance did not only affect life in the family. These issues extended to school life, where teen parents were often subjected to hostile treatment from some teachers, who believed that teenage pregnancy and parenthood were a form of sickness that had no place in the schooling context. These teachers did everything to push teen parents out of the school, potentially interfering with their right to education. Often, under these circumstances, teen parents had to push back to ensure that these teachers were not successful in forcing them out of the school. The hostile attitude of these teachers towards teen parents who have come back to school flies in the face of the Constitution, which provides that no-one may be discriminated against on pregnancy.

The findings also reveal stereotypical imaginations of what rurality means. The normative constructions of rurality in this study often led to misunderstandings about the capabilities and potentialities in rural contexts. In this study, these dominant constructions often overflowed into the school setting, with costly consequences for young people and their communities in general. This study somewhat opened a space for participants to express their views regarding the impact of the decisions that had been taken using stereotypical imaginations of what entails rurality. For instance, the unilateral decision of the school principal to stop offering a subject that teen parents regarded as useful for their careers may point to the belief that there was no need to consult them because it was not going to make any difference. If the principal believed that the participation of learners, parents and community in the area was crucial for the success of the decision, he would have done everything possible to ensure their involvement. The exclusion of these important stakeholders in the taking of the decision had devastating consequences for children in the community, namely, it limited career choices for learners and made it almost impossible to follow specific career options even though they had aspirations. These findings are in keeping with the findings from Smith Battle's (2007) study that depict the importance of an

enabling schooling context and what occurs when this is absent.  Therefore, findings of the study point to the necessity of ensuring  that all children who decide to go back to school to pursue their career aspirations, including teen parents, can do so without impediments originating from flawed constructions of rurality.

Chief among a range of factors that account as reasons for teen parents to go back to school to pursue their career aspirations were the following factors: understanding the importance of obtaining an education; a supportive family; and their personal experience of the difficulties that face their communities.   Within the context of this study, these issues raise question regarding the role of the family and school in ensuring the uninhibited enjoyment of the right to education. These three factors were mentioned as reasons that made it possible for the participants to go back to school to pursue their career aspirations.

## 5.3    Reflection on theoretical framework and research methodology

## 5.3.1 The importance of the notion of children's geographies

As stated in the previous chapters, this study was framed within the notion of children's geographies, which troubles traditional notions of children and childhood. This was useful in the understanding of teen parents' places and spaces of schooling life experiences and their struggles in pursuance of their career aspirations. Evident in the findings of this study was the power laden spatialities (Prout & James, 2002) that featured in schools, families and communities which enabled and/or restricted the realisation of career aspirations by teen parents. Issues of subject choice were found to present as a barrier where a school principal unilaterally took a decision that constricted opportunities for young people in the community to choose subjects to expand their career options.

The importance of Critical theory, Geographies of Children and New Childhood studies lay in the fact that their combination provided foundations for critical understanding teen parents not as 'not yet' but as active social actors in their own, who had the voice and ability to exercise agency to express their experiences, challenge oppressive attitudes and practices and navigate and negotiate social spaces such as school, family and community. The use of this theoretical framework provided a window for the understanding  of the realities of teen parents' lives, and how these are configured to construct them as social deviants, and therefore justify their exclusion from education. This study provided a space for teen parents,

as active social actors and agents of change in the construction of their own lives (Van Ingen & Halas, 2006), to share their experiences of the intersection of
 teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations.

