# Teenage fathers: Culture, Sexuality and Masculinity in rural KwaZulu-Natal

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'As the candidate's supervisor I agree / do not agree to the submission of this thesis'.

**Signed** ██████████████

**Name**     **Professor Deevia Bhana**

**Date**     **08 March 2020**

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I, Mornica *Nozipho Mvune*   declare that:

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## DECLARATION 2: PUBLICATIONS

The publications (under review and published) that constitute this thesis and my contribution to each of the manuscripts are presented below:

**Publication 1**

Mvune, N. (under review). Accessing the hard-to-reach research population: Reflections from a qualitative study with teenage fathers from rural KwaZulu-Natal. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology.*

Author contributions:

I designed the study, collected data, compiled and wrote the manuscript. My supervisor, Professor Deevia Bhana reviewed the manuscript, supported, guided me regarding structure and provided critical reading.

**Publication 2**

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Author contributions:
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Author contributions:
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Author contributions

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**Signed**

**Date    08 March 2020**

**Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my late mother, Busisiwe Eunice Mvune, for being the most selfless human being that I have ever met. Thank you for all the sacrifices that you made for me to attain this great academic achievement. Even if you were not physically present during the writing of this thesis, I felt your presence each second, as I was working on it. Thank you MaThembela! I also dedicate it to my late father Mncikiselwa Andreas Mvune, late brother Richard Sibonelo Mvune and his wife the late Ntombenhle Mvune, for teaching me the value of hard work and perseverance. Msani, Ndindi, Hlabandlela!

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To the love of my life, Happy Khumalo, thank you for your love and support baby. I am so indebted to you for giving me space and time to work on this thesis and for

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21 Janauray 2016

Ms MN Mvune (200400528)
**School of Education**
**Edgewood Campus**

Dear Ms Mvune,

**Protocol reference number : HSS/1516/015D**
**Project title:** Teenage fathers in rural KwaZulu-Natal schools.

**Full Approval – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol**

With regards to your application received on 13 January 2016. The documents submitted have been accepted by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and **FULL APPROVAL** for the protocol has been granted.

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 discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

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

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

Yours faithfully

_____
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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**Abstract**

This study examines teenagers' experiences of fatherhood and how they understand their responsibilities and perform their roles as fathers. It is based on a qualitative

study of 20 teenage fathers at two public high schools in the rural Ugu District of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. All research participants were black African teenagers who identified as biological fathers. Five focus group discussions and 20 individual interviews were held.

Dominant discourse often associates fatherhood with material provision, and motherhood with childcare and nurturing. The purpose of this study was to determine how impoverished teenage fathers living in a socioeconomically marginalised rural area negotiate fatherhood and its expectations, and how they navigate the socially defined standards of masculinity and fatherhood that are often expected of them. Throughout the study I draw on theory of masculinities to show how my respondents used context-specific norms of masculinity to make sense of their identities not only as fathers but also as men or boys.

My findings highlight how negotiating fatherhood is a complex process through which teenage fathers uphold and/or oppose dominant forms of masculinity. Participants upheld the notion of father-as-provider and used it to define whether or not they were "real men". In so doing, they were caught between dual identities of being children and adults simultaneously: While they wanted to be seen as caring and supportive fathers (ideal adult men), upholding dominant forms of teenage masculinity through having multiple partners and partaking in risky behaviour was also important. The crux of their conundrum was the intersectionality of culture, context, and sexual risk—and this constitutes the core of my thesis.

By way of conclusion, I emphasise the need for relevant interventions that address risky sexual practices and promote healthy sexuality for teenage men and their girlfriends.

**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

Human Immunodeficiency Virus – HIV

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – AIDS

Sexually Transmitted Infections – STIs

National Schools Nutrition Programme – NSNP

Learner Support Agent – LSA

Special Needs Education Services – SNES

Department of Basic Education – DBE

Comprehensive Sexuality Education - CSE

## Chapter One: Introduction

The teenage father of a baby born last week has launched an urgent high court application to stop his former girlfriend from putting the child up for adoption. But the mother, who is 16, has claimed that the 17-year-old raped her by forcing himself on her and, in those circumstances, had no rights to the child. The application, which came before Durban High Court Judge Mahendra Chetty this week, is being largely handled by their respective parents because of their ages. It was adjourned for a paternity test to be conducted. The teenagers live in the same area but attend different high schools in the Durban area. In her affidavit, the boy's mother says they were involved in a relationship for 11 months and the girlfriend became part of their family.

In February, the couple told their parents that she was pregnant. 'Her mother's immediate reaction was to insist on an abortion. This would never be morally acceptable for our family because we have strong religious beliefs.' The boy's mother said a further meeting was held when things calmed down and 'all the options were discussed', including the possibility of the young mom moving in with them so they could look after the baby while she returned to school. 'It [the meeting] was very positive and encouraging, although at the end her mom did say she was leaving the option of adoption for her daughter to think about.' But the following week things changed and 'she sent us several hostile messages saying we had brought shame on her family…. We addressed a letter to them indicating that we would do whatever we could to support her emotionally and financially, but the response was aggressive. The present position is that they seem intent on giving the baby up for adoption. My son wants to be involved in the baby's life and he has acquired full parental rights and responsibilities.'

The girl's mother, in her affidavit, questioned whether the father really wanted to be involved, because he had initially wanted her to have an abortion, had later agreed that the child should be given up for adoption, 'and even sent messages that keeping the baby was unaffordable'. She alleges that it is the boy's mother who wants the baby, 'because she has an irrational belief that she must have the child come hell or high water as part of her atonement before God'. She said the couple [who have been] looking after the child [since its birth] had been pre-vetted by a social worker and had been on the adoption list for four years. 'They will take good care of the child ... my daughter selected them. The necessary steps are being put into motion at the children's court for the adoption of the child and the applicants [the boy and his father] are welcome to take part in the proceedings.'

She said a charge of rape had been laid against the boy 'because he forced himself' on her daughter. It was when she had discovered this that a decision was made to 'cut all ties'.

["Teen dad Facing Rape Charge Fights to Keep Baby," *The Mercury*, June 8, 2016]

This newspaper article provides a glimpse into a Durban teenager's experiences of fatherhood—an experience that forced him to seek legal support in order to strengthen his case for being part of his child's life, even though he and his girlfriend were not in a committed relationship when the pregnancy occurred. Teenagers' negotiation of fatherhood is often characterised by complexities emanating from what Weber (2018: 3) calls this the "simultaneity of being a child and adult". Fatherhood compels boys to grow up and take responsibility even though they are still children. In the South African context, where religious, social and cultural factors combine to shape teenage fathers' responses to fatherhood, these complexities often result in masculinities that are both caring and non-caring, involved and uninvolved. The newspaper article illustrates this well: The teenage father allegedly changed from not accepting any responsibility and suggesting an abortion to becoming a caring father fighting to keep his child.

Positive responses to parenthood in both teenage mothers and fathers, are often informed by the level of support that they receive from families, caregivers and parents. The support that teenage parents receive, facilitates transition to parenthood and mediate challenges that are related to unplanned teenage pregnancies (Amod, Halana & Smith, 2019; Edwards et al., 2012, Neale & Davies, 2015). The change in response to pregnancy that the teenage father in the newspaper article demonstrated, also points to the fluidity of identity-making process (Burr, 1995), which is often characterised by changing point experiences due to varying contexts (Kehily, 2007). South Africa is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that has put legislation in place in order to protect the right to education of pregnant young women. The South African Schools Act (SASA DoE, 1996) makes provision for pregnant young women to be allowed re-entry to the education system after childbirth so that their right to education (Section 29 of the Bill of rights, 1996) is not breached. However, responses to pregnancy in teenage women, are characterised by "shame and othering" (Bhana & Mcambi, 2013, p.12), due to stigma which emanates from the negative attitudes of teachers. Bhana and Mcambi (2013) further argue that this dominant discourse of 'shame and othering' puts pregnant young women in a predicament, thus constraining their power to exercise agency.

Literature on teenage pregnancy has highlighted how teenage fathers resort to denying paternity in order to avoid taking responsibility for a pregnancy—usually due to fear

of the parents' reactions (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012; Nkani, 2017; Weber, 2012). Teenage sexuality is often regulated by adults, particularly in rural South Africa, though, for example, discourses around respect that often prohibit teenagers from openly displaying sexual attraction, as this is seen violating cultural standards of respect (Bhana, 2015; Harrison, 2008). Sexual relationships are thus often conducted in secret, resulting in what Harrison (2008: 175) refers to as "hidden love," which is more likely to involve risky practices.

Harrison's (2008) study, which focused on sexual beliefs among teenagers in rural South Africa, found that both young men and women are under pressure to ensure that their sexual relationships are uncovered. Much pressure falls on young women because of the need to meet social expectations of preserving virginity until marriage. Indeed, sexual dormancy is viewed as a sign of "good behaviour" among young women (Bhana, 2015; Harrison, 2008: 180). Virginity, therefore earns respect for the young woman among her peers, family, and potential husband. An out-of-wedlock loss of virginity is often seen as an indicator that a young girl lacks morals, and this often results in stigma. Harrison (2008) also notes that young men might hide a relationship in order to protect their girlfriends from the stigma of being found to be sexually active. She also notes that the need for secrecy benefits young men by giving them the opportunity to engage in multiple relationships that are all hidden.

Another dominant discourse that permeates studies on teenage sexuality, is the notion of childhood sexual innocence (Bhana, 2015; Kehily, 2012; Robinson, 2012; 2013; 2014). This discourse frames children as sexually "pure", and not having any sexual knowledge or experience. Furthermore, in the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal the discourse of *inhlonipho* (highest degree of respect) is used to regulate sexual purity in teenagers.  Refraining from sexual relationships is often viewed as a symbol of respect for the prevailing norms of sexuality (Harrison, 2008).Further, Kehily (2012) found that themes of romance and love are dominant among pre-teenage girls, and hence she views the construction of children as sexual innocents a "myth" (Kehily, 2012: 259). One South African teenage mother from a poor socio-economic background who participated in Amod et al., (2019: 8), stated "sex is all that we talk about as teenagers…sex is there and people will always have sex". This points to the dominance of sexual knowledge and experience in children, despite fears of adults.

The newspaper article also resonates with studies that have found a strong link between fatherhood and masculine identity (Morrell, 2001; Gibbs, Crankshaw, Lewinsohn, Chirawu, & Willan, 2017), whereby fatherhood becomes a marker of adult masculine identity for teenagers, especially when other indicators (such as a stable job and shelter) are not available (Sikweyiya, Shai, Gibbs, Mahlangu, & Jewkes, 2017; Weber, 2012; 2018).Connell (1995) suggested that a stable job, an ability to provide for wife and children and a shelter are indicators of adult masculinity. Indeed, fatherhood is a great milestone in masculinity, irrespective of age. Hindin-Miller (2018) presented evidence of successful young parents from New Zealand whose lives were turned around when they became teenage parents. These young parents attributed their academic success and well-being to teenage parenting, which they viewed as a "potential opportunity rather than a problem, provided there is holistic academic support for both parents and the child" Hindin-Miller (2018: 266). The newspaper extract is an example of stories that are rarely told, and provides evidence of the complexities and challenges that teenage fathers might face in their attempts to be involved in their children's lives. The way teenage fathers navigate their involvement is further exacerbated in contexts where sociocultural traditions still dictate expected behaviour.

Studies on teenage fatherhood are, more often than not, approached from the perspective that males conduct themselves in sexually risky ways, and often behave violently. Teenage fathers are thus often stereotyped as reckless and uncaring. However, studies are beginning to emerge that focus on alternative masculinities, where care for the young mother and the child are central (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Chili & Maharaj, 2015; Gibbs et al. 2017; Langa & Smith, 2012; Mvune, 2017; 2019; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). My research resonates with these latter studies, building on a scholarship that seeks to give teenage fathers a voice by highlighting the complexities that shape their negotiations of masculinity and fatherhood. Giving teenage fathers a voice is essential, not least because the subject of teenage pregnancy is still in its infancy, and needs to be approached from as broad and fair a perspective as possible.

**Aims and Objectives**

The main argument I put forward in this thesis is that fatherhood is socially constructed and inseparable from masculinity. It is shaped by multiple complex factors—not least the socioeconomic and cultural context in which a boy or man lives. My study took place in the Ugu District of rural KwaZulu-Natal, where I focused on how notions of teenage masculinity and fatherhood shaped teenagers' responses to fatherhood.

Research in South Africa focusing on teenage fathers' vulnerability and the challenges they face in negotiating fatherhood and masculine identities, both as fathers and teenage men, has found that the rural context, with its hegemonic norms of teenage sexuality, aggravates their vulnerability. Mkwanazi (2017) reported that 15–16-year-old fathers were predominantly located in the more rural provinces of South Africa: Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, which highlights the need for a greater focus on teenage fatherhood in rural areas. Furthermore, fathers' roles in their children's lives— particularly when going beyond financial support to focusing on their involvement in their children's lives—have not received adequate attention in studies. Examining teenage fathers' stories of masculinity, sexuality, and fatherhood is crucial in order to obtain a broader view of teenage pregnancy: The voices of teenage fathers are key to the promotion of a healthier sexuality, the prevention of unwanted pregnancies, and to increasing educational and economic prospects for teenage fathers, teenage mothers, and their children. The purpose of my study is to address these gaps in research.

**Key Research Question**

How do culture, sexuality, and masculinity combine to produce localised meanings of fatherhood in teenage fathers in rural KwaZulu-Natal?

**Sub-Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between culture, sexuality and masculinity in rural KwaZulu-Natal?

2. How do teenage fathers mediate masculinity in relation to being and becoming a father?

3. How do teenage fathers resist and/or reproduce normative understandings of masculinity?

## Background and Context

Despite declines in teenage fertility rates, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2014) reported that 11% of all births, globally, were to young women aged 15–19. An estimated 95% of teenage pregnancies were reported in developing countries, with 36.4 million women becoming mothers before age 18 and 5.6 million before the age of 15 in 2010 (UNFPA, 2013). Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the highest teenage pregnancy prevalence in the world in 2013, with more than 30% of young women giving birth before age 18 (UNFPA, 2013). Teenage births account for more than 50% of births in this region; approximately 101 births per 1000 women aged 15 to 19, which is more than the global average (Odimegwu & Mkwanazi, 2016). Teenage pregnancy reports in South Africa have estimated that one in three women have had a pregnancy (Shefer, Bhana, & Morrell, 2013; Christofides et al., 2014). The prevalence of teenage pregnancy in South Africa thus remains high. It has become a subject of social and scholarly debate, attracting much public attention. Following global trends, scholars have noted that teenage pregnancy in South Africa has become a "contemporary crisis" (Branson, Ardington, & Liebbrandt, 2013:1), and an "escalating epidemic" (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod, & Letsoalo, 2012:12). Such assertions have a tendency to fuel stigma against teenage parents and often robs them off opportunities of support that would help them negotiate duality of childhood and adulthood. However, such utterances also point to the urgency of interventions to reduce teenage pregnancy, especially since it has been identified as one of the causes for sub-Saharan African countries to fail to meet millennium development goals around education, fertility and maternal mortality (Odimegwu & Mkwanazi, 2016). Teenage pregnancy often results in negative outcomes on the health, empowerment, schooling and development of teenage mothers, teenage fathers and their children (Furstenberg, 2007; Luker, 1996; Grau, Wilson & Smith, 2012; Mkhwanazi, 2010; Mollborn, 2012; Nkani, 2012; Weber, 2018). Studies have associated early parenthood with social class, finding that most teenage mothers and fathers come from poor and marginalised socioeconomic backgrounds (Bunting & McAuley, 2004;

Mkhwanazi, 2010; Nkani, 2012; Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod, & Letsoalo, 2009; Thornberry, Smith, & Howard, 1997).

Teenage parents are often criticised for disrupting what could be called the "sexuality order" —sociocultural preconceptions that dictate who should have a child and when (Weber, 2012). This pervasive discourse on teenage pregnancy dominates in studies. Yet, Duncan (2007:308), in his study in the UK on the discrepancies that exist within teenage pregnancy policy and the views that teenage parents have, found that "[The] age at which pregnancy occurs seems to have little effect on future social outcomes…. [M]any fathers seek to remain connected to their children. For many young mothers and fathers, parenting seems to provide the impetus to change direction, or build on existing resources, so as to take up education, training and employment". From this perspective, teenage parents' youth does not mean failure, nor does it guarantee negative outcomes in life. However, a combination of other factors such as race, social class, and socioeconomic conditions, may contribute to negative life prospects for teenage parents.

The democratic dispensation, which formally replaced apartheid in 1994, affords all South Africans equal rights, irrespective of gender, race, class, age, religion, culture, or sexual orientation. South Africa's political transformation brought about a set of rights for women and children. This includes women's sexual and reproductive health rights; rights to participate in formal economy; and elimination of workplace inequalities (Dworkin, Colvin, Hatcher, & Peacock, 2012). These rights have been controversial—even labelled by some as a major cause of sexual promiscuity and delinquency resulting in teenage pregnancy (Hodes, 2017). Despite the legislative framework that seeks to achieve equality, South Africa continues to be divided along racial, economic, religious and cultural lines (Amod, Halana, & Smith, 2019). Most rural areas are still battling with the legacies of apartheid, with high rates of unemployment and poverty, and a lack of even basic infrastructure. Indeed, Armstrong, Lekezwa, & Siebrits' (2008) study, which drew on data from the Income and Expenditure Survey and the General Household Survey to generate a profile of South Africa's poverty dynamics, found that the majority of country's poorest households were in remote rural areas. Other studies have found a high prevalence of HIV and AIDS in such areas, as well as high rates of unplanned pregnancies among

young people (Christofides et al., 2014; Hunter, 2010; Mkhwanazi, 2010; Shisana et al., 2014).

Despite equal human rights being central to South Africa's Constitution, patriarchy remains all pervasive. Hodes (2017), whose study focused on popular perspectives of teenage pregnancy in South Africa, found that the persistence of patriarchy manifested in the male control of women's sexual and reproductive behaviour, sexual violence, and sexual coercion. However, studies on teenage fertility have focused mainly on pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers as opposed to their male counterparts (for exceptions see Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Chili & Maharaj, 2015; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Such scholarly attention has been justified by the physiological making of women who embody pregnancy and thus making them highly visible. In cases where pregnancy happens out-of-wedlock, it often fuels stigma against young women. Also, consequences of teenage pregnancy such as negative educational and social outcomes fall heavily on young women (Macleod & Tracey, 2009; Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012; Nkani & Bhana, 2010), including dropping out of school, uncertain future prospects, the fact that the burden of childcare falls overwhelmingly on teenage mothers and their female family members, and poor health. For example, Macleod & Tracey (2009) suggest that teenage mothers who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and cannot afford childcare services, often rely on their mothers or another female relative, and it becomes a challenge if they do not live with the adult female.

Indeed, complications related to pregnancy and childbirth have been reported, globally, as the second highest cause of death in girls aged 15–19 years, especially in developing countries (WHO, 2014). However, these complications may not be directly linked to biomedical reasons, but rather a result of limited access to medical services. For example, in South Africa, nurses' attitudes and lack of confidentiality have been identified as a main cause for teenagers' failure to access contraceptive services in clinics (Wood et al., 2006). Young women from rural South Africa, who participated in Wood et al. (2006), described nurses as arrogant, rude and short-tempered; often asking them whether they have told their mothers that they were having sex. Nurses' attitudes often brought about shame, sadness and fear in young women, as a result many stopped using contraceptives and fell pregnant. Nurses who participated in this study (Wood et al., 2006), felt that it was their role to discourage

young women from being sexually active, since parents were failing in that regard, due to cultural norms opposing intergenerational discussion of sexual matters. Although teenage pregnancies are often planned due to cultural norms that promote young marriages and early childbearing (Sedgh, Finer, Bankole, Eilers, & Singh, 2015), there is also a high rate of unplanned pregnancies, particularly in South Africa, where, particularly in the more traditional and conservative rural areas, pregnancies that occur out-of-wedlock often carry a stigma.

Both teenage mothers and fathers must bear the burden of this stigma, yet in the past most research has focused only on the experiences of teenage mothers, leaving the stories of teenage fatherhood untold. While this is understandable, given the gender inequality that makes young women and children more vulnerable, it is important, now, to address this gap and explore the lived experiences of teenage fathers— particularly as 30–50% of children born to teenage mothers have teenage fathers as well (Mollborn & Lovegrove, 2011). In a study using birth registration data from General Household Surveys (2009–2013), Mkwanazi (2017) found that 44,771 South African children were fathered by teenage men between 2001 and 2011. In 2011 alone, 3,211 teenagers became fathers. Teenage fathers are thus a sizeable group. While new trends in research have begun to include fathers in their studies (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Chili & Maharaj, 2015; Chohan & Langa; Gibbs et al., 2017; Langa & Smith, 2012; Mvune, 2017; 2019; 2020; Swartz & Bhana, 2009), it is imperative that they become a serious focus of research in order to generate a broader and properly nuanced view of teenage pregnancy, with its multilayered complexities and widely varying circumstances.

It is to this emerging body of research that my study contributes. I focus on how 20 teenage fathers forged and made sense of their identities, and how they related to and understood fatherhood. From the start I was inspired by the work of Shirani (2015), who highlighted the need for studies on young fathers, especially those who are poorly resourced and come from marginalised racial, sociocultural, and economic backgrounds.

Absentee biological fathers are another major concern regarding teenage pregnancy— on a global scale—because of the negative consequences of children growing up in

single parent households. This has resulted in a growing number of studies being conducted on absentee fathers, fathering, and fatherhood in the last 25 years (Featherstone, 2009; Makusha, 2013; Makusha & Richter, 2016; Dermott & Miller, 2015; Rabe, 2018). South Africa has one of the highest rates of absentee biological fathers (Department of Social Development, 2012; Richter et al., 2012). However, being physically absent does not necessarily mean that a father is not involved in his child's life. Indeed, Smith (2004) argues that the belief that fathers who are physically or emotionally absent are not involved in their children lives is a deficit paradigm— one which has the potential to sustain and reproduce dominant beliefs about fatherhood. Rabe (2018), in her study on the history of fatherhood in South Africa, points out that such a deficit paradigm, together with statistical reports of biological fathers' living arrangements and negative fatherhood practices, do not present a comprehensive picture of fatherhood. Father involvement, she argues, needs to be explored in a broader sense that enables different dynamics to be taken into consideration. It is therefore important that a holistic approach be adopted when examining fatherhood, an approach that can take into account the diverse dynamics that influence fathers and impact on their actions and behaviour.

This is the perspective I took in my study: I see fatherhood as a spectrum along which fathers operate at different levels and in different ways, influenced by a multitude of complex factors that must be taken into consideration if research is to be pertinent and relevant. Contrary to South Africa and UK where father absenteeism is viewed as a social issue, in a comparative study between UK and Italy, with regards to 'involved fatherhood', Baker, Miller, Bosoni and Rossi (2011), suggest that in Italy there is no 'absent father' discourse. The issue of absenteeism, including single motherhood, has not been problematised. UK has seen a notable increase in the rate of single-parent households, for example, two parent households declined from 83% in 1991 to 77% in 2001 (O'Brien, 2006). One of the factors that have contributed to this, is the feminisation of the workplace and the processes of individualisation and globalisation that are continually shaping the notion of 'family' (Baker et al., 2011).

Indeed, Mavungu, Thomson-de Boor, and Mphaka (2013), in their study on father involvement among black South African men, found that a father's access to their child may be restricted by the mothers due to the father's inability to provide materially. The circumstances of limited financial resources in which most teenage

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fathers find themselves makes providing financial support more or less impossible. This is especially the case in the more under-resourced rural areas of South Africa, such as much of KwaZulu-Natal where I conducted my research, where there are high rates of unemployment and limited economic opportunities. Some recent studies, however, have transcended the narrow view that sees men only as material providers, and have focused on aspects of fathers' involvement in childcare and in caring for the mother (see, for example, Elliot, 2016; Enderstein & Bonzaier, 2015; Hanlon, 2012; Jordan, 2018; Morrell, Dunkle, Ibragimov & Jewkes, 2016). Indeed, Mavungu et al. (2013) argue that it is crucial for fathers to be allowed to connect emotionally with their children, even if they are not able to provide financially, and that this connection may even encourage them to seek and maintain employment in order to fulfil the role of financial provider. In a comparative study between UK and Italy, with regards to father 'involved fatherhood', Baker, Miller, Bosoni and Rossi (2011), suggest that unlike South Africa, in Italy there is no 'absent father' discourse. The issue of absenteeism, including single motherhood, has not been problematised, as in UK.

Kelly (2003) has been a pioneer in work on teenage pregnancy, and has taken pains to ensure the young parents and their agency are central in her research (see, too, Kamp & McSharry, 2018; Amod et al., 2019). My study, too, is situated within this counter-framework which seeks to deconstruct and destabilise discourses which stigmatise teenage pregnancy and undermine teenage parents. However, as Weber (2012) notes, many teenage fathers (and mothers) view it positively. The purpose of the counter-framework I adopt is that it enables the research gaze to focus on young parents, their knowledge, their lived experiences and the aspirations that they have for themselves and their children.

**Historical analysis of fatherhood in South Africa**

Fatherhood is not universal. It is context-specific, dynamic and constantly evolving. The notion of time and space is significant to the constructions of fatherhood. The South African context needs to be taken into consideration if fatherhood is to be understood. South African fatherhood has been shaped by socio-historical, economic and political developments. Hunter (2006) argues that historically, black men earned respect through the amount of agricultural wealth they controlled. Hunter (2006) further suggests that in the pre-colonial period, getting married and building a

homestead were central in fatherhood. A man who was married, having fathered children and able to provide for them, earned himself *inhlonipho* (highest degree of respect) among his family and community.

The emergence of the system of apartheid strengthened the economic and political power of the whites; leaving black people powerless both politically and economically. This brought about shift in the constructions of fatherhood, whereby black men left their homes to seek employment, mostly in the mines (Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams, 2011). Because of migrant labour, a large number of children grow up in single-parent households, often led by mothers. Consequently, most black men are fathers in households where some or all children are not biologically theirs (Chikovore, Richter & Makusha, 2013). Fathers who were migrant labours were viewed as responsible because they would send money and occasionally visit their homes (Hunter, 2006). Failing to send money to the wife and children and often labelled as irresponsible.

Research notes the significance of male persons who perform fatherly roles in the lives of children where biological fathers are not available (Makusha, 2013; Mkhize, 2006; Richter & Morrell, 2008; Richter et al., 2010). For example, Makusha (2013) highlights that in Africa, it is recognised that a person performing the role of a father, may not necessarily be the child's father. This is concept is called 'social fatherhood'. Social fathers include maternal and paternal uncles, older brothers, grandfathers and mothers' partners who provide for children's well-being, education, provide paternal love and guidance (Desmond & Desmond, 2006; Makusha, 2013; Mkhize, 2006; Rabe, 2007; Richter et al., 2010). Acknowledging this context, Richter and Morrell (2008, p. 152) argue that "The African notion of a father, then, is a man who enacts the responsibility of caring for and protecting a child". The existence of social fathers, guarantees children's well-being irrespective of biological parents. Mkhize (2006) then argues that in this context, even when the child's biological parents are not alive or co-resident, the child may still have other men and women that he or she may refer to as 'mother' or 'father'.

Mkhize (2006) reminds us that African ideology is informed by communal life as opposed to individual. He cites an example of the saying *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (I am because you are), in order to capture the relational of being. In African societies, Mkhize (2006) argues, people are morally obliged to be responsive to the needs of others. The essence of Mkhize's argument is the utmost significance of the family as the organising institution. He emphasises that "a child is born into a family community, which includes the extended family, the living and the deceased". Mkhize's argument indicates that in traditional African families, child-rearing is a collective responsibility than an individual. Mkhize further made a comparison between western and African thinking, where individualism is central in western as opposed to African which is communal. In western thinking individualism and nuclear family are central in child-rearing. Western ideology is in direct contrast with African thinking that views child-rearing as a collective responsibility of the entire family, including extended family members. Mkhize argues that unwillingness to assume fatherly responsibility may be attributed to a breakdown of social and communal structures that give meaning to personhood and parenthood. For example, Mkhize (2006) suggests that if a man fails to provide for his children, the family as a whole would assume the responsibility, bound by the saying *izingane zakithi azikwazi ukukhala endle zinganakiwe* (our children cannot cry in the wilderness uncatered for). This further points to the significance of children in African families, and the obligation to ensure their well-being. However, attempting to balance the two ideologies discussed above, often leave children uncared for, especially since modern families tend to adopt western ideology in child-rearing.

Another feature that was historically significant in African fatherhood, was the gender of the child; boys had more value than girls. For example, Marsiglio (1991) suggested that fathers found it easy to relate with their sons and daughters. However, current research indicate that gender of the child does not matter and has no influence on the level of father involvement (Coley & Hernandez, 2006; Makusha, 2013). Similarly, teenage fathers in this study did not make gender of their children an issue. Irrespective of the child's gender, fatherhood was significant in the constructions of their masculine identities.