## 5.3.2 Imaginations and understandings of rurality

The study illustrated notions of rurality as a space that is accepted with aversion by officials who must work there, which often characterises rurality as a space where exclusion, poverty and deprivation is the order of the day. The social and professional challenges that are associated with working and/or living in a rural area are often the cause of this aversion (Masinire, 2015). The challenges in the community where the teen parents came from was often complicated by the continued neglect of rural areas in terms of development. This often led to difficulties for teen parents, for example, in how they were to navigate and negotiate such a space in pursuance of their career aspirations. The utilisation of the theoretical foundations as outlined in Chapter Two of this dissertation, provided an opportunity to appreciate the difficult conditions which teen parents from socio-economically deprived contexts must face in pursuing their career aspirations. The neglect in terms of social services that make conditions difficult for teen parents, and other vulnerable groups, filters into the forms life takes in these communities as well as in schooling and family spaces and places. Therefore, for things to change in rural areas and other deprived contexts, teen parents and other vulnerable groups must be heard and their views must be taken seriously and considered in doing development in these contexts. This dissertation is a small contribution to the necessity for children to be heard and understood as partners  (Kellet, 2005; Skanfors, 2009) rather than as objects who are unable to articulate their experience and what needs to be done to address the difficulties they face daily.

The example of a school principal that unilaterally decides to change the school curriculum could be regarded as an instance of the stereotypical imaginations (Masinire, 2015) that he might have had about the capabilities of a rural community. For instance, he might have regarded the community as incapable to participating constructively and productively in a discussion about subject choices. In addition, such a stereotypical imagination about the community might have been extended to learners, who could have also been regarded as incapable of productively taking part in decisions that affect their future. In this way, the school principal overestimated his knowledge of the needs of children in these community, and as a proxy, misconstrued and undermine the needs of children in this community. For instance, voices of teen parents revealed that the school principal had underestimated

and/or undermined capabilities in this community to participate productively in the discussions and ultimate decision about what children in this community needed.

### 5.3.3 The qualitative research approach and narrative research enquiry

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. The key research questions for the study were investigated through a narrative research inquiry. The reason for adopting a qualitative approach and the use of a narrative inquiry to understand experiences of the teen parents who participated in the study was based on the understanding of the importance of listening to the voices of teen parents as active social actors in their own lives. It is through this methodological mix that the study could generate rich data on the experiences of teen parents regarding the relationship of teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations. Narrative inquiry provided a space for teen parents to share their stories about their experiences of the intersection of teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations. In this way, it potentially provided an opportunity that was used to position teen parents as active agents who are aware of their situations and as agentic individuals who can effect and/or influence trajectories of change in their communities, schools, families and personal life. This was an important consideration in troubling normative notions and shifting understandings of children and childhood.

## 5.4 Original contribution of the study

The aim and focus of this study was to explore the career aspirations, factors that enable and/or inhibit teen parents in the pursuance of their career aspirations, and how teen parents navigated and negotiated these realities. There exists a body of research into teenage parents and career aspirations; however, this study believed that experiences of rural teenage parents deserved more attention. What came through though was that the construction of teenage pregnancy and parenthood as moral deviance puts families, which were identified as major sources of inspiration in this study, in a tricky situation of having to tread the tightropes of a society that is dominated by patriarchal understandings of teenage pregnancy and parenthood. A critical finding was that which revealed that the value attached to education as an instrument of liberation from social ills and personal experience of suffering served as source of the decision for teen parents to go back to school and pursue their career aspirations.

Findings of this study signal that recent legislative developments to ensure uninhibited access to education for teen parents are a significant step towards the fulfilment of the promise of education for all. Given the disadvantaged educational, social, economic and employment background of rural teen parents, career development skills should be incorporated in education to enable them to pursue careers that will assist them to achieve economic independence and become full participants in society. The findings of the study point to the complexity of the intersection of teenage pregnancy, teenage parenthood and career aspirations, and the need to trouble and problematise normative understandings of this relationship.

## 5.5  Recommendations

Findings point to the fact that education authorities must ensure that teachers and schools comply with the legislation that prohibit discrimination against pregnant and parenting teenagers, and find ways of assisting teachers and schools to negotiate their way through the moral legacies of their socialisation, upbringing and schooling, as well as challenge the existing exclusionary practices that still prevail in schools.

Regarding the development of the school as an institution in which freedom must be practised the education department should assist schools to create a conducive atmosphere for positive schooling experiences for teen parents. This would entail building interdepartmental relations to address developmental challenges, and to ensure that, at school level, there are vibrant mechanisms to ensure the availability and access to relevant career information. This implies that there must be clear mechanisms of assisting young people in taking career decisions. This may be done through career planning curriculum programmes that involve career discussion and occupational exploration, throughout the education system. There must be opportunities for learners to decide on and learn about their career interests.

 The above-mentioned aspects dealt with the implications for the study. The following section deals with recognised limitations of this study.

## 5.6  Limitations of the research study

Evaluating a study is a critical component of the research process as It allows the researcher space to be able to justify claims and gain perspectives understandings regarding the implications of the emerging findings. The major limitation of this study is that data was

collected from a few participants from a restricted geographical area. As a result, the findings of this study may not be representative of what occurs in other contexts, especially the most socio-economically deprived contexts, which are far away from towns and cities. However, generalising findings to other contexts was not the object of this study. The main objective was to reveal certain patterns regarding the aspirations of teen parents, the factors that inhibit and/or enable them to pursue their career aspirations, and how they navigate and negotiate these variables.

In addition, a further limitation to this study was the tight timeframe within which the study was to be completed as part of a qualification. As a result, there was not enough time to follow up on all the issues that could have been explored in greater depth in the study. Hence, there is a need to provide possibilities for further research.

## 5.7    Possibilities for further research

The following possibilities for further research are recommended based on the findings and limitations of this study:

- As suggested earlier, the findings of this study may not adequately represent what is occurring in other contexts. Therefore, there is a need to expand the current research theme to other contexts to come to a more objective understanding of the theme.

## 5.8    Concluding thoughts

Career aspirations of teen parents are tied to how society constructs teenage pregnancy and parenthood. The construction of teenage pregnancy as moral deviance is problematic in that it does not speak to source of the origins of teenage pregnancy. The fact that teen parents return to school after pregnancy presents an opportunity for the education system to provide education to these learners, and for society to address the discourse of moral deviance that was evident in the narratives of teen parents in this study. There is a need to educate teachers, learners and parents about the fact that pregnancy cannot be used as reason to take away the right to education.  For this to happen, teachers and schools need to be assisted to negotiate their way through the existing moral maze of their socialisation, upbringing and schooling. This could assist to empower teachers and schools to promote inclusive attitudes and practices in schools and classrooms. This would ensure that the legislative inclusion of teen parents back to the school works to their advantage, and that this provides them with a real opportunity of pursuing their career aspirations.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

**Thando**

My name is Thando, a 19-year-old teen mother. I fell pregnant when I was 17 doing Grade 10. My child is now two years old. My mother passed on when I was six years old. I was raised by my grandmother from my father's side. It's hard to be a young mother. It disturbs your life, but it is still a life. I wish to pass Grade 12 this year, pursue a career and then work.

**Ndeki**

My name is Ndeki, a 19-year-old teen mother. My daughter is now 10 months old. When I fell pregnant, I was compelled to drop out of school. In fact, I ran away from home to stay with my sister because my father wouldn't let me to stay at our house. He is very strict. As a result, my baby is staying with my sister. I feel sad that my baby is not staying with me. It is painful, but I forgive him.

**Mpumie**

I am Mpumie, an 18-year-old teen mother. I was in Grade 11 when I fell pregnant. I had to stay two weeks at home after delivery then went back to school. My son is one year and three months old now. His father denied the pregnancy at first but now he loves the baby. His parents also support the baby. People were laughing and gossiping, saying that I do not know the father of my baby. It was painful, but my uncle who is working on a farm supported me and helped me to move on and protected me from what people were saying. I am okay now, back to school as if nothing has happened.

**Fundie**

My name is Fundie. I am a 19-year-old teen mother. I was 17 and doing Grade 10 when I fell pregnant. My baby girl is three years old now. My mum is unemployed. My granny, who is a domestic worker, is taking care of the nine of us, including my baby. I last saw my father when I was 10 years old. I hate him. My baby's father does not support the baby too. He never paid for the damages, but I don't have a problem about it – I don't care. I don't even want to ask him for maintenance because he is nothing but a taxi conductor. He is not responsible. He has never seen our baby. I don't want to talk about him and my father. I just want to finish matric, receive training and work so that I could help my granny support my family and my child.