This traditional African context of social fatherhood, holds particular significance for my study, where teenage fathers from impoverished rural background, lack resources to provide for their children; often labelled as uncaring, uninvolved or absent. Similarly, research on the experiences of teenage fathers in South Africa, has highlighted the role that is played by families, especially mothers in supporting teenage fathers' involvement in the lives of their children (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Chili & Maharaj, 2015; Mvune & Bhana, 2020; Swartz & Bhana, 2009).

**Teenage Fathers, Masculinity and Material Provision**

As I have established, the traditional role of a father is that of material provider and protector, whereas a mother is expected to provide day-to-day childcare. Within this discourse, responsible fatherhood is defined in terms of financial provision (Marsiglio & Pleck, 2005; Hunter, 2006; 2010; Mkhize, 2006). Since fatherhood is socially constructed, it is therefore connected to the local context. South Africa's history of fatherhood is linked to the socio-economic legacy of apartheid, resulting from slavery and colonialism (Ratele & Nduna, 2018). This has produced a certain class of fathers which Hunter (2006) refers to as 'fathers without *amandla*' (economic power). The economic inequalities that some fathers face makes fulfilling this role a distant reality. For example, South African fathers from an impoverished background who participated in Mkhize's (2006) study emphasized the importance of a job and a stable income, as central in a man's identity. Studies on South African fathers have evolved over the past 20 years from movements that call for active involvement of fathers in their children's lives through material provision to caring masculinities. As with older men, teenage fathers thus define their roles and responsibilities in terms of material provision. For example, Weber (2013) notes how teenage fathers use narratives of being financial providers in order to construct themselves as "good men". Similarly, in my study, this thread of masculinity wove through all my respondents' narratives and understandings of what it means to be a "real man". In cases where teenage fathers lack financial resources, however, the extended family [from the paternal side] may provide more support for the child than the father (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Madhavan & Roy, 2012; Mkhize, 2006; Mollborn & Lovegrove, 2011; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Receiving support from extended family members facilitates father's involvement in the life of the child, and it has been associated with positive social,

psychological and physical outcomes in children. Indeed, Madhavan and Roy's (2012) study of the role that kin members can play in the negotiation of fatherhood among black, low-income fathers from South Africa and the United States, found that support provided by kin, from both paternal and maternal sides, is key to ensuring the wellbeing of children born to young parents. It is, however, that the gendered nature of pregnancy burdens young women, and their families.

Studies on teenage fathers have found a social perception that they are usually absent, uncaring, and uninvolved in the lives of their children (Luker, 1996; Paschal, 2006; Osborn, 2007). This perception often results in teenage fathers being emotionally excluded from the lives of their children. For example, a South African teenage father who participated in Bhana and Nkani 's (2014) study described how he experienced exclusion and how this impacted on the kinds of relationships he had with his child. The teenage father shared how access to his child and the child's mother was limited due to his inability to provide materially. Weber (2018) notes the uniqueness of teenage fathers in that, as well as facing the challenges of becoming successful breadwinners, they are faced with cultural stereotypes that assume they are absent, non-contributing, and uninvolved in the lives of their children. Challenging these stereotypes Enderstein and Bonzaier (2015) advocate for a broader definition of fatherhood where the provision of care and emotional support are central. Indeed, in the last decade, research is increasingly noting the disruption and rearrangement of highly gendered, patriarchal, socially constructed parental roles (Hegarty, 2016; Morrell et al., 2016).

Negative responses to teenage fatherhood are often grounded in teenagers' inability to live up to the ideal norms of masculinity that emphasise material provision. Some countries have put policy in place in order to strengthen support from fathers. In the United States, for example, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996) calls for the establishment of paternity and the strengthening of child support efforts with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of support and involvement of fathers in the lives of teenage mothers and their children (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998). In cases where a father is a teenager living with parents, welfare policy provides that the state may make paternal grandparents provide through child support payments (Rozie-Battle, 2002). In South Africa, a similar provision has been made through the White Paper on Families (Department of

Social Development, 2012), which aims to strengthen families through responsible parenting as one of its fundamental principles. The White Paper also encourages the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children. Despite being approved by Parliament, there are no funds devolved to provinces to enhance the implementation and reinforcement of this legislation (Ward, Makusha & Bray, 2015). In their study that focuses on the connection between parenting, poverty and young people in South Africa, Ward et al. (2015) note the role that is played by civil society through programmes that support the White Paper. For example, Sinovuyo Caring Families Programme for Parents and Teens, aims at supporting parents and their teenage children in order to minimise child maltreatment; and similarly, The Parent Centre (an NGO based in Cape Town) offers teenage parenting programme.

### *Inhlawulo* Payment and Father Involvement

South African studies that explore father involvement (for example, Morrell, 2006, Makusha, 2013; Makusha & Richter, 2016; Morrell et al., 2016) build on work that was pioneered Michael Lamb (1976, 1986). In his study of the role of fathers in the development of children, he divides father involvement into three categories: accessibility, engagement, and responsibility. According to Lamb (1976), accessibility refers to involvement where the father is busy with something else but available to respond to the needs of the child if they arise; engagement refers to the amount of time spent in one-on-one interaction with the child; and responsibility is about providing materially for the child. For the purpose of this study, father involvement refers to father's availability to respond to the diverse needs of the child and the child's mother, irrespective of residential arrangements.

Sociocultural context plays a major role in shaping the negotiation of father involvement. Cultural practices, such as the payment of *inhlawulo* (damages for impregnating[1]) or *ilobolo* (bride price[2]), makes the negotiation of fatherhood even

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[1] *Inhlawulo* a traditional way of holding the father accountable for the out-of-wedlock pregnancy and a formal manner for acknowledging paternity and giving the child kinship rights into his paternal family, even if the partners are not married. The fine is usually in the payment of actual cows or equivalent cash (Mkhwanazi & Block, 2016).
[2] Payment of *inhlawulo* serves as an alternative to the payment of *ilobolo*. The significance of *ilobolo* in formalising a marital union is emphasised by the Zulu expression *ubuhle bendoda yizinkomo zayo* (the beauty of a man depends on the number of his cows).

more complex. In most black South African communities, paternal recognition goes beyond the father, to include his kin, who often provide moral support, care, and guidance (Madhavan & Roy, 2012; Makusha, 2013; Moore, 2018). The concept of a father thus involves being actively engaged in providing care and protection to children (Richter & Morrell, 2008). Indeed, in the Zulu culture, children refer to a father's younger brother as *ubaba omncane* (junior father) or father's older brother as *ubaba omkhulu* (senior father).

Historically, the significance of the payment of *inhlawulo* was to mediate a father's involvement in the life of his child (Nkani, 2017). This enabled the maternal family to engage the paternal kin in ensuring the well-being of a child. While *Ilobolo* was traditionally used to formalise a union and legitimise children from that union, the prevalence of unemployment in contemporary South Africa makes payment difficult (Preston-Whyte & Zondi, 1989)[3]. Recent research in South Africa has found, however, that, even in the absence of marriage or *inhlawulo*, paternal families are becoming more involved in childcare activities and the inclusion of the child in the paternal lineage (Mkhwanazi & Block, 2016; Mvune, 2017; Nkani, 2017).[4] These studies have noted, too, that maternal and paternal families are increasingly negotiating for the postponement of *inhlawulo* payment, especially in cases where fathers are young and lack financial resources. This can be seen as a positive shift in cultural norms towards a more inclusive family structure, as envisaged by the White Paper on Families (Department of Social Development, 2012).

Despite evidence of such shifts, in many cases the inability to pay *inhlawulo* deprives the biological father of the opportunity to be recognised as the father of the child and often leads to restrictions by the mother's family on him claiming his visiting rights (Madhavan, Townsend & Garey, 2008; Makusha, 2013; Makusha & Richter, 2016; Nkani, 2017). Payment of *inhlawulo* thus remains, on the whole, an important way for a father to negotiate access to his child, and shapes the kind of relationship that will exist between the father and his child (Madhavan et al., 2008; Makusha, 2013).

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[3] Madhavan's (2010) study, in which only five young mothers out of a sample of 19 received any *ilobolo* at all, illustrates this well.

[4] This is more the case in urban areas. Langa & Smith's (2012) study of teenage fathers in the urban township of Alexandra, Johannesburg, found that 88% of participants were not asked to pay *inhlawulo*. They suggested that this could be due to the growing unpopularity of the cultural practice in urban contexts.

Indeed, according to Langa and Smith (2012) *inhlawulo* brings dignity and pride to fathers. A participant in their study viewed himself as a "better man" because he paid *inhlawulo* before it was even asked of him. Madhavan's (2010) study of young unmarried Tsonga, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, and Pedi mothers also found the deep cultural value attached to either *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo* as a means of securing moral legitimacy and connection with a child's paternal kin.[5] It remains, too, that under South African law, the Recognition of Customary Marriage Act (1998) makes provision that only children born in a formally recognised union, either through the payment of *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo*, belong to the father's family.

Teenage fathers clearly encounter severe challenges in their negotiation of fatherhood—including lack of support from families and society and, frequently, their exclusion from childcare due to their financial circumstances. The pervasive cultural environment that still prevails in rural KwaZulu-Natal requires that specific attention be paid to the traditional gatekeeping role played by maternal families in determining a father's involvement with his child. It is against this backdrop that I explore the negotiation of fatherhood by teenage fathers in a deep rural context in KwaZulu-Natal, and with economic circumstances that forestalled their ability to pay *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo*, thus rendering them unable to live up to socially constructed ideas of masculinity.

**Teenage Fathers and Childcare in South Africa**

Research has associated fathers' involvement during pregnancy and in childcare with better health, social, and emotional outcomes for both the mother and the child (Barker, Cook & Borrego, 2010; Gibbs et al., 2017; Jordan, 2018; Levtov, Van der Gaag, Greene, Kaufman & Barker, 2015). However, hegemonic discourse reflects a gendered division of labour where most childcare activities are performed by women, while men are expected to provide materially. Hence, Hegarty (2016) refers to men as "carefree actors" who leave women to perform most of the caregiving activities. A

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[5] See, too, Mkhwanazi and Block (2016) insightful study on the families of an unwed Xhosa mother from Nyanga East in South Africa, and families from Mokhotlong in Lesotho, who confronted the genitor or his family for the payment of *litsenyehelo* (damages in Sesotho).

study by Morrell et al. (2016) highlights the complexity and diversity of fatherhood. They found that some research shows men to be caring, involved in the lives of their children, present, and taking responsibility for their children's upkeep; whereas other studies identify men as abusive, absent, and emotionally disengaged. One recent study found that approximately just 12% of South African children receive primary care from their fathers (Hatch & Posel, 2018).

There is a paucity of studies in South Africa examining teenage fathers' involvement in childcare activities: those that do analyse father involvement tend to focus on adult fathers. The few that look at teenage fathers have found that many seek to find ways to be involved and take part in childcare (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Chili & Maharaj, 2015; Langa & Smith, 2012; Swartz & Bhana, 2009; Mvune, 2017). For example, one participant who took part in Langa and Smith's (2012) study on teenage fathers in an urban township, shared how he missed classes in order to go with his girlfriend to take their child to hospital. Another participant spoke of how he saw his daughter every day and spent time with her in order to be a better father than his own—whom he had rarely seen—had been. These studies also found that often teenage fathers were unable to be fully involved in childcare as most did not co-reside with the mother of their children (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Chili & Maharaj, 2015; Langa & Smith, 2012; Swartz & Bhana, 2009; Mvune, 2017).


**Theoretical Framework: Theory of masculinities**

My study has been informed by a theory of masculinities. Feminist work is central to the issues of men and masculinities (Gardiner, 2005). Gardiner (2005) argues that gender as a social construct acknowledges that masculinities and femininities are interrelated social attributions to persons with certain kinds of bodies. This, challenges the narrow view of limiting masculinities and femininities to natural, inborn or physiological characteristics. Reflecting on the usefulness of using feminist work to analyse masculinities, Dowd (2010, p. 419) argues that, " Consistent with what has been central focus on feminist analysis, masculinities scholarship can contribute to a better understanding of male power and the process of subordination, and therefore to the goal of women's equality". Taking into consideration Dowd's argument, the use of feminist thinking into masculinities research, makes gender

equality a possibility and can undo many gender stereotypes. Dowd (2010) further suggests that using feminist theory can make us see harm that is suffered by boys and men; which is often ignored. Dowd's view opens our eyes to the complexities that characterise being a boy or man, which lead to better understanding of masculinities.

Masculinity refers to diverse ways of being and meanings attached to being a man, it goes beyond physiological characteristics. Theorists argue that it is more appropriate to talk of masculinities as opposed to masculinity (Connell, 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2005; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). For example, Connell (2000) suggests that within one ethnic group or school or workplace there will be different ways of performing manhood, different ways of learning to be a man, different conceptions of self and different ways of using the male body. Connell (2000) further suggests that patterns of conduct the society defines as masculine may be observed in the lives of individuals but they may also exist beyond the individual. This is because masculinity is not just a fixed entity embedded in bodily characteristics or traits, as Connell and Messerschmidt note that: "Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore can differ according to gender relations in a particular setting" Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 836). This means that masculinity is a dynamic process that evolves with time and space.

Masculinities theory emerged when theorists took into consideration social constructivism of masculinity. The theory of masculinities derives from the notion that there is a hierarchy of masculinities where men occupy different spaces and some masculinities are dominant over others. Within the entire gender order some masculinities tend to dominate other masculinities and femininities in any given setting, and this is often referred to as hegemonic masculinity. Connell defined hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995, p. 77). However, beyond the subordination of women and less powerful masculinities, hegemonic masculinity is also used to indicate dominant cultural stereotypes in men. For example, hegemonic masculinity views 'a real man' as the one who is earning a steady income and able to provide for his wife and children (Connell, 1995, Gilmore, 1990). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity embraces

heterosexual, strong, healthy and competitive male with multiple partners, who competes with other males for access to women (Connell, 1995).

Masculinity is socially constructed and therefore cannot be viewed out of context. Within South African context, masculinity has been shaped by socio-economic and socio-political history. Before 1994, South African laws condoned male supremacy; as a result, irrespective of race men had undisputed power. For example, Morrell (2001) suggests that black and white men in South African families, earned money, made decisions, and therefore held power. Despite the above suggestion by Morrell, inequalities still existed among black and white men on the basis of race due to the apartheid regime; whereby white men had more power and privileges which they had to defend. Also, the history of migrant labour contributed immensely in the construction of gender identity and family structure among black families. Black children had minimal contact with their fathers because of migrant labour (Madhavan, 2010). The emergence of democracy after 1994, with the rights-based approach laws was viewed by men as a threat to their power. This resulted to masculinities that are characterised by high levels of gender-based violence, inequality, unemployment and HIV/AIDS; and that made the South Africa to be a 'real-life test laboratory' for research on masculinities (Ratele, 2014 p. 30). Indeed, the history of apartheid in South Africa and socio-economic inequalities have resulted to the disempowerment of some masculinities. Hunter (2004, p.124) notes that: "continual joblessness combined with continued agricultural collapse, create conditions for major reworking of masculinities and sexual practices over the last two decades in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa".

In the above extract, Hunter was referring to the notions of *isoka* and *umnumzana* which have undergone major changes over the years (Ratele, Shefer, Strebel & Fouten., 2010).  *Isoka* is a Zulu word used to describe a man who is within courtship age, with many girlfriends or who is a hit with women; whereas *umnumzana* was originally used to refer to a man who is a leader of the household, but currently it is used to address a man; irrespective of having a home (Ratele et al., 2010). Historically, *isoka* used to be celebrated in rural KwaZulu-Natal. However, the constructions of *isoka* as a dominant masculinity has undergone changes. The prevalence of AIDS has resulted to a change in the socialisation of young men, with

less emphasis on *isoka* as opposed to it being perceived as a triumphant masculinity (Hunter, 2005).

As I have indicated, hegemonic notions of masculinity have established a close association between masculinities and financial well-being. Hunter (2005) notes the interrelatedness between money and masculinities where men indicated their dissatisfaction for failure to attract women as opposed to their peers who had stable jobs and able to provide for women in modern ways such as buying cellphones and branded clothes. Due to economic powerlessness and reality of AIDS; most men from rural KwaZulu-Natal have become providers out of marriage (Hunter, 2005). It is in this context of minimal masculinity-validating resources; where Ratele (2014) suggests that South Africa needs culturally-intelligent and tradition-sensitive studies which will explore masculinities in their 'marginalized worlds'. Acknowledging the presence of multiple dominant masculine ideals, the concept was broadened to include multiple hegemonic masculinities which Ratele (2014, p. 31) refers to as 'hegemony within marginality'.

This ideal of construction of masculinities was further supported by Mfecane (2013) who criticised gender activist and feminist work on black masculinities for pathologising men as problematic, while ignorant of African cultures. Both Ratele and Mfecane indicate the need for in-depth insight into the context of subjects being researched. Mfecane (2018) further argues about the impact of studies where gender theories from the Global North have been used to research South African masculinities. He notes that these theories may not hold 'universal truth' because they are shaped by specific contexts in which research took place (Mfecane, 2018, p. 293). Mfecane further argues that these theories present a narrow definition of masculinity which does not fully account for the complex life experiences of African masculinities.

Similarly, teenage masculinities have been documented as associated with hegemonic notions of masculinity which manifests in risky (hetero) sexual practices, control of female sexual partners and violence (Morrell & Jewkes, 2011). However, this single and narrow view leads to misrepresentation of young black manhood; since within this heterogeneous group some are highly educated, law-abiding and well-employed

(Malinga & Ratele, 2012). This notion of teenage masculinities as problematic, undermines the positive impact that they make in societies around them; despite the hardships most of them go through. Malinga and Ratele argue that exploring black teenage masculinities from a risk perspective creates a problem for many South African studies. The problem arises mainly when teenage masculinities are treated as a homogeneous group; measured using Western standards of masculinity. Frosh et al., (2002) note that young masculinities' experiences with regards to ethnicity, race and social class play a vital role in the development of ideas of masculinity. For example, the powerlessness of black masculinities as a result of the old apartheid regime; continues to affect both young and old masculinities even in the democratic dispensation. Teenagers are often under heightened pressure to perform manhood in ways that relate to hegemonic masculinity, and this is one of the fundamental premises of my research that underlies both the fieldwork and my interpretation and analysis.

My study carefully employed the concept of hegemonic masculinities as a lens to tease out teenage fathers' perceptions of fatherhood and the factors that influence them. Exploring the experiences of teenage fathers requires an insight on how they draw on cultural, context-specific discourses and social norms as they construct their personal identities as fathers and men. Because of their age, class and social positioning, teenage fathers are likely to adopt dominant hegemonic masculinity aligned to heterosexuality. Morrell (2007) establishes a link between manhood, fatherhood, ethnicity and class, whereby fatherhood becomes the main signifier of masculinity especially in contexts where other signifiers are not readily available. This is mostly applicable to masculinities within working class, poverty-stricken backgrounds. Most teenage fathers from the rural areas of South Africa including KwaZulu-Natal, use fatherhood as a tool to define themselves as masculine (Morrell, 2007). However, teenage fathers from poor socio-economic backgrounds are often unable to live up to socially constructed ideas of masculinity, like providing for the child and hence stereotyped as uncaring or uninvolved. Portraying teenage fathers negatively, overlooks the fact that teenage fathers like teenage mothers, face numerous challenges as they negotiate fatherhood. These challenges include stigma, minimal support from society and family (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Chohan & Langa, 2011, Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Lack of economic power makes the circumstances of

teenage fathers to be more complex, especially in South African context where there are cultural obligations to be met, such as the payment of *inhlawulo*. Supporting this view, in his study that focussed on engaging boys and men towards gender equality, Ratele (2015, p. 149) suggests that "a concern with issues of poverty, unemployment and income inequality affects, or should affect, how we approach men and boys in our work". Ratele's suggestion cautions theorists and scholars about the significance of understanding context, research subjects and circumstances under which masculinities are negotiated. Demonstrating hegemonic notions of masculinity, teenage men in my study, used provider masculinity define themselves as fathers, despite their inability to perform that role. They also subscribed to dominant peer norms of teenage masculinities through having multiple partners. My participants also used fatherhood as a tool to develop non-hegemonic masculinity through caring practices, including taking part in childcare and providing support for the young mother.

**Methods and Methodological Considerations**

My fieldwork took place between January 2016 and September 2017. My aim was to understand individual and societal factors influencing teenagers' understandings of and responses to fatherhood. I therefore used qualitative research methods to explore the lived experiences of teenage fathers, and to determine their thoughts and perspectives. I found narrative enquiry the most appropriate research method for my study. Clandinin (2013) defines narrative inquiry as a best approach for studying human lives by honouring lived experience as a source of significant knowledge and understanding. Twenty teenage fathers participated in the study, purposively selected from two high schools, Busisiwe and Mqemane[6], in Illovo[7], a rural area of South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province (see Figure 1 location map). Illovo is also called uLovu (isiZulu translation, and hence it is reflected as Illovu, on the map). I chose these schools because of the high number of pregnancies they reported to the Department of Education through quarterly surveys. The surveys however, only require schools to report on girls that fall pregnant and not boys that impregnate.

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[7] Also called uLovu. Illovo is approximately 40 km south of Durban, a city in KwaZulu-Natal.

Therefore, the Department of Education does not have data on boys who have impregnated or become fathers. The following table illustrates teenage pregnancy statistics for Mqemane and Busisiwe over a five-year period:

| Year | Busisiwe | | Mqemane | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Female Enrolment | Teenage Pregnancy Statistics | Female Enrolment | Teenage Pregnancy Statistics |
| 2014 | 183 | 10 | 211 | 15 |
| 2015 | 175 | 09 | 197 | 10 |
| 2016 | 297 | 16 | 184 | 08 |
| 2017 | 121 | 08 | 223 | 16 |
| 2018 | 123 | 05 | 208 | 12 |

**Table 1: Teenage pregnancy statistics from Busisiwe and Mqemane**

I was responsible for monitoring and supporting the implementation of a Life Skills programme in these two schools, and during this I built strong working relationships with the principals. This helped me in negotiating access to conduct my fieldwork.

During the Life Skills programme implementation it became clear to me that the rural sociocultural and socioeconomic context of the schools had a great impact on learners' attitudes and perceptions. It was therefore important to take this context into account when designing my research, in order to determine the extent to which it impacted on and shaped respondents' understandings of and responses to fatherhood.

In total I conducted five focus groups and twenty in-depth and open-ended individual interviews, at participants' schools and after school hours to ensure that their academic programme is not interrupted. Focus groups provide an informal and liberal climate where participants will openly contribute their opinions and experiences (Flick, 2009). I also made it a point that participants are able to hear each other's responses in order to build on the view of others which are beyond own original responses. Topics discussed in focus groups were: *teenage cultural and social practices*; *teenage intimate relationships and fatherhood; description of an ideal father; views of the media and society on teenage fatherhood.* Stories that emerged indicated a multiplicity of masculinities whereby some challenged and others upheld dominant notions of teenage masculinity. For example, some took pride in sharing risk-taking behaviours such as having multiple sexual partners, whilst others opposed it. Pascoe (2007) found that having multiple partners was used by boys to boost their

status among their peers. Despite getting rich data from focus groups, I saw the need for individual interviews that would provide a safe space for each participant to tell his personal story. Individual interviews have been beneficial for offering a deeper insight into participants' personal thoughts, feelings and world view (Morgan, 1998). Each of the twenty teenage fathers was asked to tell his story guided by this generative narrative question: *Please tell me the entire story of your life. The best way to do this is to start from your birth, the kind of a boy you were, and then tell me all the things that happened in your life one after the other until you became a father. Take all the time you need and give me every detail because everything that pertains to your upbringing, masculinity and fatherhood is of interest to me.* Guided by Flick (2009), I formulated my generative narrative question broadly but adequately specific to central theme of sexuality, masculinity and fatherhood. During individual interviews deep emotions emerged as participants shared their life stories of growing up under difficult conditions, ultimately becoming fathers and the compelling circumstances of taking responsibility, that they found themselves under. My position as an official of the Department of Education helped me in facilitating referrals for counselling sessions with a psychologist.

Given the sensitivity of issues relating to teenage sexuality, I found that focus groups and individual interviews worked best. The same participants took part in both focus groups and individual interviews. It was interesting to see our participant-researcher relationship grow. For example, when I began fieldwork, during interviews my participants would address me as 'mam' or 'miss', that gradually changed to 'ma' (mom, which is also used to show respect to an elderly female person). Indeed, I was old enough to be their mother and having them address me as 'mam' concerned me, especially given the construction of teenage sexuality where intimate relationships are hidden from adults. In one individual interview at a later stage of the study, one participant addressed me as '*suster*' (Afrikaans word that is used as slang meaning sister). Despite my social class and age, what facilitated our engagement was the issue of race and language. Like my participants, I was African isiZulu-speaking. I therefore decided to conduct my interviews in isiZulu (native language mostly spoken in KwaZulu-Natal) in order to enhance the flow of interviews.

Interviews were later transcribed then translated into English. Even though I was African and isiZulu-speaking, translating was not easy. It required me to read

transcripts numerous times in order to ensure that translated interviews do not loose original meaning. This was crucial especially as Polkinghorne (2007) suggests that qualitative research is considered valid when the distance in meaning expressed by participants and the distance as interpreted in the findings, is as close as possible. In order to ensure originality of meaning, some extracts were left in isiZulu and a translation was inserted in brackets. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. I opted to use thematic analysis so that it provides me with a rich and detailed interpretation of data. Thematic analysis helped me to identify common threads that spread throughout the entire interview or different interviews (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). The next section presents the research context.
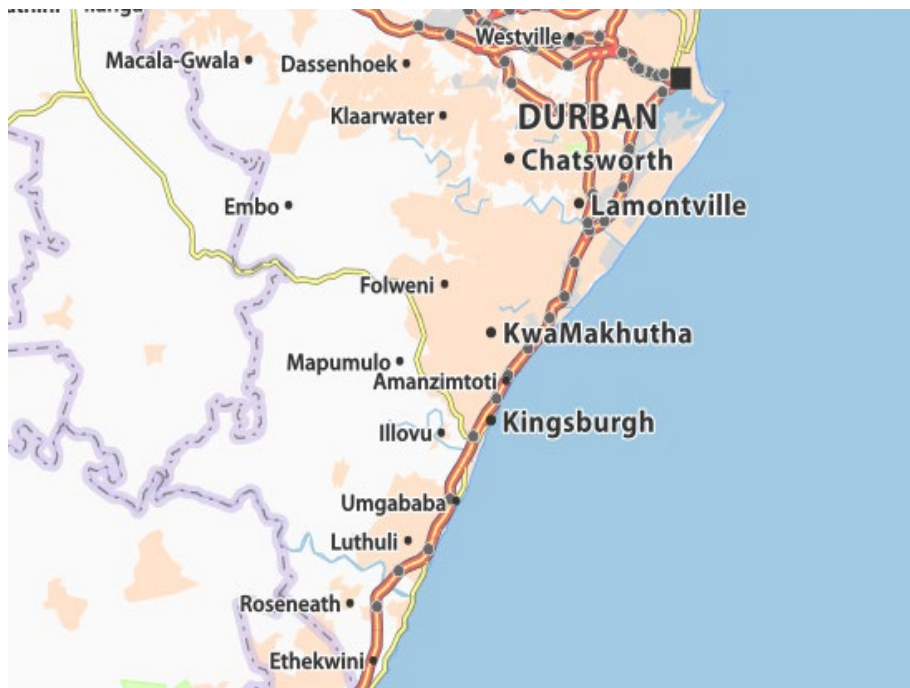


***Figure 1: Map to show Illovo and Surrounding Areas***

*The Area*

Illovo is located in the Vulamehlo local municipality of the Ugu District Municipality and Thoyana Tribal Authority, one of 39 tribal authorities within Ugu District. In the early 1980s, there were frequent faction fights within the Thoyana Tribal Authority area. Many people fled the area to seek refuge in other neighbouring tribal authorities. As a result, houses are sparsely located and this impacts on population density. Indeed, Vulamehlo Municipality has the lowest population density in Ugu at 79.1

people km$^2$ (Statistics South Africa, 2015)[8]. Governance in Illovo falls under both traditional leadership (Chief Hlengwa and his Tribal Authority) and a local central government-linked district council headed by a ward councilor. Shembe and Christianity are the dominant religions in Illovo.

In 2016 there was no proper infrastructure or economic resources, such as production factories or plantations in Illovo. Poverty and unemployment are extreme and there is a high prevalence of HIV and AIDS. In the Ugu District, the HIV prevalence was at 40.2% in 2009/2010 and 41.1% in 2010/2011 (Ugu District Strategic Plan: USDP 2012-2016). Roads are gravel and some areas are inaccessible on rainy days. Most households comprise rectangular mud structures or mud huts with, and have pit latrines. Water supply is from standpipes and they usually dry up in winter. Each household has prepaid electricity which was installed as part of government's programme for redress and equity. Despite the availability of electricity, people still collect wood for fire and only use electricity to light houses.

*The Schools*

Both Mqemane and Busisiwe were coeducational public schools offering grades 8–12 and, in 2016, all learners were black, predominantly isiZulu-speaking, and from working-class backgrounds.[9] Mqemane was about 20km from Illovo township, separated from it by the Illovo River. Most learners lived in the rural location around the school, but some lived in the township and crossed a bridge to access the school, which became a challenge during the rainy season because of floods. The school had two blocks of classrooms and one block for administration.

In 2016, Mqemane had 342 learners; 184 girls and 158 boys. The school had two blocks, one with six classrooms and the other with four classrooms and administration offices. Mqemane had a total of 12 educators: a male principal, two female Heads of Department, six level-one female educators, and three males. None of the educators

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[8] By comparison, Hibiscus Coast, also in KZN, has a population density of 347.4 per km$^2$ (Statistics South Africa, 2015).
[9] Schools such as Mqemane and Busisiwe reflect the legacy of the apartheid system that divided South Africans according to their races. Apartheid formally ended in 1994, but South Africa remains divided by socioeconomic class. Parents who are financially able send their children to well-resourced schools that were formerly reserved for white children, in order to give them a better education.

resided in the area: they commuted from neighbouring towns such as Durban and Amanzimtoti, approximately 40km away. Non-teaching staff comprised an administration clerk, a cleaner, and a parent who volunteered to cook, receiving a stipend of R900 (US$60) per month as the school is part of the National Schools' Nutrition Programme (NSNP).[10]

At Mqemane school, girls were responsible for cleaning the classrooms daily, and it was the class prefect's duty to see that they did. This task was gendered despite legislative framework that seeks to promote gender equality. Mqemane was a no fee school. This meant that all resources required for teaching and learning were provided by the school through government funding.

Busisiwe is approximately 45km from Durban. In 2016, the school had a total enrolment of 538, 241 boys and 297 girls. The school had 17 staff members: a male principal, a male deputy principal, one male and two female heads of departments, 12 level-one educators, an admin clerk and a general worker. The school is also a no fee school and part of NSNP. Like Mqemane, the educators did not reside in the school's neighbourhood. In spite of having a general worker who was responsible for keeping the school clean, girls were still responsible for sweeping classrooms and cleaning roster hung on the walls of each classroom. Boys were responsible for ringing the bell and moving desks around when girls swept the floors. This is an example of how schools unconsciously reinforce gender stereotypes, through the allocation of duties. This is informed by the assumption that boys are physically strong whilst girls are not. Busisiwe had a high rate of teenage pregnancy and therefore met the criteria for a Learner Support Agent (LSA) post. LSAs are young people within school communities who are appointed as volunteers to provide psychosocial support to learners. Matriculation is a minimum educational requirement. In 2016 they received a stipend of R3,800 (US$253) per month. The aim of the LSA programme is to maximise learners' learning opportunities by retaining learners within the education system through providing care and support for those who have psychosocial challenges such as teenage pregnancy. Because of the gendered nature of pregnancy,

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[10] The NSNP programme aims to alleviate poverty in schools in disadvantaged communities by offering a meal to the learners. The NSNP has been shown to improve attendance and enhance learner participation and hence improves their performance. At its inception, only Quintile 1–3 primary schools were part of the NSNP, but from 2010 secondary schools in disadvantaged communities were also included.

it is mostly pregnant girls and teenage mothers who receive support from LSAs. The programme is progressively implemented in South African schools because of financial implications. Only 40 schools within Ugu District had LSAs in 2016. Despite high rate of teenage pregnancy, Mqemane did not have an LSA.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical clearance was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The interview schedule was submitted to the supervisor and ethics office, before fieldwork commenced. In order to obtain informed consent from my participants and principals, I first explained what the study was about, emphasising that participation was voluntary and that participants can withdraw at any stage of the study and re-join without being penalised. Three of my participants were below the age of 18 years (South African legal age for becoming an adult), hence I obtained written parental consent for them to participate in the study. Throughout the study, I protected my participants' right to privacy, ensuring that the sensitive information they gave remained between me, my supervisor and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I also notified them that their stories will be part of the doctoral thesis that I am writing publications that will be part of. In order to ensure the well-being of my participants, I brought food for them in every interview that I conducted. This is because participating in the study meant that they would stay behind and get home late. Food served as means to strengthen our researcher-participant relationship; we ate together prior to every interview. I also gave participants who stay far from school, a lift home after interviews; in order to ensure that they arrive safe at home. It was then that I noticed that some learners walk more than 10km to get to school. I also gave each participant a R100 for each interview, in appreciation of their participation.

*My Position as Researcher*

Fieldwork methods impact heavily on the data that is generated, just as interpretation of those results can never really be objective. Indeed, it is important to recognise that objectivity within the research process is not feasible as such a recognition enables a more accurate view of the relationship between researcher and research participant. My background, assumptions, influences and experiences could not but shape the research process and how I interpreted the data it generated. Indeed,

the fieldwork data I gathered were so definitely shaped by who I that I feel it is important to include this self-reflexive section in order to provide the reader with necessary background.

I was born in Illovo during the apartheid years. I was the fourth child with five siblings; three sisters and two brothers. Almost every household in the area was poor, but I think mine was among the worst. A family of eight, we lived in a two-roomed house and a *rondavel* (a circular-shaped one room hut) which were both mud structures. We were all dependent on one small salary that my mother earned as a domestic worker. She worked for a white family that formed part of the elite middle class during those times. My father was unemployed and ill after losing his job due to alcohol abuse a few years after I was born. He, too, depended on my mother for all his needs. Despite being unemployed and spending all his time at home, my father never took part in household chores or took care of us. To him, being the man of the house meant spending most of his time in bed, walking to the river to swim on hot summer days, or enjoying the sun in winter. In spite of walking over 20km to and from her workplace every weekday, my mother would come home and do her household chores, including cooking for her husband and children. In summer, before going to work, my mother would start by working in her vegetable garden where she grew *mielies* (corn), beans, sweet potatoes and *amadumbe* (yams). On Saturdays she would take us to help her in the garden. I hated it and I think that out of all six children I was the laziest. I was always the last to arrive at the garden and usually the first to leave, often making an excuse of not feeling well. When my eldest sister, who was the first born, turned 15, my mother found her a job, also as a domestic worker, in order to supplement household income. Every Sunday we all went to church, except my father. My mother was a devout Christian and Sundays were always spent at church: this was non-negotiable. We walked over 20km to reach our church, although we sometimes got lifts from kind motorists. As the years went by, my father joined us and eventually became a full member of the church.

In 1981, when my little brother was born, my next eldest sister was forced to drop out of school to take care of the baby—even though our eldest brother was 15, and my father was unemployed and at home all day anyway. She was only 12 and had passed Standard 5 (Grade 7) with outstanding results; she had even received merit certificates. She had really been looking forward to doing Standard 6 (Grade 8), and

the news that she had to drop out came as a huge shock to her. She begged and cried but it did not help because the decision was already taken. She took care of the baby and did all the household chores such as fetching water, collecting firewood, and ploughing the fields. That brought some form of relief to my mother's daily duties. There was warm food waiting for us (me, our little sister, and our elder brother) whenever we came from school. At 14 she fell pregnant and gave birth to twins, very tiny girls who were born prematurely. They were delivered at home by my mother and a neighbour, but only lived for a few days and then passed away. When my little brother started school, my mother found my sister a job, also as a domestic worker in the same suburb where she worked.

As I drove to Mqemane for the first time, I recalled my first years at a primary school, which had only two classrooms and two teachers but nevertheless offered Grades 1–4. Back then, I saw nothing wrong that two grades were in one class and taught by the same teacher. It was fun to make noise whilst the teacher had her attention on the other grade. I always made it to the list of those talking in class and would receive corporal punishment, and be silent for a while. Mrs. Msani who taught Grades 1–2, was also the principal of the school. She had a corner in her classroom that she used as an office for doing her administration duties. Miss Mntungwa taught Grades 3–4. Both teachers were local and knew our parents and would regularly report to them regarding our behaviour and performance, when they met at the train or bus station, for example. Our parents were never called to discuss our progress; the only meetings that were called were to discuss school fees. My mother would never attend those because she was working and my father saw those meetings as suitable only for women. I was never represented. At first, I found this hurtful, but eventually I made peace with it.

After Grade 4 I had to go to another school over 10km away, that offered Grades 1–8, and later 9 and 10, too. To reach it, I had to cross the uLovu River and during the rainy summer season our school was inaccessible. Sometimes when the river was in flood and we would reach school with our school uniforms and books wet. Whenever it started to rain, we would ask the teachers if we could leave. We enjoyed having a valid reason to leave early, leaving other learners behind.

When we got to Grade 11 parents had to decide whether to take their children to high

schools in Adams or Umbumbulu. My parents decided on Umbumbulu, some 45km from home. By the time I went, things had improved at home because my father had found a job sweeping the streets and picking up litter for Ethekwini Municipality—ironic given how he would never take part in cleaning his own home. When he started working, he became a completely different man. For example, he would wake up early and make tea for himself and my mother before they left for work. Every afternoon he would wait for my mother at the bus stop so they could ride home together. He became a loving and caring father and husband.

At 15, when I had just started high school, I also got my first job as a tea girl at Illovo Country Club, through my mother's employer who played tennis there. It felt good to spend my own money at school but I kept it a secret from my friends. To them, I was a "normal" girl, the same as them, whose parents were able to provide everything. At 16, when I was doing Grade 12, I left my job so as to focus on my education.

Driving slowly along the gravel road in Illovo, waving greetings to neighbours that I passed, as the rural norms of respect require, my childhood memories were interrupted by memories of political violence. In the early 1990s, a joint decision was taken by Chief Hlengwa and his council that all subjects of the Thoyana Tribal Authority were going to support the African National Congress (ANC). In 1992, when I was 19 years old, rumours started spreading in our neighbourhood that the community across uLovu River was now supporting the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and planning to come and attack us. I was young but I could sense fear, and these threats of violence became the most popular topic of discussion at church gatherings, bus stops, schools and train stations.

My mother approached her employer, who had just opened a pre-school for white children and asked her for help. She warmly agreed to allow my family to sleep inside the pre-school hall. Despite the circumstances of running away from possible attacks, it was fun to experience a different environment where there was running water, electricity, and shops close by. We fled home on a Friday afternoon with few of our belongings, and violent attacks happened on the Sunday morning in broad daylight. Ten men from my neighbourhood were brutally murdered, houses were damaged and others burnt to ashes. As I drove along, I was almost in tears remembering how this had forced us to leave Illovo and find somewhere else to live. On the other hand, I

was grateful that the violent attacks chased us away, seeing how underdeveloped the place was. Some women I drove past were carrying firewood, and others buckets of water: Although there are communal standpipes most of the time, they are dry, leaving people with contaminated river water as the only option.

It felt good to be returning to Illovo albeit as a different person. I had two distinct but overlapping undertakings: One was working as an official for the Department of Education (DoE) in the Special Needs Education Services for Ugu District, responsible for the coordination and implementation of life skills programmes that seek to reduce unintended pregnancies amongst learners in schools, and the other was conducting research for this academic thesis. At times, therefore, my fieldstay was shaped by DoE requirements, and at other times by the requirements of my PhD research. Before commencing with my study, I explained my dual roles to the participants. This was crucial in order to diffuse power dynamics. I did not want to use my power as a departmental official to coerce my participants into participating in my study. I emphasized that I will not allow my DoE official role to impact on my role as a researcher, especially since they had seen me coming to their school on official visits. Doing a study in this sensitive field of teenage sexuality opened my eyes to the reality and defused many stereotypes that I had prior to fieldwork, regarding the social construction of teenage fathers. However, having spent my teenage years at Illovo, I understood the rural norms of teenage sexuality and that enabled me to better analyse stories of fatherhood told by my respondents.

**Thesis Map**

In this chapter, Chapter One, I introduce the reader to the study and explain the significance of a study that focuses on the experiences of teenage fathers in exploring dynamics surrounding teenage pregnancy. I situate it in the broader context of both local and global research on gender, masculinities and teenage pregnancy, and provide a discussion of my research methods, my own position in the field, growing up in the same area in which I conducted the study, and the key research questions that guided the study.

Chapter Two provides a detailed discussion of the methodology I used and compares my experiences to the difficulties other researchers have had in accessing teenage fathers as a research population. I reflect on the sampling strategies that I used and make recommendation for future studies.

Chapter three, then, focuses on the relationship between teenage cultural and social practices, heterosexuality and masculinity, and how they combine to produce sexual risk. I discuss the cultural practice of *umhlalaphansi* (an overnight cultural dance ceremony where young Zulu men and women participate, in the absence of parents or adults) and *inkwari* (a rave-like party where young people get together to socialise and have fun) and the influence they have in specific social contexts in which young people perform gender and heterosexuality in ways promoting risk for teenage fatherhood and early childbearing. I argue that cultural *(umhlalaphansi)* and social *(inkwari)* spaces are used to enact heterosexual masculinity in ways that increase the risk of unplanned pregnancies.

Chapter four highlights how the sociocultural context in which young men construct their gendered identities which consequently informs their ideas about fatherhood. I draw on the story of one teenage father, Mandla, in which the complexities of the dual identities of simultaneously being a child and a father came out strongly. In negotiating becoming and being a teenage father in rural Ugu, Mandla upholds dominant notions about ideal fatherhood where material provision and care are key, despite the fact that he comes from a resource-poor context which forestalls his ability to provide. His identity is also characterised by the reproduction of dominant notions of masculinity where having multiple partners is a sign of manhood. I show how negotiating fatherhood for teenagers is highly complex with contradictory influences.

Chapter five analyses how dominant hegemonic notions of masculinity, often associated with drugs, alcohol abuse and multiple partners, impact negatively on teenage men. In the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal, where there are high levels of poverty, teenagers engage in risky practices such as drugs and alcohol use as they see them as important resources that produce power but also risk. Being and becoming a father, however, gives teenagers the opportunity for reflection, for taking

responsibility and for constructing alternative masculinities based on providing care for the mother and child.

Chapter six examines teenage fathers' involvement in becoming fathers, through looking at the care they provide, or want to provide, for the child and the mother. I conclude, however, that when teenage fathers talk about their experiences, they position their understanding of responsibility in versions of masculinity that are culturally and socially constructed.

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter and summarises the main findings of my research and its implications. It also outlines recommendations that could bring about a healthier sexuality in teenage men and help prevent unplanned and mistimed pregnancies. My recommendations also have implications for education policy. For, example, all prevention strategies that are spelt out in education policies are targeting teenage girls whilst the boys are left out. This increases vulnerabilities in them and robs them off the opportunity of being empowered and supported.

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**Chapter 2**

     **Accessing the hard-to-reach research population: Reflections from a qualitative study with teenage fathers from rural KwaZulu-Natal**

**Abstract**

  Sampling is a crucial aspect to consider when designing a research project. However, researchers often struggle to access some research population groups because of their cultural, social, or physical positioning. The social stigma that is associated with teenage sexuality makes teenage fathers a part of this 'hard-to-reach' population. In the context of rural South Africa, stigma is further fuelled by teenage fathers' inability to live up to socially, culturally, and economically defined ideals of masculinity. Negotiating access to these cohorts of the population often requires researchers to use sampling strategies that go beyond traditional ones. In this paper I share my reflections on the sampling strategies I used in a qualitative study with twenty teenage fathers aged 17 to 19 from the Ugu District of rural KwaZulu-Natal. I discuss how I accessed this research population using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods.

  Keywords: Hard-to-reach population, sampling, social stigma, South Africa, teenage fathers,

**Introduction**

  Boys don't want the whole school to know that they have become fathers : Most of them prefer to keep it a secret … We know each other and we protect each other's secret. When teachers get to know your story that you have become a father, it's like they want the whole world to know. (Sandile, 18)

In South Africa, particularly in rural KwaZulu-Natal, teenage sexuality is often silenced and regulated by adults through cultural discourses that are intended to promote respect. Dominant cultural discourses around the construction of teenage sexuality frown upon casual sexual relationships (Bhana, 2015; Harrison, 2008; Mvune, Bhana & Mayeza, 2019). The cultural discourse of *ukuhlonipha* (respect for prevailing cultural norms and traditions), for example, emphasises sexual purity and prohibits sex before marriage (Harrison, 2008; Bhana, 2015). An open expression of intimacy or a public display of affection among teenagers is culturally unacceptable

and is viewed as a violation of the expected cultural code of *ukuhlonipha*. Many adults operate as custodians of culture and see this violation as a sign of disrespect, among contemporary teenagers living in the rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal, for prevailing cultural values (Bhana, 2015; Harrison, 2008). Teenagers, especially in rural KwaZulu-Natal, are under increasing pressure to ensure that the sexual aspects of their lives are kept secret, hidden not only from the custodians of culture, that is, parents and other adults in the community, but also from their peers (Harrison, 2008).

Given this context of sexual prohibitions, any open display of teenage pregnancy disrupts the cultural order and the prescription that demands a formalised union between families before a child is conceived. Teenage pregnancy and young parents are thus viewed as a 'social problem' (Weber, 2018, p. 4). When attention is drawn to teenage fathers, many often hide any public displays of sexuality, and deny paternity (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012). As noted in the introductory interview excerpt, another strategy is to keep teenage fatherhood a secret. These mechanisms render teenage fathers a difficult to access, hidden group (see Heckathorn, 2002 and Sydor, 2013 for descriptions of other such cohorts of research participants). As Weber (2018) says, it is their vulnerability that makes them hard to find, and this is why they are often excluded in social research (Weber, 2018). 'Hard to find' teenage fathers in rural KwaZulu-Natal are, indeed, a highly complex and under-researched cohort of the population, and the purpose of this paper is to begin to address this gap in understanding.

Beyond respect, the cultural and patriarchal context in rural areas of South Africa idealises forms of masculinity and fatherhood that emphasise provider masculinity. In a context where heterosexual marital union is presumed before the birth of a child, the families of potential partners formalise the union through the payment of *ilobolo* (bride wealth). Eleven cows (or money equivalent in value) are given by the groom to the bride's family if a young woman is a virgin (Hunter, 2006). As an alternative to *ilobolo,* a payment of *inhlawulo* (damages) is expected from a father who is responsible for a pregnancy out of wedlock. The purpose of *inhlawulo* is for a father to formally acknowledge paternity, thus legitimising the non-marital pregnancy (Madhavan, 2010). It is a way of mediating the father's involvement in the child's life (Nkani, 2017).

However, due to high rates of unemployment, and the dual nature of being at school and being a teenage father, many young fathers are unable to pay either *ilobolo*

or *inhlawulo*. This impacts on culturally and socially prescribed standards of masculinity, particularly notions of provider masculinity (Hunter, 2006; 2010), which teenage fathers often fail to live up to. For this reason, most teenage pregnancies remain non-marital (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Mvune, 2017). This often results in hiding fatherhood by denying paternity (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012) in order to avoid the payments related to *ilobolo* and *inhlawulo*.

Fatherhood is often constructed as a marker of adult masculine identity and an entry into manhood (Sikweyiya, Shai, Gibbs, Mahlangu & Jewkes, 2017; Weber, 2012) and thus associated with power and privilege which are characteristics of hegemonic notions of masculinity (Connell, 2000). However, fatherhood, like any gender identity, is not fixed. Wetherell and Edley (2014, p.13) argue that "men are not locked in one category". It is therefore possible for an individual to move between different forms of masculinities. Wetherell and Edley (2014) make reference to three modes of masculinities as suggested by (Connell, 1995); hegemonic, subordinate and implicit.

In unpacking the three modes of masculinities, Wetherell and Edley (2014) use findings from a qualitative study that was conducted among teenage men from a single sex, middle class school in the UK. The dominant groups that enjoyed most privileges and power were rugby and cricket teams, who went around showing off distinctively coloured blazers, hence indicating hegemonic notions of masculinity. One participant indicated his desire to be part of that elite group, yet hampered by the toughness or 'maleness' that was required, since he was "scared of getting hurt" (Wetherell & Edley, 2014, p.10), thus indicating what Connell (1995) referred to as subordinate masculinity. This often requires subordinate masculinities to develop alternative gender identities or locate themselves outside 'maleness'. The same participant later claimed that rugby and cricket players are mentally weak when compared to him and his group, indicating what Connell (1995) referred to as complicit masculinity. Making reference to Wetherell and Edley's (2014) study, teenage men attain hegemonic notions of masculinity through fatherhood, but still remain subordinate because of their inability to live to socially constructed ideals of fatherhood. This often results to stigma often fuelled by the dual identity of childhood and adulthood.

This indicate fluidity of gender identities that Butler (2009) refers to as performative. Butler (2009) argues that gender is performative, meaning people enact feminine or masculine gender identities.  She further argues that gender is informed by precarity. In defining precarity, Butler (2009), suggests that this refers to conditions that have a negative impact on people's lives, in ways that appear to be beyond their control. Being a teenage man and a father, carries stigma and therefore negatively affect teenage fathers in their negotiation of fatherhood. Butler (2009, p. ii) further argues that since precarity refers to living beings; "anything living can be expunged and its persistence is in no sense guaranteed". Relating this to fatherhood as a gender identity, becoming a teenage father is a precarious position because it takes away power that is often associated with teenage masculinities. In South Africa's context, particularly in rural KwaZulu-Natal, teenage fatherhood results in the secrecy as a strategy to negotiate stigma, and makes teenage fathers a hard-to-reach population.

Researchers often struggle to access this research population when using traditional sampling methods. This has led Ellard-Gray, Jeffrey, Choubak & Crann (2015), for example, to suggest that traditional sampling methods are inappropriate or ineffective when attempting to access hard-to-reach, vulnerable or hidden research populations and that additional strategies and efforts are required on the part of the researcher.

While qualitative scholars have made significant contributions to sampling strategies, less attention has been given to step by step guidelines for accessing hard-to-reach research populations. These include women, teenagers, sex workers, homeless people, sexual minorities, mentally impaired people, ethnic minorities, poor and marginalised people, and men who have sex with men (Bailey, 2008; Heckathorn, 2002; 2007; Cundiff 2012; Waldrop, 2004). Hard-to-reach and vulnerable population groups are often associated with sensitive research topics. Some topics are considered sensitive due to the impact they have on participants, or because of how the image of that particular research population is represented (Nduna, Skweyiya, Khunou, Pambo & Mdletshe, 2015). These marginalised groups are of great interest to social researchers, not least because of a desire to better the life-circumstances of such groups and to understand the social structures and contexts in which they live (TenHouten, 2017). Rosenbaum and Langhinrichsen- Rohling (2006) argue that research topics which include any form of sexual behaviour are all sensitive because

they must make reference to personal and sometimes stigmatised practices. Indeed, several previous studies have documented difficulties in accessing teenage fathers for these reasons (Chideya & Williams, 2014; Lemay, Cashman & Elfebein, 2010).

Sampling methods for such population groups are always difficult due to social stigma and concerns over issues of confidentiality and fear of exposure (Heckathorn, 2002; Lau-Clayton, 2015). The social stigma associated with teenage sexuality makes issues of teenage fatherhood and sexual risk highly sensitive. Lau-Clayton (2015) notes the usefulness of qualitative research for giving a voice to teenage fathers, a group that is often marginalised and discriminated against by societal attitudes.

One of the core challenges for researchers is ethics. Penrod, Preston, Cain and Starks (2003) warn that even when all ethical procedures have been adhered to in order to ensure anonymity, the description of the sample and presentation of findings may unintentionally disclose the identity of participants, thus exposing them to further marginalisation. Young fathers are therefore not only a hard-to-reach research sample: they are also hard-to-keep, and this limits researchers' ability to track and follow up on the research.

This paper discusses the sampling of a group of teenage fathers from Ugu, in rural KwaZulu-Natal, and the challenges encountered in accessing the sample, which resulted in a change in approach from purposive to snowball sampling. The reason I wanted to explore fatherhood experiences of teenagers from rural context is because of their increased vulnerability due to the more extreme patriarchal systems that are in place. My paper also discusses chain referral sampling methods that have great potential for accessing such hard-to-reach research populations.

### Context of the study

The study was conducted in the small rural settlement of Illovo, in the Ugu District of KwaZulu-Natal, on the south coast of South Africa. The legacy of apartheid is evident both socially and economically in this area. There is a high rate of unemployment, poverty, structural inequalities and a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. A survey investigating HIV prevalence between 2002 and 2012, found that KwaZulu-Natal had the highest HIV prevalence (27.9%) of all provinces in South Africa, especially among people of reproductive age (Shisana et al., 2014). In the second quarter of 2018, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey reported a national unemployment rate of 27.2%, and in KwaZulu-Natal 26.7% of people were not in

employment, education or training (NEET) (Statistics South Africa, 2018). The Ugu District is mostly rural, and is a popular tourist attraction due to its coastal towns. Illovo falls under the Thoyana Tribal Authority, one of 39 tribal authorities in the Ugu District. Such areas were systematically underdeveloped during the apartheid era and are characterised by high rates of unemployment, especially among black Africans, and a lack of infrastructure and basic resources. In 2011, Illovo had a population of approximately 24 728 people and 6446 households (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Most residents of Illovo are African and isiZulu-speaking.

Research was conducted at two schools, Busisiwe High School and Mqemane High School. Both are mixed-sex, state schools, offering grades eight to twelve. All learners are African and predominantly isiZulu-speaking. While the apartheid system may have formally ended in 1994, these schools still showed its traces, especially in their racial and socioeconomic dynamics. Some parents are financially able to send their children to well-resourced schools that were formerly 'whites only', while others are not. These two schools are examples of under-resourced schools that cater for learners from low income households who, in most cases, walk to school. Both schools are 'no fee', meaning that all educational resources required by learners are provided by the state, and both are members of the National Schools Nutrition Programme (NSNP) which provides learners with a cooked meal every school day. NSNP and 'no fee' are programmes that aim to address structural inequalities, improve attendance, and enhance the quality of education for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (Department of Education, 1998; 2006). Both schools lack facilities such as libraries, science laboratories or sports grounds. Busisiwe High School uses a community sports ground that is over two kilometres away, to which learners are required to walk. As a result, most learners, especially girls, prefer not to participate in sporting activities. At Mqemane High School, the sports ground is closer but is also a community facility rather than belonging to the school.

### Positioning myself as a researcher

It is important to note that researchers bring 'the self' into the research setting. Berger (2015), for example, highlights the need for qualitative researchers to focus on self-knowledge in order to better understand the role of the self in the construction of knowledge and to carefully monitor the impact of their beliefs, biases and personal experiences. This enables them to create and maintain the balance between personal

and universal, throughout the research project. She notes three ways in which a researcher's position may impact on the research process: access to the field; the nature of the researcher-participant relationship; and the worldview of the researcher which affects the way in which he or she constructs the world, asks questions, uses language and how he or she filters the information gathered from participants. Mason (2006), too, emphasises the importance of researcher reflexivity in order to highlight how engaging in research affects researchers' studies and that knowledge is produced and shaped through the interactions of those involved. A researcher's positioning includes characteristics such as gender, age, race, sexual orientation, personal experiences, beliefs biases, theoretical, ideological and political attitudes, preferences and emotional response to participant stories (Finlay, 2000; Padgett, 2008). I am a black African female doctoral student in Gender and Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I also work for the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education in the Special Needs Education Services (SNES) section. My job entails coordinating and supporting the implementation of life skills programmes and departmental policies in schools within the Ugu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

One of the life skills programmes implemented in secondary schools is the Peer Education Programme. When selecting schools to participate, the Department of Education gives priority to those with the highest prevalence of social ills such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and learner dropouts. Both of the schools where I conducted my research were selected to receiving training in the Peer Education Programme in 2015 because of the high rates of teenage pregnancy at them. The Programme aims to empower young people to effect behaviour change among their peers in schools. A group of learners was trained (five boys and five girls in each school) and their teachers were tasked with implementing the programme.

As a district official under Special Needs Education Services (SNES), I was responsible for monitoring and supporting implementation in both schools. Most learners in each school knew me by sight. My professional positioning thus facilitated my entry into the research setting: I was viewed more as an insider as opposed to being a complete outsider. Everyone from the circuit manager to the school principals and educators gave their support to my study.

My main concern, designing the research methods, was ethics. I started by explaining to the school principals what the research was about, the objectives and the research focus. I assured them of participant anonymity, that that their schools' real

names will not be used. I had a good working relationship with the teachers because I had trained them, together with the learners, in the Peer Education programme in 2015. I was anxious to ensure that my newly assumed role as a researcher did not compromise existing relationships established in my role as an official for the Department of Education.

Contrary to quantitative research where researchers are expected to be objective, in qualitative studies the inter-subjectivity and the mutual researcher-participant engagement is central in the production of knowledge. I conducted my research between January 2016 and September 2017 with a group of twenty teenage fathers– and the rich data generated are testament to the mutual engagement we shared.