**Samo**

I am Samo, a 23-year-old teen father. I am doing Grade 12. My son is one year and three months old.  I am in the same class as his mother. I do not stay with my child but my parents support the child on my behalf. My parents are working on a farm. They stay there and come home during weekends. I only stay with my cousin. I am still at school because I want to get matric, go to tertiary and then earn the money to support my family and my child.

**Linda**

My name is Linda, a 20-year-old teen father. I have a one-year-old daughter, but she is not staying with me. She stays with her mother. I stay with my granny. There is 14 of us in the house. Only two family members are working, my father and aunt. My granny does everything for us with her pension. I am not happy that my parents are not together. I don't wish my child to experience the same pain. I wish to finish school, get a qualification, help my grandmother and bring my child back so that I could give her a better education in the best schools.

**Zane**

 My name is Zane. I am an 18 years old teen mother. My son is 11 months old now. I did not drop out of school during my pregnancy. I delivered during September holidays and went back when schools re-opened in October. It was a difficult decision but I wanted to pursue my career aspirations. I must obtain an education. It is the only way.

My mother died when I was 10 years old and my father also died soon thereafter. I stay with my brother and two sisters, one of whom is mentally disabled. I grew up in an orphanage because my relatives couldn't stay with me. My aunt could not stay with me while I was young. At least she tried. We are very poor at home. They all depend on my social grant for food. When I fell pregnant, my sisters and brothers were shouting at me because they knew that my social grant would be terminated and there would be no food. That confused me but, on the other hand, it made me stronger because I always tell myself that no matter what they say, it will not change who I am.

I am now happy that I didn't abort my baby although my boyfriend coerced me to. It was difficult, I nearly committed suicide.  My sisters didn't support me like my mother would have done. I had to leave home because I was running away from the social workers who might have reported my pregnancy to the authorities and have the social grant terminated. I want the best future for myself and my child.

# APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

<u>**REASERCH TOPIC**</u>:  *Geographies of Career Aspirations: Narratives of Rural Teen Parents*

**KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**
1. What are the career aspirations for teen parents?
2. What are the contextual factors that affect these aspirations?
3. How do teen parents navigate and negotiate these contextual factors?

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**
1. Where do you live?
2. With whom do you live?
3. Do you have a small or big family?
4. Do you have any siblings?
5. What kind of careers are they in?

**PERSONAL QUESTIONS**
1. How many kids do you have?
2. How old were you when you get your first child?
3. How old is s/he now?
4. Where is the father/mother of your baby?
5. What kind of support do you receive from the father or mother of your child?
6. Explain to me why do you consider yourself a good father or mother?
7. How often do you see or visit your child?
8. What plans do you have for your child now and in the future?
9. Who takes care of the child whilst you are at school?
10. Now that you are still in school, who is paying the pre-school fees?

**ATTENDANCE**
1. How is your school attendance now that you have a child? Is it regular or irregular? Why?
2. How often do you absent yourself from school?
3. Tell me what are the reasons for absenting yourself so much?
4. What is the response of teachers towards your late coming or absence?
5. How does this contribute to your educational attainments and the whole performance?
6. What inspires motivates you to keep coming to school despite the challenges you've mentioned?

**PERFORMANCE**
1. Explain how you feel about your school performance at the moment?
2. Why is it low / high?
3. Do you think you will make it at the end of the year?
4. If not, what are your plans after matric?
5. How often do you study?
6. Do you think you will pass matric this year? What inspires you to feel that way?
7. Why is it important to you to pass Matric and further your studies?
8. Looking at your school achievement before getting a child, has it improved or dropped? What are the reasons for that?

**ATTITUDES ABOUT SCHOOL**
1. Now that that you are about to leave school for good at the end of the year, what would you like to remember or hate to remember about your schooling years? Generally, how do you feel about your school?
2. If you must change something about your school or any school rule, what would it be and why?

**PARTICIPATION**

1. Which kind of sport s do you have in your school?
2. Which one do you like most?
3. Do you participate in any extra mural activities in your school?
4. Explain to me why you like Cultural Activities/music/football/basketball so much?
5. Do you think that the school can introduce other sporting activities you do not have?
6. If you have to choose, which sports do you think will make a difference in your school and why?

**CURRICULUM RELATED QUESTIONS**

1. What subjects are you doing at matric?
2. What are your favourite subjects? Why?
3. Which subjects do you think will pave a way for a better career and why?
4. How does the school create opportunities for the learner's career choice?

**SCHOOL AND TEACHER RELATED**

1. What kind of challenges have you experienced:
   i.   as a teen parent to your child/ren?
   ii.  as a teen parent and a child to your parents at home?
   iii. as a teen parent and a learner in school?
   iv.  as a teen parent in the community in which you live?
2. How did these experienced challenges you mentioned in response to the previous question about home, school or communities in which you live enable or disable you to pursue your career aspirations?
3. Who is your role model in these settings? Why do you think so? Explain to me what is it that s/he is doing to inspire you so much?

**TOPIC RELATED**

1. What aspirations did you have prior to pregnancy? If changes on your career aspirations occurred after having a baby, what might be the reason for that?
2. What do you know about career aspirations?
3. What are you planning to do next year after finishing matric?
4. Good, do you plan to pursue a career in ……....?
5. If so where? Why?
6. Where did you get information about this career?
7. How does your school prepare you for career choice?
8. What role do you think the school should have played to expose you to different careers?
9. What area of service would you like to specialise in?
10. What do you think will hinder your progress next year?
11. What do you think will stop you reaching your goals?
12. What about your family? Are they going to approve this type of work?
13. If they say no, do you have another option?
14. How much support do they give you with your studies or academic attainment?
15. Have they ever asked you about your career aspirations for the future?

**PHOTO-VOICE RELATED QUESTIONS**

(Each participant will choose a photo of his/ her choice from many and discuss it. Questions will vary depending on the photo under discussion)

1. Tell me more about that picture? Who is this? / What is this? / Where is this place?
2. Why is this photo so important to you?
3. What is it that you don't like about this photo?
4. What do you like most in this photo?
5. Do you think that the photo you've chosen aspire you in a certain way? How then?
6. If there is something you could change in that photo, what would it be and why?

# APPENDIX 3: CONSENT LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

University of KwaZulu Natal
Pietermaritzburg Campus
193 Woodhouse Road
Pietermaritzburg
3200
01 September 2014

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOL**

I am a Master in Education student at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, conducting a research project titled: **"*Geographies of Career Aspirations: Narratives of Rural Teen Parents*".** Through the use of small stories, I want to learn more about the career aspirations of teen parents, the contextual factors that enable or hinder those aspirations and how they navigate these contextual factors.

I humbly request your assistance in this research project by being granted the permission to conduct my study at school in your district. The participants in my study will be teen parents who are in Grade 12 which is an exit point to tertiary and where their career aspirations began to flourish. They will be required to participate in individual and focus group interviews together with photo narrative. Interviews will last between 45 to 60 minutes.

Please note that:
- The school and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The schools' or the participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- All learners' response will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real name of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Digital recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed by means they deem fit.

Thanking you
Yours Faithfully
-------------------------------------                        --------------------------------------------

N.J. Kheswa                                                        Supervisor: Professor Melanie Martin

najoyk@gmail.com                                              martinm@ukzn.ac.za

**CONSENT FORM**

If permission is granted to conduct the research in the District schools, please fill in and sign the forms below.