Throughout the study I was highly conscious of my own world view as a Christian, African isiZulu-speaking, single and middle-aged woman in my forties. In view of McKegany and Bloor's (1991, p.195) argument when they state that "all knowledge is gendered", I became conscious of the impact that my gender will have on the research project and dataset. Being a black Zulu woman made me to appear as a 'mother figure' to my participants. Embedded within the African culture, especially among AmaZulu, fathers are not as approachable as mothers. They are often regarded as figures of authority. Therefore, even in the cultural context that discourages discussion of sexuality issues with adults; I was an approachable gender. Even though I was a middle-class woman with material resources, I shared a common history with my participants. I grew up in Illovo, just as my research participants did; under similar conditions of poverty. I also went to the same under resourced schools and lived a social life comparable to theirs. Therefore, I shared a history of social class with them and that was instrumental in accessing my participants. These personal characteristics positioned me as an insider and gave me advantage in accessing, keeping and maintaining a relationship with my participants. It also helped me in negotiating stigma that has been cited by literature as a feature of teenage parenthood. Articulating these similarities and differences was crucial since it impacts on the quality of data collected.

Indeed, being a black male researcher could have yielded different results. For example, Malose Langa, a young black male PhD researcher in a township of South Africa, reported different researcher-participant relationship with his participants. When issues of sexual relationships were discussed with a group of boys that called

themselves sex-jaros, explicit details of sex that indicted vast experience were shared with him. Because of his masculine identity, his participants wanted to show him that he was less of an expert on matters of sex and thus giving themselves a superior position of power than the researcher (Langa, 2012).

I was also mindful of my position as an official of the Department of Education. My professional status positioned me as an outsider. Throughout my fieldwork, I ensured that my identity as a student outshines my professional identity. I was a student like them. They were custodians of their own world, negotiating researcher-participant relationship was key in the success of the research project and quality of data. This personal reflexivity is important in contexts such as Illovo, where religious and cultural ideals combine to shape the negotiation of sexual relationships for young people, where teenage sexuality is policed and regulated through cultural and religious discourses. Like Berger (2015), Buetow (2019) highlights the significance of the researcher in becoming aware of their unconscious biases and making them known to readers.

### Theoretical Framework

Throughout my thesis I used the theory of masculinities as a lens to examine stories of fatherhood that were shared by my research participants. Masculinity may be defined as that, that constitutes a man, and is assumed to be inborn and natural (Langa, 2012). However, studies go further by arguing that masculinity entails what men think, feel and how they behave (Kimmell, 2004; Kimmell, Hearn & Connell, 2005; Seidler, 2006). Therefore, masculinities will vary from context to context. Studies on masculinity draw on the work of sociologists such as Connell (1995; 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), Kimmell (1990; 2004) and Messner (1997), historians such as Morrell (1998; 2001), and anthropologists such as Gilmore (1990). Morrell (2001) and Connell (1995) define masculinity as a social construct, resulting to a specific gender identity belonging to male persons. The theory of masculinity enabled me to show how teenage fathers use context-specific norms of being a man, to define their identities as young men and fathers. Their stories of being and becoming fathers were located within the notions of masculinity that prevailed in the rural settlement of Illovo in that particular time. Theorists further argue that there is no single pattern of masculinity, but rather masculinities (Connell, 2000; Frosh et al., 2002). Masculinities vary according to race, class, ethnicity and culture. Viewing men through the lens of

masculinities, enables us as researchers to capture the multiplicity of patterns in various contexts and times. Indeed, this was highlighted by Connell and Messerschmidt as they note: "Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore can differ according to gender relations in a particular setting" (2005, p. 836). The thread of masculinity weaved through all narratives of fatherhood experiences that were shared by my participants; thus, indicating that fatherhood is tied to masculinity and that masculinity is socially constructed.

### Purposive and snowball sampling methods

Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants on the basis of their possession of qualities or characteristics being sort (Cohen et al., 2013; Flick, 2009). As the name implies, the sample is chosen for a specific purpose and participants have to meet certain criteria for participation (Cohen et al., 2013). Morse & Richards (2002) advise that purposive sampling entails choosing the most favourable example of a subject, the one that is most likely to shed light on the research questions. In choosing the sample for my study, I was guided by four factors that Cohen, Manion & Morison (2013) outline. These were the size of a sample; the sampling strategy to be used; the representativeness of the parameters of the sample; and access to the sample. My participants had to be school-going teenage boys who had biologically fathered a child. The aim for selecting this sample was to get an in-depth explanation of the phenomenon of teenage fatherhood, that was of interest to me as a researcher. Teenage fathers were the most suitable cases to make up my sample in order to achieve my research objectives and answer research questions. Kumar (2005) says in purposive sampling the judgement of the researcher regarding who can offer most information to attain the aims of the study, is key. Because of the challenges in accessing the sample and reach a desired size, I decided to ask my participants to help me by recruiting other potential participants. This sampling strategy is called snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling is the process of gradually increasing the sample to the desired size, through referrals and through the contacts of people already in the study (Morse & Richards 2002). Snowball sampling is useful in identifying participants with specific characteristics or experiences in hidden or hard-to-reach population groups. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) suggest that the gradual increase of the

sample size resembles the growing snowball. The advantage of snowball sampling is that the potential participant is referred by someone he/she knows and trusts and that enhances participation and allay fears that participants may have. Flick (2009) refers to these sampling strategies as non-probability, where the selection of participants is not determined by statistical principles of randomness. Penrod et al. (2003) warn researchers that even when the combination of purposive and snowball sampling may provide an improved methodological rigour, limitations associated with snowball sampling, where participants are recruited from one network, may persist. One of the strategies for enhancing snowball sampling is chain referral method.

### Snowball and chain referral as sampling methods

Using snowball as a sampling strategy did help in growing my sample but I was also aware of its shortcomings. Hennink et al. (2011) warn that the problem with snowball sampling is that the recruited participants are likely to come from the same social group or network and that this thus limits variety within the sample. Similarly, Morse and Field (1995, p. 83) caution that "the researchers should be careful not to restrict participants only to those persons acquired in this way, otherwise, the information obtained may be biased". Consequently, even when great depth in understanding may be reached, the scope remains limited to the boundaries of the accessed network of participants (Penrod et al., 2003).

Chain referral sampling methods have been identified as useful in studies that involve hard-to-reach research population groups: In a similar study conducted among a hard-to-reach population Penrod et al. (2003) investigated the risky sexual practices of homosexual men in the United States of America, and used chain referral sampling. Unlike snowball sampling that relies on one social network of referral, chain referral sampling accesses multiple social groups. Penrod et al. (2003, p. 102) define chain referral sampling as a method that relies on participant referrals to others who have had an experience in the phenomenon of interest. However, "multiple networks are strategically accessed to expand the scope of investigation beyond one social network". For this reason, chain referral sampling is recognised for its success in accessing hard-to-reach populations and strengthening qualitative or quantitative research designs (Heckathorn, 2002; 2007; Penrod et al., 2003). Kalton (1993) refers

to chains of referrals as multiple snowballs, that are meshed together to form a sample that is representative of the study group.

In my own study I only made use of purposive and snowball sampling strategies with the result that sample was recruited from the same social group. Despite its usefulness and the advantages outlined above, chain referral sampling also has its biases and shortfalls through the choice of the initial sample through which chains are traced; through volunteerism, whereby cooperative participants may agree to participate in large numbers; and through the manner in which chain referrals take place (Erickson, 1979).

### Accessing the sample: Busisiwe High School

Before conducting my study, I obtained written consent from the school principal, the gatekeeper. Morse and Field (1995) emphasise the importance of gatekeepers in that they are responsible for allowing access, forming links between researchers and potential participants, and circulating information about the project. After obtaining written consent from the school principal, I met with the Life Orientation educator to introduce my study. I asked her to recruit teenage fathers to be part of my study. She introduced me to the two teenage fathers who she was aware of (Mandla and Sipho). I made another appointment to meet with Mandla and Sipho, on a Wednesday. I decided to use Wednesday afternoon to introduce my study because teaching periods were shorter in order to accommodate the sports programme.

Our meeting was in a storeroom where boxes of stationery were kept. When I walked into the room both boys were seated at a table, looking very neat in their school uniforms. There was a vacant seat, and I saw their eyes pointing to that chair. After greeting them I introduced myself then gave them each a chance to introduce themselves. With pride, they told me about their birthdays, grades, the studies that they were doing, interests in life and future aspirations, including their favourite soccer teams. I also told them a bit about myself. Deliberately, when introducing myself, I did not focus much on my professional life and social class; I chose to focus on presenting myself as a UKZN student who was eager to listen to their stories. I explained what the study was about, its aims and nature, in simple, clear and appropriate terms. I then gave them a chance to ask me questions. I was aware of how

the researcher's approach can affect a study's recruitment rate and success (Lau-Clayton, 2018; Newington and Metcalfe, 2014). The boys did not ask any questions.

Hennink et al. (2011) highlight the importance of building rapport, especially when meeting participants for the first time, so that both researcher and participants become comfortable. I had brought muffins and cold drinks, and we consumed these together as we talked. I asked if they would be interested in participating in my study and they both agreed without any hesitation. I then gave them consent forms and asked if I could give them additional ones to give to other teenage fathers who might be interested in taking part. I explained that I would use focus group discussions and individual interviews, and the young men were keen on both.

Another aspect that required careful thought was the venue where interviews were to be held. Lau-Clayton (2018) highlights the importance of thorough consideration of the research location since they can impact on participants' responses and engagement. This is also emphasised by Edwards and Holland (2013, p.46) who wrote "Positions in hierarchy of gender, class, age, ethnicity and other dimensions are not just aspects of multiple identities of individuals (or groups) but are experienced, created and enacted in places". I was constantly mindful of my social class and age as factors that made me an outsider. It was important to seek ways to negotiate these differences. For example, sport plays a huge role in the construction of masculine identity, our informal discussion included talking about favourite soccer teams. Fortunately, I did have some insight into local (South African) soccer, so I used it to enter into their masculine 'world'. Football, in particular has been documented by theorists as an organising institution for development and construction of masculinity (Renold, 1997; Messner, 1990). I used my knowledge of soccer, basic as it may be to negotiate a masculine identity, in order to be seen as an insider.

In order to ensure familiarity with research space, I decided to conduct all interviews in the school after school hours, in spaces that were allocated by teachers–either the store room with the boxes of stationery, or vacant classrooms. I requested that teachers ensured the allocated spaces were free from noise and interruptions.

Lau-Clayton (2018) notes that communicating and contacting young fathers is always a challenge, since they are a hard-to-reach sample. For example, young fathers are known to change their mobile numbers frequently, make last minute change of plans, or have no airtime to reply to telephone messages. It can thus be very difficult for researchers to communicate with them. She also highlights the importance of

building rapport and trust between researcher and participants, as this develops and maintains an honest and non-judgemental dialogue which is more likely to yield rich data. Building rapport was thus a crucial element of my research, the basis of my participant-researcher relationships, and enabled me to earn participants' trust. Mistrust in the research process is, needless to say, a barrier that hinders participation particularly amongst hard-to-reach research populations (Bonevski et al., 2014; Elard-Gray et al., 2015). Elard-Gray et al. (2015, p. 2) suggest that mistrust may originate from negative assumptions about the research process, or that participation may not yield any positive outcomes for the marginalised minorities, especially if findings do not reach the 'right' people. Indeed, the management of participants' expectations has been highlighted by Eide and Kahn (2008) as a researcher's key responsibility. I was therefore careful not to raise any unrealistic expectations.

When introducing my study, I explained to my participants that any stories they shared with me would be recorded both in audio and written form, and would be documented in publications as part of my doctoral thesis. I also explained that their stories may, in future, help to inform policy. I emphasised that their anonymity was guaranteed in every publication.

When we met the following Wednesday, four consent forms had been signed and participants were eagerly waiting to get started. Seeing that my sample was too small, I requested them to recruit others who might be willing to participate. I was not sure if there were more teenage fathers in the same school because teachers were not aware of them. Unlike women where pregnancy becomes visible, boys are not in the public eye. What I also observed is that they know each other, they were reminding one another that we need to ask so and so to join us. As a result, my sampling strategy became a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. In this way my sample size gradually increased to seven participants.


### Accessing the sample: Mqemane High School

After the principal had given me written consent for his school to participate in the study, the Life Orientation teacher told me that she was not aware of any teenage fathers but that she had records of teenage mothers and those who were pregnant. The Department of Education requires South African schools to keep records and submit quarterly reports of teenage pregnancy but this is gendered since only girls are

recorded and not boys. The intention of these records is to enable the provision of structured support for pregnant young women and teenage mothers. Through interactions with pregnant or teenage mothers, teachers sometimes come to know the fathers. I requested to have lunch with the teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers. With the help of the Life Orientation teacher I met, in a classroom, twenty-one teenage mothers and one girl who was well on in her pregnancy and who also looked to be the youngest of the group.

As they came into the room, I observed that they knew each other because they were laughing and chatting together. I started by thanking them for sparing me some of their lunch break. When I asked if they could guess why I asked to spend time with them, one of the girls laughed and said "I think you want to give us clothes for our children" and the whole group laughed. Their socioeconomic context of poverty led them to associate me with material support. I also laughed and explained my study and its intended participants, emphasising that it was entirely voluntary. As they enjoyed the snacks that I had brought, I asked if they would refer me to the fathers of their children who were at the same school or in any other school within Ugu District, as my Ethical Clearance obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal specified.

Of the 22 young women the father of the one who was advanced in her pregnancy was in the same school, a grade behind her; ten had fathers of children out of school, some working in temporary jobs; five were out of school and not working; five were in some neighbouring schools but above teen age and hence could not be part of the sample; and one lived outside the boundaries of Ugu District. I managed to get the names and contact numbers of four potential participants. Notable here is that I used a different approach to recruit participants to the one I used in the first school. However, the school social network from which potential participants were recruited was similar.

I made an appointment to meet the four teenage fathers the following week. I introduced my study and asked if they would like to participate. I again brought light snacks which we ate while we talked. I assured them that pseudonyms would be used and that confidentiality was guaranteed. They all agreed to participate. To make it more fun I asked them if they would like to choose their research names. They all chose to give themselves pseudonyms, Thobani, Siphiwe, Nzuzo and Mpontsho, I requested their consent to use an audio recorder. They all agreed and I then gave them content forms to sign and we made an appointment to meet the following week.

When we met again, all four consent forms were signed. After our first focus group, I requested them to recruit others who might be willing to participate. Again, snowball sampling methods worked and my sample size gradually increased to thirteen. This gave me a total of twenty teenage fathers from two schools. Three of my participants were 17 years old (Sakhile, Siyanda and Zamo), which made them minors. I gave them parental consent forms so that they could get permission from their parents to participate in the study. As a requirement by UKZN Ethics Office, I translated parental consent letters to isiZulu. All three parents gave their informed consent for their sons to participate in the study.

Ensuring participant wellbeing was another crucial aspect of my study. After each interview, participants were given R100 (£5.50/US$7) in appreciation of their participation, in line with Kings and Horrocks' (2010) ethical principle of beneficence, which compels researchers to take care of participants' wellbeing. I followed all these ethical protocols at every interview, stressing to participants that they could withdraw from the study anytime they wished to without being penalised in any way.

Following Lau-Clayton (2018), I made use of visual hints, such as using an audio recorder that was moved from participant to participant during focus group discussions, and ensuring I always had my field notes journal with me, in order to remind my participants about the nature of our engagement. At the end of each interview I thanked the participants and we made plans for the next interviews.

It was satisfying to see a relationship of trust developing between me and my participants. They gave me the name and number of a teenager (Sandile) whose girlfriend was pregnant and due imminently. I was also given names of two others who already had one baby each. Both Caven (2012) and Lau-Clayton (2018) note that participants are likely to feel more relaxed if someone engages with them over a period of time, and listens to them in an understanding and non-judgemental fashion. They come to feel closer to the interviewer and may even come to think of them as a friend. Edwards and Holland (2013, p. 84), too, emphasise that as qualitative researchers are human, they are likely to be "emotionally engaged with interviewees who are sharing experiences". This is what I experienced. At first the teenagers referred to me as 'mam' and later 'mama' (an isiZulu word meaning mother also used

to show respect to an elderly female person) or even 'suster' (slang word meaning sister).

Since I was conducting my study among a hard-to-reach and vulnerable research population, it was critical for me to set and maintain ethical boundaries, as Hemmerman (2010) notes. This included how I addressed teenage fathers during interviews, using formal language and referring to them by their real names. Language was another mediating factor: as I am a first language isiZulu-speaker, the mother tongue of all the teenage fathers, I opted to use it rather than English to enhance the flow of dialogue, confidence and comfort levels in my participants. In their eyes, this also helped position me within their social class. In their study, Featherstone, Robb, Ruxton and Ward (2017, p. 337) highlight how participants used phrases like: "he's like us" or "he's from around here" to show that they identified with their social care workers, and this was my experience with my respondents. I also ensured that interviews were conducted in an open and non-judgemental manner. Like Sandile in the opening excerpt to this paper, some participants shared their stories of pain, of how fatherhood is usually kept a secret at school because of the stigma and shame that accompanies it. For example:

> If they [teachers] know that you are a father they speak badly about you in front of the whole class, even in the presence of the mother of your child. They humiliate you saying things like, 'you can't give a correct answer or do your [school] work all you know is to go around making babies.' I just keep quiet and do not say anything but it is very painful, it hurts…. (Nzuzo, 18)

> Both male and female teachers–they are all the same. Sometimes it's both teachers and other learners, that's why we try to keep fatherhood a secret because when you are a teenage father, you become a joke (Popozi, 18).

Given stories such as these, where respondents spoke of their marginalisation and vulnerability, it was very important for me as a researcher not to do anything to cause them any more pain. When outlining the challenges associated with conducting research amongst hard-to-reach populations, Ellard-Gray et al. (2015) highlight two

categories: individual barriers to participation and sampling. Reflecting on my own study, I find that the two categories are interrelated. Because of the fear associated with social stigma in teenage fathers, I was conscious of the emotions that my study might evoke in participants. Due to my work in the Special Needs Education Services (SNES), which is responsible for the provision of psychosocial support in schools, I was able to assist my participants in accessing psychological support from the district.

**Conclusion**

Some research populations are very difficult to access. This paper is a reflection on a research project I conducted among teenage fathers in a remote rural area of South Africa. I did indeed have trouble in accessing these young men, and used a variety of methods. When sampling a hard-to-reach research population, it is crucial that qualitative researchers adhere to ethical standards and are able to deal with constraints that may be imposed by settings, gatekeepers and participants themselves. Adherence to ethical standards is key to ensuring that sampling does not further marginalise vulnerable groups such as teenage fathers.

Whilst noting sampling methods such as chain referral, in these reflections I have provided a detailed account of the usefulness of a combination of purposive and snowball sampling strategies in a small-scale qualitative study that involved a hard-to-reach population. I hope and trust that the strategies I have shared in these reflections will help guide researchers conducting studies among hard-to-reach research populations and advance critical thinking regarding qualitative methods.

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**Chapter 3**

***Umhlalaphansi* and *Inkwari*: Teenage men's accounts on becoming fathers**

**Abstract**

This paper explores how some South African teenage fathers in rural KwaZulu-Natal engage in heterosexual relationships. Drawing from a qualitative based study with twenty teenage fathers aged between seventeen and nineteen years old, we examine how they talk about two highly sexualised gatherings – *umhlalaphansi* (an overnight Zulu dance ceremony) and *inkwari* (a weekend-long rave-like party). We find that these social and cultural gatherings provide opportunities to express gender and sexuality whilst simultaneously increasing the risk for early childbearing. *Umhlalaphansi is* produced at the cultural nexus which supports respect and cultural norms that prohibit sexual secrecy and unregulated sexuality. Paradoxically, *umhlalaphansi* is a key site in which teenage men and women engaged in courtships, sexual relationships and risky sexual conduct. *Inkwari* lacks cultural scripts and ss based on partying, alcohol, drug use and engagement in spontaneous sexual encounters. We show how these two sites provide opportunities for young men to pursue sexuality in ways that are risky as they increase vulnerability for unplanned teenage fatherhood. The conclusion provides some implications for school-based interventions to tackle sexual risk within rural contexts in South Africa.

**Keywords:** *umhlalaphansi*, *inkwari,* culture, teenage fathers, masculinity, rural South Africa

**Introduction**

This paper is concerned with the ways in which some South African teenage fathers in rural KwaZulu-Natal experience heterosexual relationships. In rural KwaZulu-Natal, certain culturally-entrenched practices and the social construction of gender shape how teenagers negotiate such relationships (Hunter 2010; Sofika and van der Riet 2017). These practices and the construction of becoming a man are 'scripted' at a cultural level (Sofika and van der Riet 2017). Such scripts involve the normalisation of multiple sexual partners and are often linked to inconsistencies in the use of condoms (Hunter 2010; Harrison 2008). In this paper, we interrogate the relationship between teenage cultural practices, heterosexuality and masculinities, and explore how they aggregate to produce sexual risk. To do so we focus on two highly sexualised gatherings – *umhlalaphansi* (an overnight Zulu dance ceremony) and *inkwari* (a weekend-long rave-like party). While teenage sexuality in rural KwaZulu-Natal is often hidden and silenced under adult parental regulation (Harrison 2008), young people seek out alternate spaces to enact sexuality. *Umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari* are key cultural and social sites which offer teenage men and women an opportunity to explore, express and experience sexuality as they negotiate adult and cultural regulation. Teenage men are often consctruted as facing heightened pressure to conform to dominant discourses of heteronormativity (Bhana and Nkani 2014). The celebration of heterosexuality with masculine prowess increases sexual risk for teenage boys (Sofika and van der Riet 2017; Mimiaga et al. 2015; Harrison 2008). We analyse teenage men's accounts of girls and girlfriends within *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari* paying particular attention to how these accounts draw on culturally specific

gendered norms, which serve as an important resource in their construction of heterosexual masculinity.

*Umhlalaphansi* is a Zulu dance ceremony at which young men and women sing and dance overnight in the absence of their parents and is still relevant in some rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal. It is performed during traditional ceremonies including weddings, engagements or *umemulo* (a coming-of-age ceremony in which girls who are virgins participate in cultural celebrations). *Umemulo* indicates that a woman has reached adulthood and is ready to accept a partner for marriage. The intention of *umemulo* is to celebrate love, union, female virginity and bridewealth. Eleven cows are usually exchanged as bridewealth by the groom to the brides' family if the woman is a virgin. *Umhlalaphansi* is a highly gendered space. Regarding participation in this celebration only women and girls who are young, unmarried and childless can participate. During *umhlalaphansi*, young men and women take turns to perform dance styles. Beyond the singing and the performance of Zulu dance and cultural practices, the event also offers opportunities for the expression of heterosexual desire whereby young men and women engage in unplanned and unprotected sexual intercourse often as 'one-night stands' or short-term sexual relationships with little emotional commitment (Landgraf, von Treskow, and Osterheider 2018). The relationship between *umhlalaphansi* and sexual risk has its parallel elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Among the rural Maasai people for exmaple, the *esoto* cultural dance provides an arena in which young men and women can find sexual partners (Siegler, Mbwambo, and DiClemente 2013: 685) and boys do so because "attending *esoto* meant that I was becoming a man". However, the cultural practice also provides a significant context for the construction, maintenance and regulation of heterosexual masculinity and femininity. Like *esoto*, *umhlalaphans*i is also about cultural pride, an essential element in the transition to adulthood which validates and celebrates heterosexual Zulu masculinity and femininity.

*Inkwari* is another social arena in South Africa where young people from urban and rural communities come together to socialise and have fun. Unlike *umhlalaphansi,* Mimiaga et al. (2015, 308) refer to *inkwari* as a "recent social phenomenon". Akin to a weekend rave party as noted elsewhere in the west (Krul et al., 2011), it involves drinking alcohol, taking drugs, socialising with peers and engaging in sex (Mimiaga et al. 2015; Grelotti et al. 2014). Ten of the thirteen African IsiZulu-speaking *inkwari* attendees in Grelotti et al.'s (2014) study in KwaZulu-Natal indicated that *inkwari* was characterised by the use of a highly addictive drug called *whoonga*, a drug cocktail said to contain HIV antiretroviral (ARV) drugs, cleansing detergents and rat poison. Under the influence of drugs and alcohol, casual sexual relationships and unsafe sexual practices are often reported (Mimiaga et al. 2015).

More generally, drug and alcohol abuse are key risk factors in the transmission of HIV and unwanted pregnancies among teenagers in South Africa (Sofika and van der Riet 2017; Kalichman et al. 2007). KwaZulu-Natal has the highest HIV prevalence (27.9%) of all provinces in South Africa, especially among people of reproductive age, with disproportionate effects for women and girls (Shisana et al. 2014). Young women aged fifteen to nineteen years are more likely to be infected than their male counterparts in the same age bracket.

In this paper, we engage with teenage fathers and pay attention to the ways in which they talk about their participation in *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari*. In reflecting on their experiences, we explore how the cultural practice of *umhlalaphansi* and the social activity of *inkwari* provide fertile grounds for promoting sexual risk among teenage men and women. We focus on the cultural practices of *umhlalaphansi* and

*inkwari* as specific social contexts in which young people perform gender and heterosexuality in ways promoting risk for teenage fatherhood and early childbearing.

**Context and method**

The study was conducted at Illovo, a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal. The legacy of apartheid's 1950 Group Areas Act is evident in how the people of Illovo are racially divided. Rural settlements of Illovo fall under the Thoyana Tribal Authority – one of thirty-nine tribal authorities in the Ugu District of KwaZulu-Natal. Unemployment is high in the Ugu District. During the third quarter of 2014, the unemployment rate was estimated at 42.1% for black African men and 44.5% for women within the Ugu District (Statistics South Africa 2015). Lack of employment increases poverty, especially in rural areas with negative effects for poor black Africans.

Our study was conducted with twenty teenage fathers aged seventeen to nineteen years from two high schools which were purposively sampled to understand how rural cultures of masculinity combine with context-specific practices to produce particular formations of sexuality and relations of power. Life Orientation (LO) teachers from both schools were asked to help identify potential participants. Participants had to be teenage fathers at school, were willing and available to take part in the study.

During the study, we were guided by the ethical principles outlined by King and Horrocks (2010): respect for persons (individuals must participate voluntarily and have adequate information about what involvement in the research will entail, including possible consequences); and justice (fairness, fair distribution of benefits, and the burdens of research). Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Further consent for the study was obtained from principals of both schools. Participants and their parents also gave written consent to participate voluntarily in the study. To ensure anonymity, the school names and the real names of participants were replaced with pseudonyms. Each focus group discussion (FGD) had six participants and lasted ninety to 120 minutes. Focus groups made it possible for participants to openly debate and discuss issues of sexuality – providing detailed narratives of how relationships are formed, leading to unplanned teenage fatherhood. Topics discussed in the focus groups included: sexuality; relationships with their girlfriends, parents and their babies; responsibility; culture; changes that come with being a father; media and societal perceptions of teenage fathers. Table 1 (below) describes the participants.

**Table 2: Participant Profiles**

| Participant | Age (in 2016) | Grade | Girlfriend's age at pregnancy, year, and relationship dynamics | Child's age at time of interview | In a relationship with the mother of the child? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mandla | 19 | 11 | 14/2014 (met in the neighbourhood where they | Daughter deceased aged 9 months in | Yes |

| | | | were staying) | 2015 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sipho | 19 | 10 | 15/2014 (met through a friend who was in a relationship with a girlfriend's sister; attended *inkwari* together) | Two-year-old daughter | Yes |
| Bonga | 18 | 11 | 17/2015 (met through a friend at school) | One-year-old son | Yes |
| Sakhile | 17 | 11 | 15/2015 (grew up together in the same neighbourhood and the relationship began when they were at the same high school; attends *umhlalaphansi*) | Two-month-old daughter | Yes |
| Thula | 18 | 12 | 16/2015 (met at high school in the same class) | Five-month-old son | Yes |
| Senzo | 18 | 12 | 17/2014 (met at high school, doing different grades) | One-year-old son | Yes |
| Minenhle | 19 | 11 | 16/2015 (grew up in the same neighbourhood; relationship began at high school) | Six-month-old daughter | Yes |
| Zamo | 17 | 11 | 15/2015 (met at high school, doing different grades; both actively involved in school sports and *umhlalaphansi*) | Seven-month-old daughter | Yes |
| Nzuzo | 18 | 12 | 16/2014 (met at high school through friends) | One-year-old son | Yes |
| Siyabonga | 19 | 12 | 16/2014 (met at | Three-year- | No |

| | | | school and attends *inkwari* and other parties together) | old daughter | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Siyanda | 17 | 11 | 16/2015 (met at high school through a participant's friend, he attends *umhlalaphansi*) | Three-month-old daughter | Yes |
| Mvelo | 18 | 12 | 17/2015 (met at school in 2013) | Nine-month-old son | No |
| Popozi | 18 | 12 | 15/2015 (met at high school, in same grade but in different classes, attended *umhlalaphansi* together) | One-year-old son | Yes |
| Mqulusi | 19 | 12 | 15/2014 (met at a cultural music competition when participant's group were performing; takes part in *umhlalaphansi*) | One-year-old daughter | Yes |
| Mpontsho | 19 | 12 | 16/2015 (met through a friend who was in a relationship with her older sister; used to attend *inkwari* together before becoming a father) | One and a half-month-old daughter | No |
| Belo | 18 | 12 | 17/2015 (met at school doing the same grade) | Four-month-old daughter | Yes |
| Sandile | 18 | 10 | 18/2015 (met at high school, doing grade 10, in the same class, he attended | Two-week-old son (first pregnancy ended in miscarriage) | Yes |

| | | | *inkwari* before becoming a father) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thobani | 19 | 10 | 16/2015 (met her during *umhlalaphansi* when she was 13, doing grade 7 in 2012; the relationship started in 2013 when she was 14) | Two-month-old daughter | Yes |
| Siphiwe | 19 | 12 | 17/2015 (met her in 2007 through a friend) | One and a half-year-old daughter | Yes |
| Andile | 18 | 11 | 16/2015 (met her when they were in the same high-school class and neighbourhood; she was one of his soccer fans) | Five-month-old daughter | Yes |

To complement the narratives elicited from focus groups, semi-structured individual interviews provided an opportunity for participants to tell their unique personal stories relating to issues of sexuality, gender, relationships and experiences of fatherhood. Each teenage father was encouraged to tell his story in response to the following question: *Please tell me the entire story of your life. The best way to do this is to start from your birth, the kind of a boy you were, and then tell me all the things that happened in your life, one after the other, until you became a father. Take all the time you need and give me every detail because everything that pertains to your upbringing, masculinity, relationships, fatherhood and your schooling, is of interest to me.* Most individual interviews required follow-up to further explore emerging themes. Both focus groups and individual interviews were conducted in quiet rooms allocated at each school. The rooms were chosen because the level of noise and other disturbances around them had to be low.

Clandinin (2013) suggests that narrative inquiry allows the researcher to understand the experience shared, narratively – capturing the wholeness of participant lives. Focus groups sourced general perceptions on teenage intimate relationships and fatherhood, while semi-structured narrative individual interviews offered participants the opportunity to share their personal experiences of becoming fathers, focusing on how relationships were formed, and how they upheld and challenged dominant cultural constructions of masculinity and heteronormativity.

All interviews were conducted in IsiZulu – which is the home language of the interviewer and first author (NM) and the participants. Interviews were recorded using

a digital audio recorder. They were transcribed verbatim before being translated into English.

## Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, which involved studying it in a systematic manner in order to identify, analyse and report patterns within the data corpus (Braun and Clarke 2006). In analysing the data, we drew upon the existing literature on teenage sexual cultures (Jewkes and Morrell, 2012); young masculinities and teenage fatherhood (Bhana and Nkani 2014); masculinity, sexuality and cultural norms (Hunter 2010; Harrison 2008); and cultures of drug use and intoxication in youth cultures (Grelotti et al. 2014). Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas (2013) place emphasis on the researcher's broader understanding of the context influencing stories told by participants. Such understanding helps the researcher develop a wider understanding of what goes on in the participants' world. As the first author had grown up in Illovo (the context of the study), her understanding of the rural setting helped in interpreting participants' experiences. Our analysis process was guided by each of the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 87):

**Table 3: Phases of analysis**

| Phase | Processes involved |
|---|---|
| Familiarising with data | We transcribed data verbatim then translated from IsiZulu into English. The data were read repeatedly to identify key ideas. |
| Generating initial codes | Electronically; we used different colour shades to highlight text containing interesting ideas. |
| Searching for themes | We coded similar ideas using the same colour, grouping data together according to the themes of *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari*. |
| Reviewing theme | We then read the data to check if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts, and the entire data set. |
| Defining and naming themes | We went through the themes again to get a clear definition and name of each theme. We also checked if each theme fitted into the overall story the analysis was telling. |
| Producing the report | In this final phase, we carefully selected rich extracts to use in the final analysis. |

## Findings

### *Umhlalaphansi*

In rural KwaZulu-Natal, young people negotiate sexuality under a range of cultural and social norms often vested in the production of heterosexual male hieracrhies. Available resources in rural KwaZulu-Natal provide young people with an opportunity to express sexuality in ways that are locally specific. One of the strategies

used by participants to express their identity as heterosexual men was participating in *umhlalaphansi*.

> **Mqulusi**: We perform *umhlalaphansi* whenever we celebrate. We perform it in every traditional ceremony, we use it to entertain people; it's about showing off our Zulu culture and being proud of who we are. I can say, it is a way of bringing us together to have fun, like other young people would go to *inkwari* so this is our own *inkwari* … we perform it in traditional parties, like when there is a household that has slaughtered a cow maybe for *umemulo* (coming-of-age ceremony) for their daughter, we get invited to go and perform at no charge. We also dance *umhlalaphansi* when there is a traditional wedding or engagement; in such ceremonies, we perform throughout the night inside a hut or rondavel. As the name says *hlala* (sit) *phansi* (down), we all sit down, I mean boys and girls we sit down and take turns to stand up and perform. (Individual Interview 1)

*Umhlalaphansi* supports the cultural repertoires through which young people make sense of being Zulu and as Mqulusi notes above its 'being proud of who we are'. The link between umhlalaphansi and being proud as a Zulu man allows Mqulusi to claim Zulu identity. Like Siegler, Mbwambo, and DiClemente (2013) in their study of the *esoto* dancing among Maasai youth, *umhlalaphansi* is a vital and enjoyable component of young men and women's lives in rural KwaZulu-Natal, as Zamo and Siyanda explained*:*

> **Zamo**: *Umhlalaphansi* teaches us respect. When we were young boys some of us attended church, similar things are learned in *umhlalaphansi*. As Christians we were taught the importance of respecting yourself and respecting others… So, I can say taking part in *umhlalaphansi* is like going to church. (FGD 5)
>
> **Siyanda**: When we grew up our older brothers and uncles took part in *umhlalaphansi*. We see it as a kind of a sport. It helps us as boys to do away with shameful things, for example, when you take part in *umhlalaphansi*, you can never rob people or rape girls – even the relationships you are in must be known. You must not have secret relationships. Even a girl who takes part in *umhlalaphansi* is not allowed to be in a secret relationship. Her relationship must be formalised through a ceremony called *ukumiswa kweduku* (raising a flag). (FGD 5)

Teenage fathers linked the cultural practice of *umhlalaphansi* to Christian principles of respect. The fusing together of *umhlalaphansi* and Christian values has historical salience. During colonisation, the encounter between African traditions and Christianity produced religious plurality which incorporated Christian principles with African cultural norms (Hunter, 2010). The double character of *umhlalaphansi* is evident in the celebration of African cultural traditions and "going to church" as Zamo illustrates above. The fusion is testimony of the historical process through which Christianity has been constructed in South Africa and its relationship to African cultural norms. Thus, culture and religion, despite the variations, sit alongside each other, bound by the combined value for respect. In light of these values, Siyanda argues that secret relationships are in opposition to culture and religion. In doing so, he vilifies participation in crime and rape. Relationships, as Siyanda notes further, are not taboo but should be sanctioned by cultural processes. Here, like Harrison's (2008)

study of young people in rural KwaZulu-Natal, teenage men use cultural discourses as a strategy to enact a respectable Zulu masculinity based on good moral behaviour. Within the context of *umhlalaphansi,* sexual secrecy is taboo. Relationships that are hidden, as Harrison (2008) also notes, are viewed as risky violating gender and cultural norms.

Beyond and entangled within the moral rhetoric however, is evidence that heterosexual desires and courtship rituals and practices are key to the enjoyment associated with *umhlalaphansi:*

> **Zamo**: *Umhlalaphansi* is very important these days because of the high rate of women and children abuse. It teaches us about respect – you learn to respect yourself and others. For example, I may see this girl and like her and want to talk to her. It is important to follow proper ways of *ukushela* (courting). Maybe I can ask my brothers [members of *umhlalaphansi*] to accompany me. As a group of six we can go and talk to her. My brothers will help me persuade her, talking to her as a group will make her comfortable. Because it's at night, we would just ask her name, surname, area where she comes from and the side of the river from where she fetches water so that I may go and see her during the day for *ukushela*. As members of *umhlalaphansi*, we are not allowed to use force on a girl. (FGD 5)

Importantly here, sexual desire cannot be acted upon without engaging in *ukushela.* As noted by Wood, Lambert and Jewkes (2007) and Hunter (2010) courting practices amongst young people in South Africa reflect desire and choice before marriage such that the Zulu word, *ukushela* refers to the male pursuit of love and desire for a woman. *Ukushela* is thus deemed to be non-coercive and has a culturally specific contextual basis. Choice instead of coercion are paramount in *ukushela*. Zamo explains this non-coercive pursuit of a heterosexual partner. Other men may provide the support in establishing initial heterosexual contact and persuade the women or subject of desire to accept the relationship. Of significance here is that *ukushela* takes place in contrast to forcing love, and young women do have choice to reject *ukushela*.

Nevertheless, sexual relationships are a vital part of *umhlalaphansi*. Other than being a cultural dance celebrating Zulu identity but based on respect, *umhlalaphansi* was central to sexual risk. As Thobani explained,

> Both boys and girls take part in *umhlalaphansi*, but only girls who do not have children participate. What made me love *umhlalaphansi* is that I would meet many different girls there. It's easy to get yourself a girl – talk to her then sneak out to have sex, then come back. (Individual Interview 2)

Participating in *umhlalaphansi* enables teenage men to express heterosexual masculinity and engage in sexual intercourse. Unlike the process of *ukushela* described earlier, here Thobani refers to the 'one-night stands' afforded by the opportunity to come together at *umhlalaphansi.* Earlier attempts by participants to foreground cultural norms and Christian values around respect that condemned sexual secrecy are now violated as young men and women "sneak" out to have sex. Thobani talks about how consent is reached, and sex becomes consensual. *Umhlalaphansi* is

thus not only a cultural dance ceremony, but is also a highly sexualised arena for the enactment of heterosexual masculinity. The sexual relations in the context of *umhlalaphansi* are temporary and an expression of male heterosexual power as Sakhile explains:

> **Sakhile**: Taking part in *umhlalaphansi* does not stop a boy from having many girlfriends. What is important is that they must be known by [the] *igosa* (leader of the group) and other members. Even girlfriends can know each other, there is nothing wrong. (Individual Interview 3)

Unlike the moralistic discourse around respect, culture and religion suggested earlier, multiple partners are validated by the male leader of the group called *igosa*. A highly problematic association exists between the cultural practice of *umhlalapansi* and *ukushela* while also accommodating multiple partners. There is increased pressure among teenage men to enact masculinity in ways that honour compulsory heterosexuality and legitimate multiple partners. *Umhlalaphansi is* thus paradoxical. Cultural and religious norms around respect and objection to sexual secrecy are prominent as this cultural site also provides fertile ground for the accommodation of heterosexual masculinity. Thobani provides further details of the courtship rituals:

> **Thobani:** I already had many other girlfriends [smiling] when I met the mother of my baby. I met her at *umhlalaphansi*. At first, I wasn't interested in her; I wanted her older sister, but she was playing hard to get. When I asked for her number, she gave me a wrong one. The mother of my baby was thirteen years old then [2012], doing grade seven. Her sister kept sending her to talk to me; I got the sense that maybe she was interested in me. In the morning I called the older one who had given me a wrong number – I couldn't talk to her at night because I don't court girls at night! What if I court a girl at night and she turns out to be ugly in the morning? So, I waited to talk to her in the morning. Again, she (older sister) played hard to get, sending her little sister to me. So, I started talking to her sister (mother of my baby). I asked for her number and she gave me a correct one. When I got home, I phoned her, and she turned me down. I just knew that I had to be patient. After some months we met again at another *umhlalaphansi*. I continued with courting until she accepted my proposal that we should date. (Individual Interview 2)

Thobani provides details about *ukushela* and the process through which he became successful in the pursuit of desire and romance. Hunter (2010), like Sofika and van der Riet (2017), suggests that being popular with girls is key to 'successful' masculinity. Traditionally, in South Africa, men are expected to take a leading role in initiating romantic relationships – with women expected to respond to such advances. Sofika and van der Riet (2017) referred to such sexual practices as culturally scripted, with men and women taking on different roles marked by gender power and inequality. Women and girls' responses to the initiation of courtship, however, are culturally specific. Showing shyness, modesty, delaying responses to a boy's advances and reticence, are key cultural markers of an acceptable femininity (Wood, Lambert, and Jewkes 2008). Thobani was turned down initially. This rejection is an acceptable part of heterosexual relationship dynamics which requires males to constantly engage with a possible suitor. Wood, Lambert, and Jewkes (2007) note that the pursuit of a partner is key to showing love and the more a male pursues his love

interest, the more the pursuit is conceptualised as genuine love. Importantly, the relationship is one that shows the operation of cultural dynamics and *ukushela* which come together at *umhlalaphansi* where sexual connections can be realised.

### *Inkwari*

*Inkwari,* like *umhlalaphansi*, provides a spatial domain for the young people in the study to express sexual desire, albeit in ways that did not highlight cultural norms. Rather dance, fun, sexual excitement, alcohol and drug use were key to masculinity making and sexual risk. Current South African studies have associated attendance at *inkwari* with increased sexual risk as a result of unsafe sexual practices and drug use (Grelotti et al. 2014; Mimiaga et al. 2015). For example, Grelotti et al. (2014) found that *whoonga* is commonly used at *inkwari.* Studies that have been conducted on *inkwari* associate its attendance with urban social culture. This is not restricted to urban contexts as five of our participants confirmed attendance in rural KwaZulu-Natal:

> **Siyabonga**: Nokwanda and I loved the same lifestyle, we loved fun, so we sometimes attended parties like *inkwari* where we would drink and have fun…we made a mistake by not using condoms. When she [Nokwanda] went back home, her parents chased her away telling her that, '*phinda la uvela khona*' (go back to where you come from). So, she came back to me and we spent the whole weekend together at my friend's place and went to school on Monday. After two months she told me that she was pregnant. (Individual Interview 4)

Bhana and Nkani's (2014) study of teenage fathers from rural KwaZulu-Natal found that a common answer in accounting for the unplanned pregnancy was that it was a 'mistake' and linked to inconsistent condom use and spontaneous sex. Siyabonga's account of *inkwar*i highlights a relationship between drug and alcohol abuse with unsafe sexual practices (Sofika and van der Riet 2017).

Noting the concerns around sexual risk, some parents prohibit their children from attending *inkwar*i:

> **Andile**: One weekend I lied to my parents and told them that my friend has a party, I went to attend *inkwari*. I just wanted to see for myself what happens at *inkwari* because I've always heard from the other boys at school about the fun, music, dance, drinking and sex that happens at *inkwari*. (Individual Interview 5)

Andile speaks of the social dynamics of masculine peer cultures which is important in highlighting *inkwari* as an arena for masculinity making mobilised around dance, music, fun, sex, and alcohol use. We find that the availability of girls, sex and opportunities for sexual engagements increased the attraction around *inkwari:*

> **Siphiwe:** *Inkwari* is a party that takes place mostly over weekends; young people each contribute a certain amount of money and then they buy alcohol and sometimes even drugs. They drink, smoke and even have sex during *inkwari*. Usually the people who engage in sex are complete strangers – they

are not in a relationship. It's just sex, it's like the next day, "I don't know you and you don't know me". Ayanda doesn't do all those things. She sometimes goes to church, she's different. I love her for that. She behaves well. (Individual Interview 7)

Siphiwe confirms that *inkwari* is about fun, the availability of alcohol, drugs and sex (Mimiaga et al., 2015) and the expression of heterosexual masculinity. Unlike the regulations around cultural norms which sanction what is possible around sex and sexuality, *inkwari* is positioned as an unregulated social arena defined by "its just sex" and non-commitment. In contrast, Siphiwe talks about his girlfriend as good and well behaved as she avoids *inkwari* thus producing the good girl versus the bad girl dichotomy. This dichotomy was further illustrated by another participant as follows:

> **Mpontsho:** The mother of my baby, Zikhona, is a nice girl. But bad sometimes because she still attends *inkwari*. Young people have fun and drink alcohol and dance to the loud music throughout the night, and those in relationships get a chance to be together at *inkwari*. We don't have enough sports facilities in this rural area. So that makes many young people attend *inkwari* because they have nothing else to do when they are not at school. (Individual Interview 8)

Mpontsho's description of *inkwari* indicates that it also provides a space for fun and enjoyment – especially in the context of limited rural recreational facilities that characterise the Ugu District. The quest for enjoyment and pleasure surpasses fear of sexual risk – especially when under the influence of alcohol and drugs (Mimiaga et al., 2015).

**Conclusion**

Teenage fathers in this study construct *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari* as two important social and cultural arenas that provide them with opportunities to enact heterosexual masculinity. These sites present contradictory discourses around gender, religion, culture and sexuality proliferate. Cultural norms as expressed through *umhlalaphansi* are woven into respect and Christian values which prohibit secret relationships. Yet, as this paper has shown, sexual relationships are actively pursued as a marker of heterosexual masculinity and young people's investment in sex and sexuality. During *umhlalaphansi,* sexual relationships are hidden (Harrison, 2008), are often spontaneous much like one-night stands, short term and are characterised by risks for unwanted pregnancy. Sexual health risks associated with *umhlalaphansi* are further expounded as *umhlalaphansi* upholds, rather than challenges, the problematic discourse of masculinity underlined by a culture of multiple girlfriends. *Inkwari*, as other research has documented in South Africa (Mimiaga et al., 2015), comprises a more toxic social cocktail of drugs, spontaneous and unprotected sex, and alcohol abuse as young people explore rave and night-long partying cultures. The teenage men in our study, understood both *inkwari* and *umhlalaphansi* as fertile sites for pursuing heterosexual relationships. Whilst they produced culture in relation to normative understandings of respect, young men were simultaneously vested in heterosexual masculinity and heterosexual success was achieved in/through these cultural and social sites.

Importantly, our study highlights the relavence of context specific rural spaces through which masculinity is enacted which increases teenage men's vulnerability to unwanted pregnancy. Whilst young South Africans have increased access to and knowledge about condoms and sexual risk, especially in relation to HIV and teenage pregnancy (Jewkes and Morrell, 2012), the specific context through which sexuality is produced requires attention if programmes and interventions are to succeed. We have examined the cultural context of the rural setting of Ugu District, KwaZulu-Natal where certain cultural norms are produced and resisted as we have seen in *umhlalaphansi.* In Harrison's (2008) study of young people in rural KwaZulu-Natal, interventions which elevate culturally relevant forms of sexuality education are suggested although these have not yet been implemented. Harrison (2008: 186) also suggests that "using cultural dance forms popular among rural youth to deliver prevention messages is another option". Our study offers a more nuanced understanding of cultural dance in rural KwaZulu-Natal which might not work as an intervention tool unless the underlying assumptions that permeate the cultural dance of *umhlalaphansi* are interrogated and understood as risk producing celebrations.

In rural KwaZulu-Natal, there remains urgent need for effective school-based interventions to address sexual risks associated with *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari*. Such interventions must be designed to target the unplanned teenage pregnancy, but they must also address the related issues of gender and sexuality, HIV, drug use and alcohol. We argue that the risky activities that characterise *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari* need to be added to school programmes so that they are able to provide contextually relevant sexual health and HIV education. In South Africa, sexuality education forms part of the Life Orientation programme in school, which was designed to empower learners with knowledge on all aspects of personal and social health and development, while also raising cultural consciousness among learners. However, research shows that Life Orientation has not been effective enough in terms of addressing issues of sexuality and HIV that affect the young people in South Africa (Mthatyana and Vincent 2015). One of the reasons underlining this ineffectiveness lies in how sexuality is taught – with teachers give much emphasis to discourses of danger, risk and disease without giving adequate attention to young people's own experiences and understandings about sexuality. Nor has there been any attention to cultural norms in the delivery of Life Orientation as we have seen in the rural context of Ugu. To address this gap, we suggest that the sexuality education curriculum must begin to explore ways of engaging the subject of sexuality from the perspectives of young people as we have done in this study with teenage fathers. This will require Life Orientation teachers to grasp the interplay between the social, material, cultural, and gendered contours surrounding young peoples' sexual conduct. By giving attention to local contours of sexuality and the operation of sexuality in different contexts, teachers may have better chances of success in addressing the issue of unplanned teenage fatherhood. This success, however, will depend on the extent to which the teachers are able to challenge teenage men to avoid unprotected sex while also challenging the social and gendered norms through which masculinity in this impoverished South African rural context is achieved.

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**Chapter 4**
*Ubaba ukhona kodwa angikabi namandla[i]*: **Navigating teenage fatherhood in rural Kwazulu-Natal**

**Introduction**

South Africa has one of the highest rates of absent fathers in the world (Richter et al., 2012). Many scholars have written about the negative consequences it has on the lives and development of children (Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Makusha, 2013; Richter et al., 2010; Richter et al., 2012). Some 30% to 50% of children born to teenage mothers have teenage fathers who do not live with them (Mollborn and Lovegrove, 2011). As concerns about pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers grow, especially where pregnancies have compromised educational outcomes, research has justifiably been directed to young women's particular vulnerability within contexts of poverty and unequal gender relations (Morrell et al., 2012).

Research focusing on young fathers' vulnerability and the challenges they face in assuming fatherhood, particularly regarding financial support and involvement in their children's lives has not been as widespread. Swartz and Bhana (2009); Bhana and Nkani (2014) Langa and Smith (2012); Makusha and Richter (2016); Morrell et al., (2016); Chili and Maharaj (2015) are some of the scholars who have begun to be engaged in research on young fathers. Studies show that how teenage fathers understand their roles and responsibilities as fathers, and how they support the young mother and the child, is influenced by particular local ideals of masculinity (Jewkes et al., 2009). In this chapter, I explore a young man's experience of becoming a father and his ideas of masculinity. This case study points to the existence of ideas about teenage fatherhood that identify a father's responsibilities as going beyond providing materially to providing day-to-day care to children. In writing against the conventional narrative of young fathers, I draw attention to the complexities and contradictions that young fathers have to navigate, especially a father like Mandla who comes from the impoverished Ugu district, in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I begin the chapter with a brief summary of what we know about the experiences of teenage fathers from the limited research available. This is followed by a description

of the study. I then discuss Mandla's experiences and ideas about fatherhood and masculinity in order to underscore how understandings of teenage fathers' actions cannot be divorced from their specific cultural contexts. This chapter demonstrates how taking into account experiences, perceptions and locations enables context specific insights into the complex manifestations of masculinities as being and becoming a father is negotiated.

**Teenage fathers and masculinities in South Africa**

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that masculinity is not just a fixed entity embedded in the body or in personality characteristics. They define it, rather, as a practice that happens through social interaction and which is shaped by gender relations in any given social setting. In rural KwaZulu-Natal being a breadwinner is central to ideals of fatherhood and constructions of masculinity (Bhana and Nkani, 2014). Most teenage fathers, however, are unable to fulfil this role, especially in contexts of acute unemployment and structural inequalities. This challenge of fatherhood is compounded by persistent cultural norms that often make it difficult for a father to be involved in his child's life.

When Swartz and Bhana (2009) explored the experiences of young men who became fathers in their teenage years, it emerged that young fathers faced numerous challenges in attempting to be involved in their children's lives. One of these barriers was the payment of *inhlawulo* or damages. Nkani (this volume) provides a detailed discussion of *inhlawulo*, here I discuss its historical roots and its cross-cultural applicability. Historically, the significance of the payment of *inhlawulo* was to mediate a father's involvement in the life of a child. This enabled maternal family to engage paternal kin in ensuring the well-being of a child. *Ilobolo* (bridewealth) was initially used by black South African communities to formalize a union and legitimize children from that union, however, the prevalence of unemployment made it difficult (Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1989). *Inhlawulo* offered an alternative to the payment of *ilobolo*, whereby the genitor can formally acknowledge paternity and give the child kinship rights into his paternal family (Madhavan, 2010). The payment of *inhlawulo* doesn't not automatically lead to a later payment of *ilobolo*. Mkhwanazi and Block (2016), note that in Nyanga East, South Africa, even in the absence of *inhlawulo*, families are beginning to involve paternal kin in childcare activities and a child can be

incorporated into paternal lineage. This is a positive shift in cultural norms, towards a more inclusive family structure, as envisioned by the Department of Social Development (2012).

In a study conducted by Madhavan (2010) in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa; where the sample comprised of Tsonga, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana and Pedi unmarried young mothers; all participants confirmed the cultural value of either *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo* as means of securing moral legitimacy and connection with the child's paternal kin. Also, Mkhwanazi and Block (2016) found similarities whereby families of an unwed Xhosa mother from Nyanga East in South Africa and families from Mokhotlong in Lesotho would confront the genitor or his family for the payment of damages, called *litsenyehelo* in Sesotho. The payment of damages is not only a Zulu cultural practice but a popular practice among black communities in Southern Africa.

Payment of damages is an important way for a father to negotiate access to his child and shapes the kind of relationship that will exist between the father and his child (Madhavan et al., 2008; Makusha, 2013). Scholars have suggested that an inability to pay *inhlawulo* deprives the biological father of being recognised as the father of the child and may lead to restrictions by the mother's family on claiming his visiting rights (Madhavan et al., 2008; Makusha, 2013; Makusha and Richter, 2016). According to Langa and Smith (2012) the payment of *inhlawulo* brings dignity and pride to fathers. For example, young father who participated in Langa and Smith's (2012) study viewed himself as a "better man" because he paid *inhlawulo* before it was even asked of him.

In South Africa, the majority of men do not have the resources to pay *inhlawulo* or even to assume provider masculinity (Hunter, 2010; Richter, Chikovore and Makusha, 2010). A lack of financial means may result in fathers denying paternity and thus being freed from the obligation to pay *inhlawulo* or provide financially for the child and the child's mother in the future (Nduna and Jewkes, 2012). For example, young fathers without financial resources who took part in Swartz and Bhana's (2009) study highlighted the role played by their own mothers in providing both financial and emotional support for the teenage father and his child. However, studies have also indicated that there has been a shift in the perception that fathers' involvement in their

children's lives should be limited to a financial one (Hosegood and Madhavan, 2010; Makusha, 2013). Studies that have explored fathers' involvement (Morrell, 2006, Makusha, 2013; Makusha and Richter, 2016; Morrell et al., 2016), build on the work that was pioneered by Lamb (1976). Lamb's (1976) definition of 'father involvement' was centralized in three sections; accessibility, engagement and responsibility. According to Lamb (1976) accessibility refers to the kind of involvement whereby the father would be busy with the child, but available to respond to the needs of the child if they arise; engagement refers to the amount of time spent in one-on-one interaction with the child and responsibility is about providing materially for the child. It is against this backdrop that this chapter examines Mandla's story.

**Methods and context of the study**

This study was conducted at one of the high schools in Illovo (also known as Ulovu), in the Ugu district, approximately 40km south of Durban, in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province. Illovo is comprised of urban, township and rural settlements. The rural settlements fall under the Thoyana Tribal Authority. In 2011 there were some 6446 households in Illovo, and a total population of approximately 24 728 (2982 people per $km^2$), approximately 53% women and 47% men (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Most African residents (99.55%) live in the rural areas and township of Illovo whereas a small percentage of coloured, white and Indian people (0.47%) are located in the urban areas. The rural settlements of Illovo are underdeveloped and there is a high rate of unemployment. Most residents of Illovo are African and *IsiZulu-*speaking.

This chapter is part of an ongoing doctoral study that examines 30 teenage fathers' narratives of fatherhood. Mandla's story derives from this larger sample. The study is a qualitative narrative inquiry. Narrative research as a way of understanding experience; stories lived and told (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). In narrative thinking, the context of the study is important. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that narrative inquiry is based on three dimensions: interaction (personal and social); continuity (past, present and future) combined with the situation (notion of place). In order to understand his masculine identity, my interactions with Mandla involved all these dimensions. Three hour long in-depth interviews were conducted with Mandla

in *IsiZulu*, which is the first language for both Mandla and myself (NM). Interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated into English. All interviews were held at the school. The aim of having interviews at school was to ensure participant well-being. Following King and Horrocks in their ethical principle of beneficence (which entails securing the well-being of participants), I found it more appropriate to drive approximately 130 km from my work place to his school, so as to interview Mandla at his own school, when school had ended for the day. Also, the kind of setting where Mandla lived, was not conducive for interviews to be held at home (as outlined in the background below). The reason for focusing on just one story is to provide the reader with a rich insight into the complex negotiation of masculinity and teenage fatherhood; as Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) argue that stories lived and told are as a result of influence on the person's inner life, social influences and the person's unique personal history. Before I proceed to the next section, let me provide some background information.