I…………………………………………………………………………………………..,
(Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this documents and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project within the school in the Pietermaritzburg district. I understand that teachers are free to withdraw from the project at any time should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____          Date: _____/ _____/ 201

# APPENDIX 4: CONSENT LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Pietermaritzburg Campus
193 Woodhouse Road
Pietermaritzburg
3200
01 September 2014

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOL**

I am a Master in Education student at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, conducting a research project titled: **"*Geographies of Career Aspirations: Narratives of Rural Teen Parents*".** Through the use of small stories, I want to learn more about the career aspirations of teen parents, the contextual factors that enable or hinder those aspirations and how they navigate these contextual factors.

I humbly request your assistance in this research project by being granted the permission to conduct my study at your school. The participants in my study will be teen parents who are in Grade 12 which is an exit point to tertiary and where their career aspirations began to flourish. They will be required to participate in individual and focus group interviews together with photo narrative. Interviews will last between 45 to 60 minutes.

Please note that:
- The school and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The schools' or the participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- All learners' response will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real name of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Digital recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed by means they deem fit.

I thank you in anticipation.

Yours Faithfully

------------------------------------          --------------------------------------------
N.J. Kheswa                                    Supervisor: Professor Melanie Martin

najoyk@gmail.com                               martinm@ukzn.ac.za

**CONSENT FORM**

If permission is granted to conduct the research in the District schools, please fill in and sign the forms below.

I………………………………………………………………………………………………...,
(Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project within the school in the Pietermaritzburg district. I understand that teachers are free to withdraw from the project at any time should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____          Date: _____/ _____/ 2014

# APPENDIX 5: CONSENT LETTER TO PARENTS

<div align="right">
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Pietermaritzburg Campus
193 Woodhouse Road
Pietermaritzburg
3200
01 September 2014
</div>

Dear Parent/Guardian

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOL**

As part of the requirement for an M.Ed. (Social Justice) in the School of Education of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Pietermaritzburg), I wish to undertake a research project in Career Aspirations of parenting teenagers in the school where your child attends. The aim of the study is to investigate the career aspirations of adolescent parents and how they navigate the contextual factors that affect their career aspirations.

This study is targeting grade 12 adolescent parents as they are about to exit the FET band to Tertiary Institutions where they will further explore their career aspirations. I would like to be given a permission to work with your child who fits in this category.

I am fully aware that this is the crucial time for them as they are embarking on extensive revisions in preparation for trials as well as final exams. I do not intend to disturb their study schedule in any way. I hope to meet them immediately after school for 1 hour and then release them to continue with their studies.

Participation by grade 12 parenting teenagers is voluntary and confidentiality regarding the identity of the participants will be maintained. The school principal and governing body have granted me permission to conduct this study.

Your cooperation in this regard will be appreciated. If agree, kindly sign the consent form enclosed.

Yours Faithfully

N. J. Kheswa (Miss)

Supervisor: M. Martin

## CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

I ……………………………………… permits my daughter / son (Name)…………………………………………… to participate in a research study conducted by Ms N.J. Kheswa on Career aspirations of parenting adolescents.

Signed By: …………………………………..
         At: ………………………………… On: ……………September 2014

# APPENDIX 6: CONSENT LETTER TO LEARNERS

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Pietermaritzburg Campus
193 Woodhouse Road
Pietermaritzburg
3200
01 September 2014

Dear learner

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOL**

My name is N.J. Kheswa. I am a teacher by profession. I am a Masters of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am conducting a research that explores adolescent parent's career aspirations for the future and the contextual factors that influence their academic success.

The research will take place in a focus group discussion with other parenting adolescents from your school. The discussion will be between 1 to 2 hours for three sessions. I will be asking you questions about what factors you think influence your academic success and career aspirations for the future and how you as a parenting teenager, will navigate the challenges you think you facing to achieve academic success.

The research will take place over 3 visits. During these visits the researcher and translator will always be present.