Mandla was 19 years old and in grade 11 at a rural high school when I first interviewed him. He lived with his 31-year-old sister, Phume, and his brother-in-law, Ndumiso, in a rural settlement of Illovo. His parents were married and lived at KwaMachi, a rural settlement in Harding, about 100km from Port Shepstone, on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Mandla grew up at KwaMachi and, after passing grade 7, asked his parents if he could go and live with Phume since he would be able to find temporary work to help support himself financially. Mandla also used the opportunity to move to Illovo as a way of escaping from his father who was very strict. His father stayed at Illovo whilst working at Toyota [a large car manufacturing company], in Durban. When his father retired in 2010, he moved back to KwaMachi. Mandla moved to Illovo in 2011. Describing his childhood, Mandla said:

> I think I was a spoilt child because I had stayed many years with my mother who wasn't too strict unlike my father who was very strict with his rules. Back then I didn't get along with my father because of his strict rules so I decided to move back to Illovo to do grade 8 at this school.

During weekends and school holidays Mandla worked at Ndumiso's small car repair business, which he operated from home. But that was not enough and so in 2013 Mandla found himself selling drugs at school in order to make extra cash. In 2014,

when Mandla was 17 and in grade 10, he found out that his girlfriend, Ntokozo, who was then 14 and in grade 8 was pregnant.

**Becoming a father: negotiating *inhlawulo*, taking responsibility and provider masculinity**

> We started dating in 2013, she was doing grade 7 and I was doing grade 10. Because her parents didn't like our relationship, they sent her away to stay with her father in Umlazi… Her parents just didn't want any boy next to [having a relationship with] their daughter. I think they were trying to protect her. They said she was too young to have a boyfriend. She would come to visit her mother here at Illovo during school holidays and we would see each other. We continued with our relationship in secret. When she was in Umlazi she would phone me every day because she knew my number by heart and I also reached her through her friends. In September 2014, we found out that she was pregnant. She was four months when we found out (Mandla).

Mandla said that he was shocked when Ntokozo told him about the pregnancy. When they told her family, Ntokozo's mother demanded to know how Mandla planned to support the baby, invoking the idea that men should provide financial resources to raise the child. He told her that he would continue with his temporary jobs and that he intended to contribute towards the material care of the baby by "buying the stuff the baby needs". He assured Ntokozo's mother that they both planned to continue with school. She then told him that she wanted to speak to his parents. Mandla explained that his parents lived far away but he could ask his elder sister, Phume, to come and speak to Ntokozo's family on behalf of his family. The following Sunday Phume met with Ntokozo's mother and they discussed the payment of *inhlawulo*. Afterwards Mandla said that he felt "relieved because [now] both families knew".  Despite Mandla not having a steady income, when his father found out about the pregnancy, he insisted that Mandla should pay *inhlawulo,* hence following a widely-held norm in the community.

> Ntokozo's family accepted that I cannot pay because I'm not working ['*angikabi namandla*' – I don't have power at the moment]. My father told me to pay it [*inhlawulo*]when I start working, when I finish school and I mean when I get a real job.

Since Mandla could not afford the payment, Ntokozo's family agreed to postpone it until such time as he could do so. Mandla used the phrase '*angikabi namandla*' to indicate his willingness to conform to the norm yet he acknowledged that he was hindered by his lack of proper employment and limited finances. A participant who took part in Bhana and Nkani's (2014) study also indicated a great desire to be fully involved in his child's life by using the expression '*ubaba ukhona*' (father is here), while also indicating his powerlessness by using the expression '*anginawo amandla*' (I have no power). The difference between the *angikabi namandla* and *anginawo amandla* is that the former indicates that at that moment the speaker does not have financial power although he foresees that the situation will change in the future, whereas the latter indicates that he has lost hope in his situation changing.

The construction of masculinity, like all identities, is complex, fluid, multiple and varied. However, there are certain dominant ideals that are recognised within particular communities. Previous research has indicated that in the first decade of the twenty first century a dominant form of masculinity among young men was premised on promiscuity and conspicuous consumption. This concept of masculinity often resulted in young men denying paternity and thus feeling free to continue with multiple relationships and capricious spending (cf. Mkhwanazi, 2010; Hunter, 2010; Jewkes and Morrell, 2012). Thus, the fact that Mandla did not deny paternity and wanted to take responsibility contradicts this dominant representation of young masculinities (Jewkes et al., 2011). Mandla's insistence on 'buying what the baby needs' resonates with Morrell (2006) statement that 'providing' is an important aspect of masculine identity and responsibility. Richter and Morrell (2008) argue that one African definition of 'a father' is a man who assumes the responsibility of caring for and protecting the child. In Mandla's particular circumstance of limited financial power, responsibility meant caring and protecting. Responsibility is material support but can go beyond materiality to include care. In this way fatherhood becomes a site where masculinity is transformed with consequences for progress towards gender equality (Elliot, 2015; Morrell et al., 2016; Makusha, 2013).

When asked to describe an ideal father, Mandla answered:

> An ideal father must have his own house [and] be married. He must be working and he must be able to teach his children respect. He must also be respectable... A father has to have a house so that he can provide his

> children with a home. As they grow up, they [the children] need to know
> that they are growing up under their father's hand… Growing up under the
> father's hand means that a child lives with his father and behaves
> according to what the father is teaching him because, you see, sometimes
> if a child does not live with his father he loses respect (Mandla).

As a young, unwed father who was still at school and not living with his girlfriend, Mandla's idea of an ideal father was everything that he himself was not. In rural KwaZulu-Natal, the predominant practice is that a man secures employment and uses his money to build a house and pay *ilobolo* to the family of his prospective bride. When they get married, he and his new wife live with his parents, even if he has finished building the house, until such time as they get blessings from the parents to move to their own home. Mkhwanazi and Block (2016) write that the rates of formally acknowledged unions have declined in Southern Africa, and this could be related to limited job opportunities available to men, hindering from paying *ilobolo* and denial of paternity in some cases. Mandla thus sees the house as an important aspect of being a father. Thus, in his eyes, a father not only provides financially but also materially.

Aside from being a provider, Mandla also perceived fatherhood as being about control – having the power to discipline the children, assuming the role of authority figure and acting as a guide and role model on matters such as how to behave. The use of the term 'his father's hand' (*isandla sikababa*) shows the importance he places on the father as a figure of authority and discipline. However, according to Mandla, for a father to command this authority and respect from his children he should be married, working, and living in his own house. This reflects the manner in which Mandla grew up. Mandla grew up in a home with a father who married his mother, provided the family with shelter and other material needs, and was strict and authoritarian. To Mandla, being able to provide materially was as important aspect of fatherhood:

> …it happens; you see children do not give their mothers the same level of
> respect as their fathers… A father is able to put down strict rules for his
> children like telling them what time to be back home after visiting
> friends… Mothers do put the rules but it's not the same as rules laid down
> by a father. As time goes by, a father develops pride about his children.
> For example, in 15 years' time he can praise himself for doing well…
> because 15 years is when the child is able to display behaviour showing
> what was taught by the father during the early years of the child's life.
> Like if the child is 15 years or older not smoking, not pregnant, having not

impregnated any girl, getting good results at school and respecting older people at home and in the community. Sometimes people will praise the child for the good behaviour and that makes the father very proud.

Here, Mandla is expressing a common idea that only fathers are able to discipline children and that children raised by mothers will be unruly and disobedient. Such children, he implies, are likely to smoke, get pregnant, drop out of school and not adhere to norms pertaining to proper conduct such as showing respect for elders. In a sense, this sentiment corroborates Mkhwanazi's (2010) argument that mothers of teenagers are often held to blame for teenagers who become pregnant because it is thought that they have not taught their daughters how to behave.

## Being a father: I was always there for Angela and her mother

> During pregnancy, my girlfriend would complain that I'm not giving her my attention because she's pregnant. So, I decided that I will spend most of my Saturdays with her at her place because her mother would be gone to church, as a member of Nazareth Baptist Church also called Shembe. We would sit and laugh, tell each other jokes and talk about our baby (Mandla).

Mandla spoke fondly of Ntokozo and baby Angela (pseudonym). He told me how he supported his girlfriend, both financially and emotionally, during pregnancy and after the birth of their baby. Mandla presented caregiving as central to his experience of becoming a father and being a father. In the interviews, he often mentioned the emotional and childcare support he provided to Ntokozo but he also spoke about the challenges he faced not having any money and emphasized that he made every effort to provide for his family despite being poor:

> I used to have a grass-cutting machine that helped me to make some money by cutting grass in our neighbourhood. But when the baby was born, the machine was broken and I didn't have money to repair it. My only support was my brother-in-law, Ndumiso, who said if I need anything for the baby I must let him know. He sometimes gave me jobs over the weekends and school holidays in his car repair business. He would pay me R500 a week so that I [could] buy stuff for the baby like milk and nappies. I was always there for Angela and her mother… When she went to the clinic or hospital with the baby, I would accompany her and carry the baby all the way to the bus stop and whilst waiting at the hospital queue. It felt good, it felt really good. When Angela was born my girlfriend's, parents began to accept me. Her [Ntokozo's] mother said the birth of the baby had

strengthened the relationship between me and their family. Her mother helped me in buying some of the baby's stuff (Mandla).

Although initially Ntokozo's family did not approve of the relationship between Ntozoko and Mandla, when Mandla showed his willingness to care for Ntokozo and Angela their attitude to him gradually began to change from one of rejection to acceptance. As a show of increasing acceptance, Mandla was allowed to spend more time with his child despite having not yet paid *inhlawulo*. Recent research has shown the ways in which families have used *inhlawulo* to obstruct fathers from disadvantaged backgrounds becoming involved in their children's lives (Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Makusha and Richter, 2016; Swartz and Bhana, 2009). Mandla was allowed full access to his baby and was allowed to give his child a name, a privilege often denied to teenage fathers or to fathers who have not paid *inhlawulo*.

> Having a baby stressed me a lot because I couldn't buy baby stuff. Even in class I would be stressed and couldn't concentrate on my lessons because sometimes the mother of my baby (*umama wengane yami*) would tell me that she needs nappies or milk or other things for the baby. It would really stress me because I didn't have money. Sometimes she would tell me that Angela is sick and crying and I would ask her to come and sleep at my place just to help her take care of the baby at night. The following day I would be very tired at school. I failed grade 11 because I was stressed. Things were really tough for me and the mother of my baby.

According to the cultural norms, especially amongst the Zulus, a child born out of a formally recognised union, belongs to the maternal family. Mkhwanazi and Block (2016) found that in Mokhotlong, Lesotho, the family of a woman who falls pregnant out of a formally recognised union; completely cuts ties with the father of the child, regarding him as 'unknown' and excludes him from taking any form of responsibility, including providing materially for the child. This practice places an extra burden on the mother of the child, especially in cases of young mothers with limited support structures and resources. Madhavan (2010) found that in some parts of rural South Africa, even if both the mother and the child live with the mother's family; regular contact with the father and his family is maintained in order to ensure kin connectivity and financial support. In the case of Mandla, Angela's illness afforded him an opportunity to take part in some of the childcare activities and also to have both mother and child spend some nights at his place, even if it was temporary. Despite

Angela's illness, Mandla knew that he could not ask Ntokozo and the baby to live in his household as he could not afford to support them.

Descriptions of the great lengths that a young father went to provide care, and the emotional toil that it took on him, is rare in literature on the experiences of teenage fatherhood in South Africa. Mandla not only spoke about the challenges he faced in negotiating fatherhood and schooling, but also about the stress, pain and helplessness he felt when his child was ill. When Angela was nine months old, she became very ill and died. Mandla told me about it in the following words:

> …it was very painful. She was nine months and had just started crawling. Doctors said she had asthma like her mother. That stressed me a lot. I failed grade 11 and this year [2016] I'm repeating… We got counselling. The nurses spoke to us. I think we are both ok now. We miss Angela very much but we agreed that we are going to focus on our education and not rush into having another baby. So Ntokozo is using the injection to prevent another pregnancy… I think Angela would still be alive if she [had] stayed with my parents who both use traditional medicine. Maybe she would [have had] better care than what she got from her mother who is still a child herself (Mandla).

As Mandla said, after the death of the baby he and Ntokozo decided to focus on their education and prevent future unwanted pregnancies. This is another aspect of masculinity: using past experiences to make decisions about the future.

**The ideal man**

While describing his relationship with Ntokozo and Angela with emotion and care, Mandla also revealed that he simultaneously upheld the idea than a man needed to have multiple concurrent partners:

> She [Ntokozo] would accuse me of spending my time with other girlfriends… I had about three or four other girlfriends. As boys, we competed with each other about the number of girlfriends [we had]. If you have one girlfriend or none, [you become the subject of] *uyahwayelwa* by other boys… *Ukuhwayelwa* is when other boys make fun of you, making silly jokes about you. When you show up, everyone just laughs. Because I didn't want *ukuhwayelwa amajitha* [to be mocked by the guys], when my girlfriend moved to Umlazi to stay with her father, I found myself other girlfriends. Sometimes Ntokozo would catch me with them and become very angry and we would have arguments… The girlfriends were not replacements [laughs]. No, I still had Ntokozo. She is the one I have had a long relationship with, but things changed when my baby was born. I just had to grow up.

Similar to findings in other studies in South Africa focusing on the construction of masculinities, Mandla subscribed to the idea that manhood was about having multiple partners (Jewkes and Morrell, 2012). However, he attempted to justify the contrast between his earlier narrative of being a caring man and this almost indifferent attitude by arguing that, as the mother of child, Ntokozo was special – 'the one'. This contradiction between a sense of recklessness with multiple girlfriends and care with a long-term partner has been written about in studies that look at the dynamics of multiple concurrent partners (cf. Reddy and Dunne, 2007). Like other men who engage in multiple, concurrent partnerships, Mandla reasoned that his long-term relationship with Ntokozo meant that there was a level of trust and commitment between them. It also meant that there was no need for them to use contraception. In their study in KwaZulu-Natal, Chili and Maharaj (2015) also found the association between long-term relationships and trust and that men who were in a long-term relationship used contraception inconsistently.

Multiple concurrent partners are socially accepted as a masculine norm. They are often viewed as a hegemonic display of masculinity, however, the same behaviour amongst women is negatively viewed. According to Mandla having multiple partners, did not have any negative effect with Ntokozo as long as he spent with her. Ntokozo's response to Mandla, suggests her complicity in reproducing the normative masculine conduct around multiple sexual partnerships.

Mandla's words also shed light on the ways in which peer pressure combined with norms of masculinity and gender inequalities further increase sexual risk-taking in young men. Mandla had multiple concurrent partners in order to avoid *ukuhwayelwa amajitha*. Yet in so doing he was putting his life and that of his girlfriends at risk, especially given the high prevalence of HIV among young people in the Ugu District. In this area, the HIV prevalence was at 40.2% in 2009/2010 and 41.1% in 2010/2011 (Ugu District Strategic Plan: USDP 2012-2016). Yet the number of girlfriends Mandla had was how he identified himself as masculine, regardless of the risks involved.

**Discussion**

Mandla's narrative of early fatherhood sheds light on a young man's experience of teenage parenthood in the context of a resource-poor, rural setting. While the interlocuters are on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of gender, and geographical location, Mandla and Rethabile's stories speak well to and reinforce the need to challenge the dominant portrayal of experiences of being and becoming teenage parents. In reading them together, we are afforded a glimpse of what Quma may have felt (through Mandla) and through Rethabile what Ntokozo may have felt (for Rethabile's experiences see Mkhwanazi, this volume).

Mandla's narrative about fatherhood draws attention to the importance of understanding the socio-cultural context in which young men construct gendered identities which consequently inform their ideas about fatherhood. In negotiating the experience of being and becoming a teenager father in rural Ugu, Mandla upholds dominant notions about ideal fatherhood, despite not being able to translate them into his day to day life.

In Ugu, like elsewhere in the country, the denial of paternity and the absence of a father from the child's life was common. However, when Mandla learned about his girlfriend's pregnancy, he insisted on taking responsibility and providing care for the mother and baby. This is similar to some of the experiences of fathers mentioned in other chapters in this volume- notably Chili and Maharaj, Mkhwanazi. In the context of common father absence, many would read that taking responsibility for a child is contrary to ideas of masculinity in these communities. What I want to suggest, is that this action actually reinforces dominant ideas of manhood by having men insist on providing care and support. Teenage fathers who participated in Langa and Smith's (2012) study, for example, indicated their commitment to being caring and loving fathers in order to provide their children with a different experience of growing up than they experienced themselves in their own father-child relationships, where their fathers were either absent or present but distant (see also Bhana and Nkani, 2014). In taking responsibility for his baby, Mandla reproduces the dominant understandings of masculinity that are based on a man providing for a woman and her children. Hunter calls this "provider masculinity" and uses the term to refer to the cultural practices

and gender norms where men are expected to provide for women's material needs (Hunter, 2010).

So, despite the economic hardships that Mandla suffered, he insisted and found a way to perform 'provider masculinity' in order to define himself as a father. At the same time, however Mandla's story contradicts the common discourse of teenage fathers as being uncaring, uninvolved and irresponsible.

Another way that Mandla reproduces dominant ideals of masculinity is by buying into a notion of masculinity in which having multiple partners are a sign of manhood. Mandla, like many young people today is aware of the deleterious effects on relationship dynamics and the health and wellbeing of families yet he indulges in these relationships. At once caring, involved and responsible, he can also be seen as uncaring, uninvolved and irresponsible. This very contradiction sheds light on the complexity that young men face in navigating dominant ideas about manhood.

**Concluding remarks.**

Even though this chapter uses one narrative, and cannot be generalized for all the teenage fathers from a rural context; it does point to a possible shift in norms whereby a maternal family may allow a father full access to the life of the child; irrespective of the payment of *inhlawulo*. This is an important milestone in acknowledging the dynamics that exist within the spectrum of fatherhood and the need for finding ways of ensuring fathers from disadvantaged backgrounds are involved in the lives of their children. Mandla's story also sheds light on the ways in which dominant masculine norms are reproduced – such as the need to achieve provider masculinity and a heterosexualized masculinity based on multiple partners and risky behaviour. This version of masculinity is based on notions of a male entitlement to sex. It puts young men and women at risk. An understanding of teenage fatherhood as masculinity-making, as I have shown in this chapter, has value in understanding the ways in which Mandla contested dominant masculinities by describing himself as caring and expressive of emotions, while at the same time reproducing hegemonic versions of masculinity.

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I am here as a father but I don't have power yet.

**Chapter 5**

**Sandile's Story**

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> "He told us all the terrible things that he had said to us in the past like we can starve…he didn't care, he told us that. And on his last day he begged us to forgive him. He looked sad, he actually had tears- you can imagine tears of an old man"

This is the story told by 18-year old teenage father, Sandile, who lives in Illovo in rural Ugu District of KwaZulu-Natal. Sandile shares with us the last encounter he had with his biological father, to whom he referred to as a "stranger," on his deathbed. Sandile's story continues. His stepfather took over the role of father and supported Sandile and his siblings. In 2014, Sandile's stepfather died of tuberculosis, and Sandile told us of the pain he felt this time. He also expressed his deep sense of powerlessness. His mother was a lone provider, relying on the Child Support Grant (CSG), introduced by the South African government in 1998 to alleviate poverty. The grant began with a monthly cash benefit of R100 payable to a child's primary caregiver up to the age of seven, and extended to benefit children up to age 18. When he turned 18, Sandile's benefit was terminated, but his mother continues to collect the grant for his three younger siblings and gets some help from an older relative Sandile's experience in a female-headed household, in poverty, their reliance on CSG, and the absent and uncaring father, is not unusual in South Africa: in impoverished black African households, only one in three children live with a mother and father (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Factors that contribute to this include the legacy of apartheid through male migrant labour, land dispossession and the geographical separation of fathers from their children through "cultural gatekeeping" (Hunter, 2010; Makusha and Richter, 2016). A common example of cultural gatekeeping is the payment of *inhlawulo* (fine that is paid by a man for an out of wedlock pregnancy), which is common among black Africans. Due to high rate of unemployment, many South African fathers are unable to pay either *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo* (bridewealth). Inability to pay *inhlawulo* may sometimes rob a father off an opportunity of being part of his child's life (Hunter, 2010; Makusha and Richter, 2016). Dominant hegemonic

notions of masculinity, often associated with drugs, alcohol abuse and multiple partners, impact on young men. Yet, as we describe, for Sandile, the path to becoming a father provided him with moments of reflection, allowing him to consider responsibility and renewed forms of power that could catapult to changing masculinities.

**Power and playboys**

Growing up was not easy for Sandile:

> As a boy, I did all the bad things. At grade 6 I started smoking cigarettes, moved to alcohol and dagga (marijuana) at grade 7. I would save R5 each day so that on Friday I would have R35. We would put our monies together with my friends and buy a bottle of brandy. I think it's because of the friends that I had, ja (yes) we influenced each other to do those things. We would drink during break and smoke. After break, we would come back drunk and disturb classes. I think it was bad influence from friends. We would arrive late at school and sometimes bunk classes. When I was drunk, I would feel good, alcohol made me feel like a different person, a person who is happy.

Through alcohol and drugs, Sandile was able to express power, derive pleasure, work against the misery and drudgery of poverty, and gain power amongst his group of friends. At the same time, he had multiple girlfriends and his peer group called themselves playboys:

> I was good when it comes to *ukweshela* (courting). I was never turned down by a girl. So, I just couldn't wait to pass grade 7 and come to high school. We were a group of 9 friends; 8 of us passed grade 7 only one failed. When we came to high school to do grade 8, we gave our group a name; we called ourselves playboys**.** We would sit together during break and eat cakes and cold drinks. We would ask any boy to go and call a child (girl) for us and he would go and return with that child. It was about showing off that *sibanibani* (so and so) *uyayibamba le ngane* (is in a relationship with this child) she belongs to him. Even when I was doing grade 8 I had a girlfriend doing grade 12.

The term playboy -- used for a man with multiple girlfriends -- is not unusual in rural KwaZulu-Natal, as Hunter (2010) notes. One older participant who took part in

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Hunter's (2010) study, was defined a 'playboy' as *isoka lamanyala* (a dirty *isoka*), a man with many girlfriends without intention to marry any of them; an *isoka* is a man who intends to choose one to marry.

Sandile's aim as a playboy was to show off and earn the respect of his peers. Then in 2015 he met Ntobe, who was 18 years old and doing grade 10. Sandile was 17, and in the same classroom. He said that Ntobe was the most brilliant learner in class, and she would do homework for both of them. Unlike other girls who saw nothing wrong in sharing their playboy boyfriends (Bhana and Anderson, 2013), Ntobe would fight with any girl who was in a relationship with Sandile. She was often reported to the principal, and as a result her relationship with Sandile became known to the whole school. Their relationship was volatile:

> One night we had a big fight with Ntobe when she was visiting; she woke up in the middle of the night whilst I was sleeping. I saw her heating a spoon over the burning stove. She was crying saying she wants to burn my face so that I become less attractive to the other girlfriends. It was a big fight; I woke up and fought back, trying very hard to protect my face. My mother woke up because of the noise because we were both crying. She took Ntobe to sleep with her and I went back to my room. Luckily, I blocked the spoon with my hand and I only got a small scratch.

Violent gender relations are a feature of teenage heterosexual relationships (Russell et al., 2014) but violence can be viewed as a sign of love and commitment (Wood et al., 2008). Sandile's mother supported their relationship and advised them to use protection. But Ntobe was already pregnant. Sandile insisted he always had condoms and had protected sex, and Ntobe would insist "no condom no sex." However:

> One day after having sex we saw that the condom was missing, we really got worried cos when we started I was wearing it. We found it inside Ntobe (girlfriend's vagina), so we don't know what happened … One night I visited her and when her parents were asleep, she allowed me to sneak into her bedroom and that night we had no protection; we had unprotected sex … As a boyfriend, it's my duty to provide CDs (condoms) ... we continued using condoms but sometimes we would have sex without protection.

**Pregnancy**

Their inconsistent and incorrect use of condoms resulted in Ntobe's pregnancy:

> One day she told me that she doesn't feel well. She said she has nausea; she feels sleepy and tired all the time. She said she suspects that she may be pregnant. So, she asked her friend to accompany her to the clinic and the nurses confirmed that she was pregnant. We just didn't know what to do, we were so afraid of what our parents would say. It was a very difficult time in our relationship; we decided that we were not going to tell anyone until the pregnancy start showing. Only our close friends knew.

However, Ntobe did not carry pregnancy to full term; she had a miscarriage at three months. When the local clinic referred Ntobe to hospital for a curette to "clean out her womb," Sandile's mother went with her, providing both physical and emotional support. After the miscarriage, Ntobe and Sandile no longer used a condom or any other form of contraceptive. Two months after the miscarriage, Ntobe was pregnant again.

> We continued with our relationship. We were no longer using protection. After some time, she told me that she was pregnant again. Miscarriage was sometime in June (2015) and she found out about the second pregnancy in August. My mother suspected that she was pregnant and asked her; she denied it, she just lied. My grandmother from Umlazi phoned my mother to say she was having strange dreams like someone was pregnant. My mother called both of us and asked if Ntobe was pregnant. We denied it until Ntobe started crying and admitted that she was pregnant

Despite that they were not using protection, Sandile insisted that the second pregnancy was not planned, and they were shocked. Sandile's mother told him to drop out of school and to find a job in order to provide for his child, and so assuming his new role of fatherhood.

> My mother took me to another room and spoke strongly to me, telling me that I have to drop out of school to go and work for the baby now that I am a man. I managed to find a temporary job where I was helping one guy who is a local

builder. I worked for him during weekends and school holidays and he paid me R100 each day. I spent it all on Ntobe's needs like paying for her transport to the clinic. I stopped smoking and drinking in 2015, I just had to grow up. I spent every cent I had on Ntobe.

**Being there for each other**

Sandile made every effort to provide for Ntobe - so meeting the socially set standards of masculinity - taking on temporary jobs on weekends and holidays. In addition, he found other ways to provide Ntobe with care and support, including academic support when she couldn't come to school.

> She (Ntobe) was very brave; she came to school with her big tummy. She didn't care who said what. When exams for first term (2016) started, she was highly pregnant and only managed to write two subjects then went to deliver the baby, our baby boy. When she was away, I would communicate with our school LSA (Learner Support Agent); who would give me some schoolwork from subject teachers, especially assessment tasks to pass on to Ntobe. Ntobe would do the (assessment) tasks and give to me, so that I give LSA, who would then forward to different subject teachers. This really helped Ntobe to have some marks in her subjects; but not all teachers gave LSA the work.

Such stories of caring teenage fathers are often untold. Sandile was determined to be a supportive and caring father, to provide Ntobe and their child with a different experience from his own. The academic support that Sandile gave Ntobe, together with the LSA, enabled her to make a smooth re-entry back to school after having a baby. As Sandile explained, the LSA helps learners with problems that disturb learning, including linking them with social workers, referring them to the health clinic, and in other ways, working with young pregnant women to ensure they return to school after delivery. Both Sandile and Ntobe would talk to the LSA, although this was unusual:

> Usually, it's pregnant girls or girls who have become mothers who go and talk to the LSA. Boys don't want the whole school to know that they have become

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fathers, most of them prefer to keep it a secret. So, I think that's why they (teenage fathers) don't want to be seen talking to the LSA. But I'm telling you mam, there are so many of us who are fathers here (at school); we know each other and we protect each other's secret. When teachers get to know your story that you have become a father, it's like they want the whole world to know.

Stigma and shame therefore prevent teenage fathers from getting support that might help them negotiate fatherhood and schooling. Sandile continued, giving account of the day, his child was born:

I was away with my school soccer team when my mother phoned me to tell me that Ntobe is in labour. She told me that she (my mother) had hired a car to take her (Ntobe) to the hospital. Around 8pm my mother called me to say Ntobe has been taken to hospital. The following day around 8 in the morning my mother phoned me again and told me that I was a father to a baby boy.

It was a great shock. I just cried and couldn't explain to my teammates… I think it was because I was very happy. I ended up telling teachers that I have just become a father - they couldn't believe it. I showed them the picture that my mother had sent via WhatsApp. I was very happy about becoming a father. As a result, that day I had a very good game; I managed to focus knowing that Ntobe and the baby were fine. After being told that I had become a father; I even ignored the girlfriends from other schools that I had found at a hotel where we were staying. My mother phoned me again to tell me that we can go together to the hospital the following day if I wanted to see the baby.

So Sandile shared his news with his teachers, despite the general expectation that boys and men should 'bury their emotions' (Kaufman, 1993: 61). Sandile also told us about the kind of a relationship that he has with his son, Ayanda.

My mother stays with our baby. I am saving every cent that I get for him and his mother. Whenever I look at him, it's like I see myself, he has my looks. He is very handsome. He has a beautiful smile like his mother. When my mother is busy with some of her duties, I hold Ayanda, tell him stories until he falls

asleep then put him to sleep, he sleeps with my mother but I also help like making his bottle. It feels good to know that I get to see and spend time with him every day. Ntobe comes over to see him during the weekend but sometimes come and spend time with him in the middle of the week and we go to school together. We never miss a day at school; we are always there for each other.

The above extract points to a caring father who is actively involved with his infant and supporting his partner. Becoming a father provided Sandile with an opportunity to develop an alternative form of masculinity (Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Morrell et al., 2016), different from using drugs, alcohol and having multiple partners. At the same time, despite his pride in becoming a father, Sandile's life was not without hardship:

Things have changed now that I have a baby. My mother is spending money on the baby, like in December she didn't buy me new clothes and didn't give me any money. She told me that it's either me or the baby. It's very hard having a baby whilst you are still a child yourself. So, I am sure that it is going to take us a very long time before we think of another baby. We are both focusing on our education.

* * * *

Sandile's story sheds light on the complexities surrounding teenage sexuality, especially in rural KwaZulu-Natal where there are high levels of poverty. In such contexts, teenagers engage in risky practices such as using drugs and alcohol, and having multiple intimate partners, as important resources that produce power but also risk. This includes unplanned parenthood. Dominant masculine norms are reproduced as Sandile works to provide for his baby and girlfriend, but he provided academic as well as material support for his girlfriend and was actively involved in caring for his infant son. In contrast to his father, Sandile wants to be involved, and with support from his mother when he and Ntobe are at school, he helps care for the child. While such masculinity is invested in dominant notions of provider status, it is also deeply caring.

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**Chapter 6**

**Caring masculinities? Teenage fathers in South Africa**

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**Abstract**

In this paper, we examine ways in which a group of teenage fathers in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, talk about their involvement in becoming a teenage father. We draw from a qualitative research project based on five focus groups and twenty individual interviews with teenage fathers aged between 17 to 19 years of age. We argue that when teenage fathers talk about their experiences, they locate caring and traditional versions of masculinity in understanding their roles. These versions of masculinity are socially and culturally located which both expand and constrict teenage fatherhood and caring masculinities. We conclude with some implications for addressing teenage men in the construction of masculinities.

Studies have found that fathers' involvement during a pregnancy and in childcare is positively associated with better social, health, and emotional outcomes for both the child and the mother of the child (Jordan, 2018). A dominant feature of fathers' involvement in families however rests on gendered division of labour where men are assumed to provide material resources whilst women are accorded caregiving roles (Jordan, 2018). This conventional focus as Enderstein and Bonzaier (2015) suggest is limited as fatherhood should integrate provision with care and emotional support. The purpose of this paper is to examine how South African teenage fathers, within circumscribed economic contexts, make meaning of their caring roles in relation to pregnancy and the birth of their child. As Elliot (2016) and Hanlon (2012) suggest caring masculinities is disruptive of gender conventions where fathers' roles as solely vested in materiality is contested.

Connell (2005) argues that dominant gender norms are reproduced through hegemonic masculinity–the dominant forms of manhood in a given time and place. Hegemonic masculinity is constructed as oppositional to caring practices (Tronto, 2013). Caring masculinities require men to reject the domination and aggression that are often associated with cultural notions hegemonic masculinity (Tarrant, 2018; Elliot, 2016). Reconstructing masculinities with less dominance and aggression, and

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putting greater emphasis on values of care and non-domination, might encourage men's broader involvement in gender equality (Morrell et al. 2016). Indeed, Hanlon (2012: 209) argues that "men's caring should be supported as a gender equality intervention itself". Tarrant (2018) argues that understanding caring masculinities requires consideration of the social contexts in which they might flourish or be supported. In South Africa, caring masculinities is considered to be a key pathway to gender equality (Morrell et al., 2016). Gibbs et al. (2017) refer to father's affective involvement in families as active fathering, which is also associated with better partner relations and less violence in relationships (Peacock & Barker, 2014).

Our focus is on school-going teenage biological fathers in rural South Africa as they navigate the demands of being young fathers and the expectations of fatherhood. We analyse how teenage fathers make sense of fatherhood and their feelings of responsibility during pregnancy and after the birth of the child. Marginalised fathers, such as those embedded in poverty, are stereotyped as uninvolved, uncaring, or averse to caring practices within notions of masculinity. It is therefore important to understand the context in which fathers navigate their experiences of being a father (Tarrant, 2018). Jordan (2018) cautions against treating caring practice as homogenous, particularly given the broad spectrum of fatherhood and the varying circumstances under which care and involvement are negotiated.

Race, class, unemployment, structural dilapidation and the current recession in South Africa, has compounded socioeconomic marginalization for the majority of black South Africans. Moreover, in rural KwaZulu-Natal, cultural norms interact with sexuality, gender and the financial demands which surround the birth of a child. *Inhlawulo* (payment for damages) is an important aspect of this. Historically, cultural norms place value on female virginity and entitle a pregnant girl's family to receive *inhlawulo* for a non-marital pregnancy. Payment of *inhlawulo* serves to make non-marital pregnancy legitimate, mediates a father's involvement in the child's life, and is a way of formally acknowledging paternity (Madhavan, 2010). The payment of *inhlawulo* varies and could take the form of a cow, goats or cash. Unable to fulfil the requirements of *inhlawulo,* most teenage fathers fail to compensate the girl's family.

The interaction between race, gender, and class in the experience of teenage fatherhood is further regulated and policed through cultural discourses of *inhlonipho* (respect) where an open display of childhood sexuality is taboo (Harrison, 2008). Within these cultural frameworks, teenage fathers are marginalized for failing to meet the obligations of *inhlonipho*, and are often stereotyped as reckless, irresponsible sexual predators who have no or limited involvement in childcare (Swart & Bhana, 2009). The complex processes through which teenage fathers enact masculinity are fluid and changing (Bhana & Nkani, 2014).

Given the growing body of research that highlights how essential it is for fathers to be involved in their child's life ( Department of Social Development, 2012; Bhana & Nkani, 2014), it is remarkable that a focus on teenage fathers and the particular challenges they confront regarding pregnancy and parenting is still not a central concern in South African research (see exceptions Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Our paper seeks to contribute to this developing body of work whilst demonstrating, too, the persistent ways through which masculinity and fatherhood are reproduced. As teenage fathers tell their stories of having children whilst they are children themselves, we pay particular attention to the diverse meanings that they attach to fatherhood. In this paper, we pay particular attention to how fathers understand their responsibilities regarding pregnancy and the birth of their children. Building on Robb (2004: 124), who found that fathers repeatedly used the word 'involved' to describe fatherhood, we examine our respondents' involvement in providing care for the mothers of their children during pregnancy and after the birth of the child.

### Context and Methods

The study was conducted in Illovo, in the rural district of Ugu, KwaZulu-Natal. KwaZulu-Natal is the second largest province in South Africa, with a population of 10.92 million or (19.9% of South Africa's total population (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The rural area has 39 tribal authorities and like rural areas in South Africa it is underdeveloped with high rates of unemployment and poverty. The rural settlements of Illovo fall under the jurisdiction of Thoyana Tribal Authority, where most residents are black African and speak *isiZulu* as their main language.

This paper draws from a qualitative doctoral study which explores the lived experiences of teenage fathers from Illovo, focusing specifically on their stories of the care they provide to their children and the mothers of their children. Qualitative research is of vital importance especially when studying teenage fathers (Weber, 2018; Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Tuffin et al., 2010). Close-up interviews and narratives as Bhana and Nkani (2014) state in their study of teenage fathers in South Africa provide opportunities for young men to discuss issues regarding pregnancy and fathering from their own points of view. This is vital especially when the stigma surrounding teenage fathers in South Africa often means that they are a hard to reach population who deny paternity as they navigate their inability to meet provider status. Similarly, Weber (2018) argues in her study of teenage fathers in the US, that the use of interviews can function to 'give' voice to young men in relation to their stories of becoming young fathers. Meanings are contextual and is shaped in/through interactions with people (Elliot, 2016; Weber, 2018). In our study we sought to understand how meanings about being and becoming a teenage father are produced. Individual interviews (II) and focus group discussions (FGDs) provided opportunities for teenage men to voice their meanings of being and becoming teenage men and young fathers.

We interviewed twenty *isiZulu* speaking fathers aged between 17 and 19 years, from two high schools, in order to gain in-depth insights into rural norms of masculinity and teenage fatherhood. Learners in both schools were all black African and *isiZulu*-speaking. This racial segregation reflects the legacy of apartheid that continues to divide South African societies spatially and in terms of race and class. Participants were selected with the help of Life Orientation teachers in each school. Initially only nine teenage fathers agreed to participate in the study especially because of the stigma associated with being a father in school. These participants were urged to recruit their peers to join the study. The sampling strategy changed from being purposive to incorporate a snowball approach. In doing so the sample size increased to a total of 20 participants.

Teenage fathers in our context are a hard to reach population because of the stigma associated with being children and fathers at the same time as well as the prevalence of denying paternity in order to avoid cultural norms associated with damages and payment to the girls' family for having a child out of wedlock (Nduna and Jewkes, 2012; Bhana and Nkani, 2014). In other contexts, teenage fathers are also considered to be a hard to reach population for similar reasons (Lemay, Cashman & Elfebein, 2010). Noting a small sample of 20 teenage fathers in our study, we understand that data saturation does not depend on the size of the sample, but rather on the thickness and richness of data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Guided by our qualitative approach and narrative inquiry, we reached data saturation when we were able to produce new information, were able to see similarities and differences with established literature and when no further coding was possible (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006).

Principals and their parents gave written consent to participate in the study, and the invitation letters were translated into *isiZulu*, as was the semi-structured interview schedule. In obtaining consent, we were mindful of the four elements involved, as noted by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) which are voluntarism, competence, full information and comprehension. We have used pseudonyms throughout to protect the identity of participants and their schools. The study comprised five FGDs between 60 and 120 minutes long. Each FGD had between four and seven participants. Flick (2009) notes the importance of FGDs for creating an informal and liberal climate where participants can openly contribute their opinions and experiences, building on the responses and views of others. Consent to use an audio recorder was obtained from the participants. The discussions and interviews were conducted by the first author in *isiZulu*, in classrooms after school hours. Recordings were transcribed and then translated into English. Having obtained rich data from the FGDs, we felt it was necessary to create space for each participant to tell his unique personal story through an individual narrative interview. Whilst FGDs and narrative interviews addressed similar questions, the narratives provided opportunities for further in-depth individual (II) stories.

In telling the story of how they come into being as teenage men and young fathers, we used narrative interviews. Narrative interviews address broader social and cultural patterns through which our participants' stories are situated. We sought to examine

this experience as a story or narrative from the beginning to the end. In line with narrative interviews (Weber, 2018) we asked our participants to present their stories about how they met their girlfriends, what happened, their involvement in the pregnancy and their experiences of being a young father. We paid careful attention to the social and cultural processes through which their stories of being teenage fathers was contextualised. Teenage fathers' narratives allowed us to see their stories not simply as an individual experience but as situated experiences where being and becoming a teenage father was strongly invested in masculinity. In doing so these narratives provide important means to examine how the stories are simultaneously masculinised accounts of being a teenage man and a teenage father. As Weber (2018) suggests these stories of teenage fathers are resources in the making of masculine identities.

In reflecting on the research process, it is important to recognise that the first author who conducted the interviews was regarded as 'familiar' to the participants. Firstly, the first author was born and raised in a similar rural setting in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. She is black African and i*siZulu* is her first language. The first author has worked in schools in and around rural KwaZulu-Natal and thus familiarity was also based on recognising the researcher as older teacher. However, it is important to recognise that the first author by virtue of being an *isiZulu* speaking woman was also able to produce the data about sexuality and gender based on participants' notions of hegemonic masculinity. It is possible that the narratives could have been different if the researcher was a black African male where power relations amongst younger men and older men could have impacted the research. Being an older female black African female in her mid-40's with material advantages was also important to note. However, the participants were not invested in the researcher's social status and unless asked, there was little discussion about the researcher's social position and generally the participants were very eager to talk about their experiences.

*Data analysis*

Data were analysed thematically. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that in order for analysis to be convincing, themes need to cohere around a central idea or concept. Our central theme is teenage fatherhood, and thematic analysis helped us identify

common threads running through the interviews. Concerned about addressing teenage fathers' own points of views, we adopted an inductive approach to analysis in which we read and re-read data allowing for the organic development of themes. The next section focuses on these major themes before we proceed with a discussion

### Findings

When teenage fathers talk about their experiences of being and becoming a father, they talk about being a 'real' man. Masculinity and fatherhood are thus inseparable from our discussion. In negotiating masculinity and fatherhood, we address between care, real men and masculinity. Three areas of caring are considered: taking responsibility, practicing care work and associating care work with culture and provider masculinity. Then we will proceed to examine how non-involvement is justified through the expression of masculinity, sexuality and the 'burden' of culture where the obligations to pay for damages creates a barrier to fathers' involvement.

### A 'real man', a 'real' father: Caring masculinities

In the experience of being and becoming a teenage father, many of our participants demonstrated forms of masculinity based on love, care, commitment and obligations to family whilst also involving the ability to provide. In talking about and telling their stories of being and becoming a teenage father, masulinity was invoked through which the ' real' man was constructed. Unlike the common stereotype which positions teenage fathers as reckless, irresponsible and sexual predators, the context of pregnancy and parenting provided new directions in thinking about and acting on the creation of the young family. Practically, this meant caring for their partners during pregnancy and involvement in nurturing the baby. Significantly the cultural-material-gendered context produced certain obligations which endorsed *ukubika isisu (payment of damages caused by non-marital pregnancy) whilst placing ilobolo* [bridewealth] on the agenda in terms of future marital goals. In both instances, provider status of teenage fathers was explicit. Being a teenage father in a poor rural setting and at school meant that our participants lacked economic power and negotiated their entangled roles.

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*Real fathers don't run away*

Most of our participants spoke of how fatherhood has changed them by giving them a sense of responsibility underlined by affective discourses despite the fact that all the pregnancies were unplanned, stressful experiences and situated amidst economic stresses:

> Our daughter, Thandolwethu … I pray that she grows and makes good decisions in life; unlike what we did. I would not want her to have a child at a young age; even if you have support, it is very stressful. When you become a parent at a young age, it's like you are forced to grow up… you grow up too quickly. That's what happened to me, I just had to grow up and do things differently (Belo, 18, II).

The experience of having a child instilled stress, fear and provided opportunities to reflect upon and make new decisions. In Belo's case above, he had to 'grow up' pointing to navigating childhood with parenthood and thus adult responsibilities. Many of these responsibilities and obligations which were often set in affective discourses:

> I have to see my baby, I want to spend time with him, he is my baby after all (Mvelo, 18, FGD).

> I think when you have a child with someone, you don't have a choice but you have to love her [the girlfriend] and stand by her all the time (Popozi, 18, II).

To 'stand by' pregnant girlfriends, rather that deny paternity was a common way through which teenage fathers explained their experience of becoming fathers. Caring for their girlfriends, having a strong sense of commitment and obligation to the impending birth is not often associated with teenage masculinity in South Africa (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Teenage fathers in our study thus disrupt normative versions of masculinity and contradict youthful notions of masculinity (Weber, 2018; Tuffin et al., 2010). An absent-father discourse is often used by teenage fathers 'most dads

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aren't around' as Weber (2018: 2) notes in her study in the US to justify their non-involvement in the lives of their children and girlfriends. Unlike the absent-father discourse and youthful masculinity we find elements of what is a good father hinging on involvement and the constitution of 'real' masculinity:

> …a good father will not run away… because she[the mother of the child] didn't want the child and wasn't ready in the first place–it's because of my mistakes, that's what a real man must do (Nzuzo, 18, FGD).

Nzuzo places unequal gender power relations at the centre of manhood and the negotiation of fatherhood. Admitting that the pregnancy was not his girlfriend's mistake, rather 'because of my mistakes' situates the gendered nature of relationship dynamics where young women lack power to negotiate safe sex (Harrison et al., 2008: Hunter, 2010, Bhana, 2016). Young women are complicit in risky sexual conduct by conforming to gender norms rather than resisting unprotected sex and negotiating timing of sex. Teenage men on the other hand are expected to demonstrate sexual prowess and an active sexuality is key to hegemonic notions of masculinity. For Nzuzo, recognizing his mistake and complicity in power relationships also has the effect of reflecting on and recognizing his obligations to the mother of his child.

*Practising Care*

Teenage fathers spoke about their relationships with the mother of their child and their child as they practiced care. Pregnancy in rural Ugu, is situated within limited infrastructure, poor hospital and health care services. Whilst health care and prenatal visits are free of charge, the health services are constrained and overextended because of limited staff and large number of patients. In this context many teenage fathers spoke about how they practiced care:

> During pregnancy …I would go with her and wait for her in the waiting area on the hospital benches…Even on the day our baby girl Ziyanda was born, we thought it was her usual sickness… We didn't know it was labour pains- we were surprised when the nurse told her that the baby was coming.

To know that I was there when Ziyanda was born makes me very happy, actually it makes me a proud father…(Sipho, 19, II).

…making Zinhle pregnant, it was a mistake, we did not plan it…after *ukubika isisu* (reporting the pregnancy), things became better. I mean we were still afraid of being seen together, but I found ways of supporting her, whilst still respecting the adult people. We were going to become parents but we were still children, so it was important to do things with *inhlonipho* (respect).…if she had an appointment at the clinic, I would go and stand in the queue for her because our clinic is much closer to my home but far from hers. Sometimes I would ask my cousin to stand in the queue for her because she walked a long distance before reaching the clinic. That made things better for her because she would be seen by the nurses sooner and not take the whole day. Some days I would stay with her at the clinic until the end of her visit or sometimes leave her and rush to school and arrive late, like the days when I'm writing tests. Zinhle would insist that I must not miss tests (Sakhile, 17, II).

These interviews suggest how teenage fathers provided an account of positive caring practices and the negotiation between schooling and becoming a teenage father. On becoming a father, nurturing activities highlighted love, care and investment in the child's development:

I sometimes sing to her and teach her songs and dance moves. I also take her for walks and show her [off] to my friends. She looks like me. She is a beautiful girl. I call her my twin because her birthday is on the 17th of April and mine is on 18th (Siya, 19, II).

I can say being a father is about setting a good example for your child; so, I try very hard to be a good example to Luthando. For example, I don't want her to see me when I am drunk. I think that would be setting a bad example for her because even though I am her father I am still young, so it is important to show her respect (Siya, 19, II).

Being a good father incorporated affective responses and practices whilst supporting reflection and change. For instance, Siya is aware that alcohol use is a 'bad example' and thus mediates the use of alcohol by attempting to set a 'good' example to his child, Luthando. Here there is recognition that traditional masculinity based on alcohol abuse is bad fatherhood and good fatherhood is thus rooted in sobriety and respect for the child. But there was also a another understanding of what care comprised associated with the notions of being a good father:

> … I cannot continue with many girlfriends knowing that I have become a father. To hear Zenande call me 'baba' [father] makes me very happy at the same time it scares me….all I wish is to be there for her, throughout her life, and to make her happy by doing everything that a father is supposed to do…like protecting her from the dangers of life and providing for her and her mother (Siphiwe, 19, II).

Being a good 'baba' (father) meant reflecting on and changing heterosexual masculine norms that relied on multiple partners. As noted in South Africa, multiple sexual partners is associated with versions of masculinity based on seeking status especially in contexts where men and boys are marginalized in the economic sphere (Gibbs et al., 2018; Bhana, 2016). Being and becoming a teenage father involved reflecting upon and reworking dominant masculine norms to those that were positively associated with being a good father. Being a good father also invoked traditional support for men as protectors and providers.

*Real fathers provide: culture and masculinity*

In our context, being 'real' fathers was entangled with changing norms around masculinity which included affective display of love and care, taking responsibility and fulfilling obligations to a new and young family and reflecting upon harmful patterns of masculine conduct which included alcohol use and multiple partners. Being real fathers was as much about the ability of teenage men to provide for their new families (Bhana and Nkani, 2014). This was the view of many of our participants:

A real father will not run away from his responsibility like providing for the child. It is important to support her [the girlfriend] and the baby and be there for them (Nzuzo 18, FGD).

The participants in our study cannot achieve provider status as they navigate schooling, parenting and poverty. Being and becoming a father incites this notion of masculinity further. As Siya says "I used the money that I earned through dancing to buy her food stuffs that she craved during pregnancy". Indeed, all the participants pointed to their inability to provide materially. By drawing attention to their lack of ability to provide they simultaneously invested in the power of provider masculinity in achieving 'real' fatherhood status. But this was also partly related to the inextricable link between masculinity, provider status and cultural circumstances (Gibbs et al., 2018; Hunter, 2010). Being a 'real' father was contextualised within an 'own family' set-up invoking cultural norms. Adherence to these norms combined with provider status was a key driver in conceptualising teenage fatherhood:

…When you have a child, it's like you have your own family–when you have *amandla* [power] you have to proceed to the next level, like paying *inhlawulo* [payment for damages] and *ilobolo* [bridewealth], so that you provide a home for your child (Popozi 18, II).

Popozi's construction of fatherhood is framed around dominant ideals of 'successful' masculinity which emphasise the importance of a stable job, a house, and children, rather than a youthful reckless masculinity centred on being sexually successful (Gibbs et al., 2017). The kind of family that Popozi is referring to constitutes a young, non-marital family, not uncommon in South Africa, where there are low marriage rates, especially among black South Africans, because of an inability to pay *ilobolo*. Popozi uses the phrase *amandla* to indicate the limitations of his financial power, which hampers him from shifting the relationship to marriage through the payment of *ilobolo* or *inhlawulo*. Our respondents reflected on this masculine position that is aligned to future aspirations: As teenage men in school and as 'children', they are unable to meet the expectations of hegemonic provider masculinity–although they do aspire to achieve it. However, as children having a

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children, they found other ways to provide care and support. Being able to provide for the child and for the mother thus emerges as having two interrelated definers of success, and the non-payment of *inhlawulo* was seen by some teenage fathers as the greatest barrier forestalling their caring for their children.

> I'm a different person now. My thinking has changed, because now there is this person I have to take care of and ensure that she doesn't run out of things like nappies and milk. Every cent that I get, I spend on her. I've stopped participating in *umhlalaphansi*. I only take part when we perform as a *maskandi* (a genre of isiZulu traditional music) group–to earn some money and provide for my daughter and her mother (Thobani, 19, II).

As with our other participants, providing materially is central to Thobani's understanding and performance of care. Thobani suggests that fatherhood has more meaning and value for him despite all the benefits of *umhlalaphansi* (such as having easy access to multiple girlfriends prior to the birth of his daughter).

Masculinity, fatherhood and culture was also invoked through future goals regarding marriage and related to virginity:

> Anele's family was understanding [about the pregnancy] but my mother and grandmother were told [by Anele's family] that I must marry Anele because no one will marry her with my child, since I've taken her virginity. My mother and grandmother agreed and promised that I will marry her when I finish school and get a job, *uma senginamandla* (when I have power) … Yes, I will marry her, I love her very much and I took her virginity so it's fair that I marry her, another thing is that she behaves very well. She respects me and my family. I love our daughter as well (Zamo 17, II).

Clearly, Zamo's commitment to care extends to marriage and is bound by cultural and gendered norms.  In rural KwaZulu-Natal, marriage is possible when a man secures financial resources to enable him to pay *ilobolo,* which is a minimum of 11 cows if a girl is a virgin. Madhavan (2010: 142) defines *ilobolo* as a "culturally prescribed marker of a man's commitment to a union". Notable in Zamo's words is

that his love for Anele takes into account on her good conduct and virginity, suggesting that virginity and sexual submissiveness are central to young men's preference in girlfriends and future wives. Being able to provide for the child and for the mother thus emerges as having two interrelated definers of success, and the non-payment of *inhlawulo* was seen by some teenage fathers as the greatest barrier forestalling their caring for their children.

> You find that we will meet and then we are seen by the neighbours and then they'll start talking about those cultural things again … Can't they just leave us alone? They will say you haven't paid the cow but you have courage to come and stand near the girlfriend's home; you are rude, disrespectful. There is a lot you see, if you haven't paid [*inhlawulo*] (Bonga, 18, FGD).

Bonga shows that the inability to provide and fulfil cultural obligations may limit fathers' access to their children. The cultural pressures, especially in rural KwaZulu- Natal, to pay for damages (*inhlawulo*) intersects with the desire to be a 'real' man and care for a child. In other words, hegemonic notions of masculinity are reinforced by cultural demands that view a 'real' father as someone who can provide materially.

In contrast Siya was able to pay for the damages:

> Everyone like my friends and family knew that she's the mother of my baby because *ukubika isisu* had taken place and it was not much of a problem to be seen together. She continued with school and dropped out when she was highly pregnant. (Siya, 19, II).

Once cultural practices such as *ukubika isisu* (a process whereby the pregnant young woman's family make a request to the genitor's family for the acknowledgement of paternity) have been performed, being seen together is approved.

**Non-involvement: Non-caring masculinities?**

A few of the teenage fathers in this study found reasons to justify their lack of involvement and commitment towards supporting their pregnant girlfriends:

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Sometimes it depends on the kind of person that she [the pregnant girlfriend] is. Even if I want to support her, and do everything for her, she will be looking for arguments even if they are not there....she sees me talking to someone and she starts a fight. That can make me angry when she tries to control my life, deciding for me who I spend my time with and sometimes I may end up forgetting about her (Thobani, 19, FGD).

The patriarchal context of rural KwaZulu-Natal shapes the negotiation of gender identities within intimate relationships. For Thobani provision of care is subject to him being allowed to do as he wishes. To him, being a man gives him a choice in understanding involvement. As he says, he may 'end up forgetting about her'. Involvement and care are also partly related to relationship status with the mother of the child. The kind of relationship described by Thobani indicates a lack of trust which causes tension. As Gibbs et al. (2017) find a lack of trust is a major concern for young women, often resulting in arguments and increased stress levels during pregnancy. However, when asked whether forgetting about the pregnant girlfriend will mean forgetting about the child, Thobani's response was categorical:

No, I will never forget about or neglect my child, *amathumbu am*i [my own flesh and blood], but as for her [my girlfriend] she must just let me live my life (Thobani, 19, FGD).

Thobani's account of insisting on being involved in the life of his child, using the phrase *amathumbu ami*, points to a deep identity link that exists between him and fatherhood. Mkhwanazi's (2014) also found that teenage mothers indicated that fathers of their children were still involved in the lives of their children in spite of relationship breakups.

Our respondents also cited other reasons for fathers failing to provide care during pregnancy:

...I would...tell her to have an abortion because we are not in a relationship... We are just having fun and so we cannot have a child together,

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and she would refuse. *Ayi ke* (oh well) that's her own story and she must leave me out of it. I would just tell her to do what she has to do, it's just up to her. I would just deny [paternity] and say the child is not mine…Sometimes I would deny that the child is mine out of fear for parents, especially my father, because if they hear that I have impregnated a girl *ngingalala ehhokweni lezinkukhu* (I would sleep in the chicken shed outside) because I'm still young and schooling but my conscience would be eating me up inside that this is my child. In such cases it's not easy to give any support to that pregnant girl, she may be on her own or with her family (Sandile, 18, FGD).

Sandile's story shows how the relationship dynamics and the circumstances under which a pregnancy occurs determine and impact on the level of care. Like Gibbs et al. (2017) interpersonal issues around relationship dynamics between biological parents, and broader structural factors such as gender norms and masculinities, were all factors that shaped a father's involvement and provision of care. Sandile justifies his negative response to pregnancy and becoming a father by the fact that there is no relationship, but only fun. Harrison, Cleland and Frohlich's (2008) study found that it was a common trend for young South Africans to distinguish between 'primary' or 'non-primary' partners. Because the pregnancy that Sandile describes happened with a non-primary partner, his lack of support, care and involvement is, according to him, justifiable. He also talks about the denial of paternity as he negotiates his role as a teenage man in school and being a father. Thus, uncaring masculinities is not as simple as denial based on hypermasculinity. Rather the fear of facing his parents and taking responsibility for the pregnancy places adult-child relations and sexuality as an important reason for not taking responsibility. This fear has been cited in research as the main cause for denial of paternity among young South African men (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012). Furthermore, taking responsibility comes with the acknowledgement of payment for damages which falls on Sandile's family.

**Discussion**

This study emphasizes how masculinity shapes teenage men's conception of fatherhood, as fatherhood is shaped by masculinity. The production of caring

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masculinities is situational and embedded in the material, social and cultural context through which teenage fathers experience being and becoming a father. Context not only determines the nature and level to which a father can provide care; it is also key in the formation of teenage fatherhood and masculinity. As Jordan (2018) argues, caring masculinities cannot be considered out of the context within which they are expressed. This context provided opportunities for teenage men to inhabit forms of masculinity which emphasised care in being a 'real' father but also its opposite. Caring masculinities were disruptive of normative understandings of teenage men's irresponsibility. Mkhwanazi and Block (2016) view the acceptance of paternity and responsibility among teenage fathers as a new and positive trend that contributes to the healthy development of children born to teenage parents.