The research process will involve the following:
  (a) First, I will have a briefing session where we will introduce ourselves with an aim to develop a rapport and trust in each other in order to get to know each other.
  (b) The research procedure will be outlined, rules will be set and key issues and expectations will be highlighted and clarified.
  (c) A brief discussion about your experience as teenage parents will be slightly explored.
  (d) Cameras to be used for taking photos of the things you consider an inspiration or barriers to your aspirations will be handed out after showing you how to use them. Photographs taken will be discussed in the focus group in the next sessions.

To make decisions about the research, there are a few more things you should know.
  • Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to not to talk to me if you do not want to.
  • If you agree to take part in this study, I will ask you to sign a consent form as an indication that you were not forced to participate in this study, but still if you do not want to be a participant anymore, you may withdraw.
  • You may also refuse to answer any questions if you do not feel comfortable answering them and you can leave the discussion at any time if you feel uncomfortable with the process.
  • You will not be in any disadvantage if you choose not to participate in this study.
  • I would like you to choose a special name for yourself. In the research, I will refer to you by this name so that your own name will be kept confidential.
  • The name of your school will not appear in the research report.
  • We will not use this information to report on you to the school or any other authority.
  • Anonymity will be maintained in the reporting of the findings in this study.

- All information you contribute during the discussion will be kept confidential and an appeal will be made to the participants at the start of the discussion to refrain from talking about the discussion to other people.
- The discussion will be recorded and all information collected will be stored or destroyed after analysis.
- Unfortunately, we cannot give you material help or monetary payments for participating in this study. However, you will get a copy of all the photographs taken, and if I know of any services, that I can link you to, I will.

If you have any further questions about the research, my contact details are as follows: 0333867278.


**DECLARATION**

I………………………………………………………………………… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I give my consent to Ms N. J. Kheswa to be a participant in her research on career aspiration.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signed by:…………………………………………

At:………………………On……………………

# APPENDIX 7: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF KWA-ZULU NATAL

**UNIVERSITY OF**
**KWAZULU-NATAL** ™

**INYUVESI**
**YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

26 April 2013

**Professor A Muthukrishna 845**
**School of Education**
**Edgewood Campus**

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0250/013**
**Project title: The geographies of children's schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries:**
**Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers**

Dear Professor Muthukrishna

**Expedited approval**

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**

/px

cc Dr P Morojele
cc Academic leader researcher Dr MN Davids
cc School administrator Ms B Bhengu

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

# APPENDIX 8: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



education
Department: Education
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar                    Tel: 033 341 8610                    Ref.:2/4/8

---

Prof. N Muthukrishna & Dr P Morojele
P O Box X03
ASHWOOD
3605

Dear Prof. Muthukrishna and Dr Morojele

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS**

Your application to conduct research entitled: **THE GEOGRAPHIES OF CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING IN KWAZULU-NATAL: NARRATIVES OF CHILDREN, PARENTS/CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS,** in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1.    The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2.    The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3.    Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4.    Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5.    A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions   where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6.    The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 May 2013 to 31 March 2014.
7.    Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department.  Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8.    Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9.    Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10.   Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education:

Umlazi District                    Othukela District
Sisonke District                   Pinetown District
Zululand District                  Illembe District

**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**
**Head of Department: Education**
**Date: 19 November 2013**

**KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

POSTAL:        Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL:      247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201.  Tel.  033 392 1004 Fax: 033 392 1203

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beyond the call of duty

EMAIL ADDRESS: kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za; CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;

WEBSITE:       www.kzneducation.gov.za

# APPENDIX 9: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

# Ntwintwi

Proofreading and Editing Solutions

Date: 03 February 2017

## CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING
### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that the thesis bearing the provisional title *Geographies of Career Aspirations: Narratives of Rural Teen Parents*, to be submitted by **Nana Joyce Kheswa** has been edited for language by Ntwintwi Proofreading and Editing Solutions. Neither the research content nor the author's intentions were altered in any way during the editing process.

Ntwintwi guarantees the quality of English language in this thesis, provided our editor's changes are accepted and further changes made to the thesis are checked by our editor.

Yours sincerely,

Jabulani Ngcobo
Director: Ntwintwi Proofreading and Editing Solutions