Our study suggests that being and becoming a teenage father opens up possibilities for teenage fathers to produce alternate patterns of masculinity based on care. If care is key to gender equality as Hanlon (2012) and others (Gibbs et al., 2018; Tarrant, 2018) then the emphasis on care is crucial for teenage fathers', their children and for the young families. The emphasis on caring was produced through taking responsibility. 'Real' fathers acknowledged paternity and supported the mother of their children during pregnancy and after the birth of the child. Masculinity is also embedded within the identity also characterised by the "simultaneity of being an adult and a child at the same time" (Weber, 2018: 3). Becoming a young father and creating a new young family thus means contesting and contradicting the separation of adulthood and childhood (Weber, 2018).

Responses to the experience of fatherhood echo Mkhwanazi and Block (2016), who refer to childbearing as an important event which results in maternal and paternal families becoming related, and marks the transition to adulthood for both men and women. On becoming a father, some of our participants suggested how this shaped their reflections upon and misgivings regarding alcohol and multiple partners. Affective bonds of relationships were significant and the love, care, concern and pride shown for children produced versions of masculinity that tilted towards caring masculinities. These conceptions of care however were also constrained through the association with provider status. Caring masculinities opens up possibilities for understanding teenage fathers away from dominant stereotypes that position them as

uncaring, irresponsible and reckless but constructions of masculinities and fathering also close up avenues to achieve gender equality.

Our analysis points to the contextual basis through which teenage fatherhood is experienced. The social and cultural processes expand understandings of fathering and restrict what might be possible to change masculinities. It is difficult to separate caring forms of masculinity from the material, cultural, and social contexts which shape them. Masculinities are co-constructed, and new, caring versions are produced while normative understandings of power are simultaneously adhered to. An enduring pattern in teenage fathers' conceptions of their roles revolves around providers which embedded in notions of care. The association made between responsibility and provider status is key to understanding the stubborn entanglement of male power with economic provision (Hunter, 2010). In Jewkes et al. (2014) study of men in South Africa, they only referred to children in terms of providing for them suggesting the very powerful ways through which provider masculinity surrounds conceptions of fatherhood. In our study, culture, materiality and masculinity intersected in ways that supported provider status reproducing fathers as breadwinners. The role of being learner at school and a teenage father increased the tension around the inability to meet the social and cultural demands requiring payment of damages and male role around provider status. The payment of damages continues to play a major role in the construction of masculine identity among South African men–especially in rural KwaZulu-Natal (Hunter, 2010). Teenage fathers experienced fatherhood where they remained on the periphery unable to meet the demands associated with cultural and gender norms and unable to fulfill provider status. Non-payment of *inhlawulo* could lead to limited or no access to children (Bhana & Nkani, 2014).

Some participants overtly rejected involvement in the pregnancy and birth, whilst not disputing biological father status, and this was dependent upon the type of relationship with the mother of the child which was often fleeting or based on a non-permanent relationship status. Traditional conceptions of masculinity or hyper-masculinity produced limited options about involvement. Teenage fathers drew on these discourses to justify their position of non-involvement blaming teenage mothers for failing to consider abortion. Traditional conceptualisation of masculinity also derived from teenage fathers' entitlement to unrestricted freedom and opportunity to

engage in multiple partners which produced conflict in relationships. However, the rejection of responsibility is a strategic tool to highlight male power in relation to heterosexuality but also to show its weakness. Weakness was evident in terms of adult-child relations, the fear of being a father whilst at school and the financial obligations that arise in terms of payment if paternity was acknowledged.

### Conclusion

This study highlights the wider debate about teenage fathers' involvement in their children's lives and the potential to change dominant meanings around masculinity (Weber, 2018; Tuffin et al., 2010 Bhana & Nkani, 2014). The teenage fathers in our study navigated the demands of being a 'real' good 'baba' (father) by challenging and accommodating masculine norms. Caring masculinities remained a powerful theme in repositioning masculinity as nurturing, affective, and invested in better child and family outcomes. However, caring is contextual and being a teenage father invokes social and cultural norms as it produces meanings about adult-child relations and sexuality.

In taking responsibility, teenage fathers drew upon non-normative constructions of masculinity to illustrate their capacity to care. This involved caring for the mother of their child during pregnancy whilst negotiating schooling. Care work also took the form of reflecting on and critiquing norms around youthful masculinity that entrench alcohol use and multiple partners. An enduring concern for teenage fathers was the issue of finance and their inability to provide. For some of the fathers the denial of paternity and lack of involvement was negotiated through strategically constructing relationships as main partners and somewhere 'fun' and sex were highlighted. In doing so, they were able to use heterosexual masculinity to deny their involvement. Whilst this lens of analysis could be used to portray teenage fathers as uncaring, the cultural norms associated with the payment of damages and the fear of being at school and becoming and being a teenage father invoked adult and child relations of power and sexuality which produced fear and non-involvement. Thus, being a 'real baba' is a negotiation of masculinity in a context where they are teenage men at school,

operating within a heterosexual understanding of masculinity, and where cultural norms exacerbate the demands for provider status.

Given the complex relationships through which rural teenage fathers experience fatherhood, supporting the 'turn' to caring masculinities is vital. Schools are vital places where such work can begin. So far emphasis has been given to teenage pregnancy and young mothers (Morrell et al., 2012). Addressing boys and teenage men who draw on traditional versions of masculinity is important. These versions of masculinity are key to understanding sexual risk and early childbearing. Addressing these versions of masculinity within the school Life Orientation programmes is important as is the need to provide opportunities for boys to engage with new emerging versions of being a 'real' man that does not hinge on provider status and domination. Whilst we have shown malleability of masculinity in the context of care, the social, cultural and gendered contexts limit and constrain opportunities for developing and enhancing caring masculinities. However, teenage fathers' flexibility especially in reflecting upon their conduct, the expression and investment in love, care and support for the child in the creation of new families, suggests that changing forms of masculinity are possible and indeed exist in the same contexts where traditional forms of masculinity are ascendant. Addressing cultural norms and broader social and economic context remains key to the understanding of masculinity. Indeed, a central concern in any intervention programme is to deal with the construction of masculinity which is key to understanding causes and consequence of teenage fatherhood.

There are certain limitations to our study. As noted, our sample is small made up of 20 participants. However, our intention was to generate thick and rich data based on an approach of storytelling or narrative enquiry that allowed us to produce data that was dense. Secondly, our participants emerge from one particular rural social context in South Africa and therefore our findings may not be generalised. Our aim however was not generalisability. Rather we intended to unravel the context specific meanings through which being a teenage man and a young father were constructed.

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**Chapter 7**

**Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations**

> We found out that she was pregnant in July 2015; she was 4 months pregnant when we found out. I just didn't know what to do. I kept asking myself, how do I tell my parents? With my mother, it wasn't going to be that difficult, but with my father, I was scared, I was really scared (Sakhile, 17).

To conclude my study, I use this extract from an interview with Sakhile, one of my participants who repeatedly use the word 'scared' to describe his first response to pregnancy. Reactions such as Sakhile's are common: because many young fathers are scared, they respond negatively to pregnancy, and are thus often stereotyped as uncaring and uninvolved—even if this is far from how they wish to be. Given the disparities of view and intention inherent in such situations, my aim, with this study, was to build on scholarship that seeks to give young men a voice, and to highlight the complexities that characterise their negotiations of fatherhood. My intention, throughout this study, was that the teenage fathers would be the key source of data: they are the ultimate authorities of their own social world, as Pattman (2015) confirms. Throughout my fieldwork I therefore strove to ensure that their thoughts and priorities drove our discussions and informed the research agenda.

This chapter is, in part, a summary of my explorations of how teenage boys, in a conservative, rural context, negotiated fatherhood and navigated the associated socially constructed standards of masculinity. These are the research questions that my study sought to answer:

**Key Research Question**

How do culture, sexuality, and masculinity combine to produce localised meanings of fatherhood in teenage fathers in rural KwaZulu-Natal?

**Sub-Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between culture, sexuality and masculinity in rural KwaZulu-Natal?

2. How do teenage fathers mediate masculinity in relation to being and becoming a father?

3. How do teenage fathers resist and/or reproduce normative understandings of masculinity?

Throughout my study, I have used participants' experiences to show intersectionality between culture, sexuality and masculinity in relation to teenage fatherhood in rural KwaZulu-Natal. I have shown that participants used context-specific norms of masculinity to make sense of their identities not only as fathers, but also as teenage men. In line with academic discourse in South Africa that derives from studies which have found a strong link between fatherhood and material provision (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Hunter, 2010; Makusha, 2013; Makusha & Richter, 2016; Morrell, 2016; Morrell, 2006; Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010; Swartz & Bhana, 2009), my findings highlight how teenage fathers held firmly to the stereotype of father-as-provider-and-protector and used it to define their identities. In their negotiation of fatherhood, therefore, my participants both upheld and opposed dominant notions of masculinity in ways that emphasised the presence and importance of the intersectionality of culture, context, and sexual risk. For example, my respondents made efforts to show caring masculinity by taking part in childcare activities, yet having multiple partners in order to adopt socially accepted norms of being men. The following section constitutes an overview of the chapters and how each contributes to the broader story of the thesis as a whole.

**Teenage Fathers as a Hard-to-Reach Research Population**

My second chapter, *Accessing the hard-to-reach research population: Reflections from a qualitative study with teenage fathers from rural KwaZulu-Natal,* describes how I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods to access teenage fathers who would agree to participate in the research. This chapter was shaped by the challenges I encountered in reaching the desired sample size, although the size of the sample is not a key requirement in qualitative research, I wanted to ensure there was enough variety within my sample to obtain rich data representative of the dynamics that are evident among rural teenage men. Studies on teenage fertility exploring early childbearing have noted the invisibility of teenage fathers in much social science research (see, for example, Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Lau-Clayton, 2015; 2018; Lemay, Cashman & Elfebein, 2010; Weber, 2012; 2018). Teenage fathers' voices are thus inaudible, especially compared to their female counterparts. This silence is often due in part to the difficulty of accessing teenage fathers, which makes them part of what is often referred to as a 'hard-to-reach' research population, and in part to the fact that because issues around sexuality are sensitive, researchers often struggle to find research participants. Teenage sexuality has additional complexities that emanate from the dominant discourse that views children as asexual beings characterised by sexual innocence. Robinson (2011: 1169) highlights this:

> Children's sexuality within this discourse is read as non-existent or immature at most. The sexual maturity is equated with 'innocence'—considered inherent in the child. Consequently, sexuality becomes the exclusive realm of adults; a space in which children are constructed as the asexual, naive, innocent 'other'.

The dominant notion of children's sexual innocence often results in stigma when young people are seen to be sexual and thus alter the social order which specifies who can have sex and when. In the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal, such stigma is further exacerbated by norms of teenage sexuality that often forbid casual sexual relationships (Bhana, 2015; Harrison, 2008). In this context, pregnancy is only permissible after a union has been formalised through the payment of *ilobolo* (bridewealth). As an alternative to *ilobolo; inhlawulo* (payment for damages) serves as a formal acknowledgement of paternity if pregnancy happens out of a marital union (Madhavan, 2010; Nkani, 2017). Teenage fathers from socioeconomically marginalised contexts, as my respondents were, often fail to live up to these socially and culturally defined markers of masculinity. Unlike teenage mothers, who are highly visible in all public spaces, teenage fathers are often not visible: most decide to

shy away from the public eye to avoid stigma. Like teenage mothers, teenage fathers are vulnerable to stigmatisation and this makes them hard to find. It was therefore of utmost importance that participating in my study did not further stigmatise my participants, and adhering to ethical considerations was thus key to sampling procedures.

When accessing research sites, I was conscious of my dual role: a researcher interested in stories of fatherhood told by teenage fathers, and an official of the Department of Education responsible for monitoring and implementing sexuality education life-skills programmes in two research sites. Indeed, my study received support from different levels of management within the Department of Education under the Ugu District. My two roles were interlinked, and needless to say it was important that one did not negatively impact on the other. It was important to create a clear distinction between the roles so as to break power dynamics and establish rapport. Hence, throughout my fieldwork, I positioned myself as a researcher and a student, rather than an official. Also, I was constantly self-reflexive, careful to remember my own world view as a Christian, African, IsiZulu-speaking woman in her forties with material advantages, and the impact this would have on my fieldwork.

I am however conscious that my social and professional positioning may have influenced my participants' responses to the research project, including their willingness to actively participate, the stories they told and how they told them. To have a female researcher exploring their stories of sexuality may have afforded them a superior status to enact masculinity. For example, Langa (2012) noted how teenage men who participated in his study shared explicit details of their sexual experiences in order to position themselves as sex experts and making him less knowledgeable. Although there were many differences between me and my participants, there were also similarities, the most fundamental of which was that I was also a student and a single parent. These similarities positioned me as an insider and facilitated access into participants' own 'world'. Participants were not interested in my social status but, rather, were always eager to share their experiences. Gender power dynamics did play a part in researcher-participant relationships. For example, it is possible that my respondents' narratives may have been different had I been a black male researcher. Context plays a huge role in shaping people's lives. Being born and raised in the same rural setting of Illovo that my participants were from, made me familiar to them, and

enabled me to better understand their experiences. This resulted in rich data on teenage sexuality and participants' notions of hegemonic masculinity in their conception of fatherhood.

**Teenage Social and Cultural spaces, Heterosexuality, Masculinity, and Sexual Risk**

In this chapter I established that rural norms of teenage sexuality prohibited young people from engaging in casual sexual relationships. Discourses of respect were used by adults to police and regulate teenage sexuality, and any open display of sexuality was thus often viewed as a violation of the set standards of respect (Harrison, 2008). This often drove young people to seek alternative spaces where they could be sexual without the fear of being judged. These spaces where teenagers enacted sexuality were often away from the watchful eye of the adults. Echoing Weber's (2012) study, in which she asked her respondents (teenage fathers) to describe what had happened in order to examine their stories about taking responsibility for a pregnancy, in this chapter I examined how my participants accounted for becoming teenage fathers, and explored their negotiation of sexuality and how it increased their vulnerability to sexual risk.

The chapter is titled *Umhlalaphansi* and *Inkwari*: *Teenage men's accounts on becoming fathers*, and focuses on the cultural practice of *umhlalaphansi* and the social activity of *inkwari* and how the two combine to produce sexual risk. *Umhlalaphansi* is a nightlong ceremony where young men and women sing and dance without the presence of adults. *Inkwari* is a rave-like social activity where young people gather to socialise and have fun, usually over weekends and school holidays. Ideally, *umhlalaphansi* is meant to promote healthy masculine values and instill cultural pride among young Zulu men. Attending these events allows teenagers to enjoy themselves and socialise, usually under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and these are opportunities for the celebration of heterosexual masculinity, in ways that heighten the risk of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. In other words, *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari* are a fertile ground for casual sex, often with minimal precautions for protected sex. This chapter thus explored how partaking in *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari* allowed young men opportunities to perform masculinity in ways that put themselves and their girlfriends at risk. Both these activities provide spaces for the celebration of hegemonic masculinity through risky

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sexual practices and sexual prowess, linked to traditional norms of rural masculinity. Hunter (2010) noted how becoming *isoka* (a man with multiple girlfriends) was traditionally celebrated and used by men as a means to earn a superior status among peers.

### Real Fathers Provide for Their Families

Hegemonic discourse associates fatherhood with material provision whereby a father is expected to provide both for the child and the mother of the child. All the teenage men in my study accepted paternity, indicated pride in their identities as fathers, and viewed their main role as being providers. They defined 'real fathers' as those who could provide materially, even though most of them could not. I used two individual stories in this thesis (chapter 4 and 5) to highlight how culture, provider masculinity, and care are interlinked. The first was Mandla's story, *Ubaba ukhona kodwa angikabi namandla: Navigating teenage fatherhood in rural KwaZulu-Natal*, which focuses on the role of material provision. It tells the story of 19-year-old Mandla, who became a father at the age of 18 years. Despite his lack of income, Mandla consistently attempted to provide materially for his child and the mother of his child. To Mandla, being a father meant not only providing financially, but fulfilling cultural obligations through aspirations to make the payment of *inhlawulo* as a way of accepting paternity and taking responsibility for the pregnancy. Becoming a father also meant forging a new masculinity where care was central. To this end, Mandla also took part in childcare activities, where he could.

This finding resonates with Weber's study that focused on the experiences of teenage fathers in England. She noted:

> Due to age, class, and a potential host of other factors, they [teenage fathers] are unable to participate effectively—but they can't admit that they can't provide without jeopardizing their masculinity, so they talk around it; they construct narratives that mask their vulnerability, allowing them to still be seen as good dads (2013: 96).

Teenage fathers may want to be seen as 'good dads' or 'real men', yet they are usually restricted by a lack of financial power. That often results in them being

stereotyped as reckless, uncaring, or absent. Being a teenage father is thus about negotiating the stigma that arises from these social stereotypes.

On a different level, while making attempts to become a 'real father', Mandla also sought to conform to dominant notions of masculinity through having multiple sexual partners in order to avoid *ukuhwayelwa amajitha* (being mocked by his friends). Mandla's other partners were kept secret from the mother of his child, who was 'the one'. The chapter thus also explored how being 'the one' meant being at even greater risk as it was characterised by unprotected sex, which was used as a tool to prove that there was love and trust in the relationship. Reddy & Dunne (2007) noted how unprotected sex is used by teenagers to prove love and trust. In this context condoms carry stigma that a partner is suspected of carrying disease. Condoms are therefore used with a non-primary partner in a relationship that has no commitment.

The second story, *Sandile's story*, presents Sandile, an 18-year-old father who grew up in a poverty stricken, female-headed household when he was rejected by his biological father. Growing up was not easy for Sandile, who started using drugs and alcohol at primary school. According to Sandile, drugs and alcohol were his happy space: they gave him a sense of belonging and earned him respect among his peer group. Sandile and his friends were known as playboys, because they had multiple sexual partners. Similar to Langa's (2012) study where teenage men called sex-jaros were famous and earned respect from their peers for having multiple sexual partners; being a playboy made Sandile to be admired by his peers. When Sandile became a father, he made every effort to provide for his son and girlfriend. He found temporary jobs which he did during weekends and school holidays and even attempted to build a house for his new family, using mud and poles. Like Mandla, Sandile produced dominant masculinity through providing for his family. Sandile, who lived with his son, also took part in day-to-day childcare activities, which he performed mostly after school. Similar to teenage parents from New Zealand who participated in Hindin-Miller's (2018) study, becoming a father gave Sandile a reason to change his lifestyle in order to provide his son with a different experience than his own.

Both Mandla's and Sandile's stories illustrate how dominant ideas of masculinity hinge around having multiple partners and partaking in drugs and alcohol, which also highlights their increased vulnerability to unwanted pregnancies and STIs, including HIV.

**Care and Contradictions in Teenage Fathers**

With this chapter, *Caring masculinities? Teenage fathers in South Africa*, I focused on the type of masculinity that emerged as teenage fathers both upheld and opposed dominant notions of masculinity as they negotiated fatherhood. While the two previous chapters presented evidence of care and acts of attempting to become 'real fathers' through provider masculinity and taking part in childcare, this paper focuses on how, for some teenagers, becoming a father meant wrestling with contradictory priorities. On one hand they had to negotiate the cultural-material-gendered context that required them to fulfil the obligations of either *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo* in order to be recognised as fathers; while on the other hand, their socio-economic position forestalled them fulfilling their material obligations. However, most my respondents took pride in their roles as fathers and sought ways of being involved, despite the socioeconomic and sociocultural barriers in their way. The patriarchal context of rural KwaZulu-Natal thus shaped the negotiation of gender identities within intimate relationships and heavily impacted on how teenage men responded to pregnancy. Indeed, some participants used the circumstances under which the pregnancy occurred as a reason to justify non-caring practices and irresponsible behaviour. In mediating masculinity, teenage fathers indicated what Weber refers to as the "simultaneity of being a child and adult" (2018: 3). These dual identities of childhood and adulthood impacted on the negotiation of fatherhood and the level of responsibility respondents took. Negotiating balance in these dual identities, meant growing up and taking responsibility for the pregnancy by taking care of the child and the mother of the child. Having multiple partners and engaging in risky practices were used as justification for being children. Therefore, being and becoming fathers meant resisting and reproducing normative understandings of teenage masculinity and fatherhood.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Throughout my thesis I have presented evidence to show that fatherhood is closely tied to notions of masculinity, and that masculinity is socially constructed. Fatherhood is thus shaped by factors such as sociocultural and socioeconomic

conditions. I have also shown that being a teenage man and a father in the rural Ugu District of KwaZulu-Natal involves the complex negotiation of social norms of teenage sexuality, peer norms of masculinity, cultural expectations where provider masculinity is dominant and stigma for becoming a teenage father. Teenage fathers must "negotiate multiple voices of masculinity", as Langa (2012: 298) puts it. Teenage fathers have been documented as reckless, uncaring and absent in the lives of their children and those of their girlfriends. My study was interested in how teenage fathers resist or reproduce dominant notions of rural masculinity as they develop their identities as men and fathers. Resisting the dominant forms of masculinity meant adopting caring and involved masculinity. Such masculinity has been referred as 'alternative masculinity' where care for the child and the mother of the child is central (Morrell et al., 2016). Negotiating multiple voices of masculinity often resulted to teenage fathers that are both caring and uncaring, involved and uninvolved. This indicates fluidity of the identity-formation process (Burr, 1995).

There is a need to amplify and support caring masculinities among teenage fathers, especially when fathers have been reported as absent or not involved in the lives of their children. Such alternative forms of masculinity could be supported by means of following teenage fathers through longitudinal studies. Indeed, Mkhize (2006) noted the fluidity of fatherhood as a gender identity, highlighting that it is possible for a father to be a caring and responsible father for a few years then abandon his responsibilities some years later. I would like to follow these teenage fathers in order to assess sustainability of their alternative voices. Participating in my study provided an emotionally-safe space to share the challenges they experienced as they navigate their roles as teenage men and fathers. Therefore, following them through a longitudinal study would bring about sustainability and support their caring practices.

Rural norms of teenage sexuality exert pressure on young men and women. These norms include the view of young people as asexual beings where sexuality is regulated by adults through discourses of *inhlonipho* (respect) in which heterosexuality is highlighted. The socially constructed standards of *inhlonipho* forbid teenagers from open displays of sexuality, which are, on the whole, viewed as a violation of accepted standards of respect (Bhana, 2015; Harrison, 2008). This often compels young people to seek alternative spaces to enact sexuality away from the watchful eye of adults. For example, teenage fathers in my study talked about spaces

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such as *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari* where they were able to socialise with their peers. Such spaces are important for young people as they grow up and develop their masculine and feminine identities. They also engender the celebration of sexuality, providing opportunities for courtships to commence, but also for high risk sexual encounters, such as one-night-stands. However, *umhlalaphansi* and *inkwari* could also be utilised as spaces to provide sexuality education, including the importance of taking precautions for safe sex, facilitated by older members of the peer group who are invested through their own experiences in stimulating dialogue and reflection about what it means to be a young man or woman in rural South Africa.

This recommendation draws on Delius and Glaser's (2002) study that notes the role played by *amaqhikiza* (older girls) in their Zulu peer groups in guiding and supporting their younger peers when negotiating sexuality. Harrison (2008) found that older boys played a similar role in mentoring their younger peers. Sexuality encounters were regulated by older members of the peer group and the only form of premarital sex that was encouraged was a non-penetrative form (thigh sex—also known as *ukusoma*).

There is clearly a need for future studies that focus on the intersectionality of teenage social spaces, gender, culture, and sexual risk, and a multi-sectoral approach to context-specific interventions. Although the South African school curriculum does not have sex education as a school subject, sexuality education is offered through the Life Orientation (LO) as a subject. Indeed, Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) has been approved in the current national policy on HIV, STIs and TB for learners, educators, school support staff and officials in all primary and secondary schools (DBE, 2017), and pilot projects will soon commence. Unlike the existing LO curriculum, CSE will cover in depth, culturally-relevant and age-appropriate information on sexuality, reproductive health, alcohol and drug abuse, peer pressure, relationships and responsibilities, gender-based violence, HIV, STIs and unplanned pregnancies. I believe it is important that such interventions should also focus on equipping young men with knowledge and values about various forms of manhood and also create a safe environment for reflecting on the 'self', whilst learning from, respecting and valuing others. Whilst the proposed CSE promises to yield good results, there is a need for it to be supported by multiple sectors and levels of South African society.

This study has presented evidence of the impact of sociocultural and socioeconomic influences on the negotiation of fatherhood. These influences hamper the involvement of teenage fathers in the lives of their children, often resulting in them being stereotyped as reckless, uncaring and uninvolved. This makes teenage pregnancy highly gendered, with the burden of childcare falling on the shoulders of the teenage mother and her family. Consequently, studies have tended to focus on the negative outcomes that teenage pregnancy has on the lives of young women and the role that schools can play in increasing their life opportunities and economic prospects (see Bhana, Clowes, Morrell & Shefer, 2008; Mkhwanazi, 2010; Nkani, 2012; Panday et al., 2009). These adverse consequences include school dropouts, negative health outcomes and poor socioeconomic conditions.

There is also a need for an inclusive social and cultural environment that acknowledges dynamics that exist within fatherhood. For example, as I have shown, in rural KwaZulu-Natal a father may not be accepted as a father if he has not fulfilled cultural obligations such as the payment of *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo*. This emanates from the dominant masculinity role that defines fatherhood in terms of material provision, and results in the marginalisation and alienation of fathers from disadvantaged backgrounds—such as the participants in my study—who are often unable to live up to these socially constructed ideas of masculinity. There is thus a need for the emergence of alternative masculinities that allow fathers to be part of their children's lives unhindered by sociocultural dictates which privilege material provision above all else. What is required is a shift towards a more inclusive understanding of family composition. As some studies have noted, for example, Mkhwanazi & Block (2016), Mvune (2017) and Nkani (2017), some maternal and paternal families are now negotiating and postponing the payment of *inhlawulo* until the father starts working. However, more needs to be done to supporting teenage fathers' negotiation of fatherhood.

### Policy Implications

The gendered nature of teenage pregnancy has made support for teenage parents biased towards mothers whilst leaving out fathers. My study indicates a need for a clear policy framework that is going to guide support programmes for teenage fathers as well. Indeed, the Department of Education has formalised support for young

women, and in some selected schools out of school youth have been appointed on voluntary basis as Learner Support Agents (LSAs). The main role of LSAs is to provide support for female learners during and after pregnancy. This support includes referrals to clinics or social services and academic support in order to enable pregnant teenagers to continue schooling during pregnancy and make a smooth re-entry after delivery. This is an important milestone for creating an enabling environment in schools for the implementation of rights-based policies that allow learners to continue schooling during and after pregnancy. However, the support is gendered and needs to be structured so that teenage fathers can also benefit from support in negotiating their dual roles of being learners and fathers. For example, Learner Support Agents could help schools with the formation of support groups for teenage fathers, where they can openly discuss the challenges they go through in their negotiation of fatherhood, share parenting strategies and learn from each other. In the United Kingdom (UK), support programme in the form of mentor service was initially developed for teenage mothers but then later extended to include teenage fathers as well (Neale & Davies, 2015). The mentor service provided holistic support for teenage mothers and fathers and served as prevention educational sessions to reduce pregnancy rate. A similar model could be adopted for South African teenage fathers, especially those from poor socio-economic backgrounds in order to improve future prospects for them, their children and the mothers of their children.

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# APPENDICES

**<u>Appendix 1</u>**

**Informed consent- participant**



**Informed Consent Letter to Learners**

Date:
Dear _____

My name is Nozipho Mvune. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This is a formal invitation to request you to participate in the research project titled: Teenage fathers: Culture, Sexuality and Masculinity in rural KwaZulu-Natal. My supervisor is Professor Deevia Bhana.

This study seeks to explore how teenage fathers from rural KwaZulu-Natal define and experience fatherhood. The main question that this study asks is: is: How do gender dynamics shape teenage fathers' constructions of masculinity and experiences of fatherhood? Such research is particularly relevant in South Africa given the high rate of absent fathers in the lives of children especially African children. Recent media reports and studies on family intervention indicate a huge decline in the number of households whereby both parents are present in the lives of children.

The study aims to examine how teenage fathers give meaning to fatherhood and the ways in which these fathers relate to their children. The project will involve interviews with learners who are teenage fathers. All participants and the name of the school will be anonymized. I will take the transcripts back to the participants so that they could check and make changes where they feel necessary. In the various publications that will result from this study I will not use participants' real names or the names of their school.  They are also free to withdraw from the project at any time during or after data collection, without penalty.

Whilst every precaution will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of the participants in every group, there will be limits of confidentiality. Participants will be informed that should there be a disclosure/s which indicates that their well-being/other learners' is being compromised or at risk, I will seek their consent in addressing the matter.

A letter has been written to your parents/guardians to ask for their permission for you to participate in the study.  Kindly take this letter and discuss your participation with them as well, and if they give their permission, fill the form below and return to me.

a

**DECLARATION**

I………………………………………………………………… (full names of participant)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research
project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

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

*Additional consent, where applicable*

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion      YES /NO

Video-record my interview / focus group discussion       YES/ NO

Use of my photographs for research purposes              YES /NO

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT                                          DATE

………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your willingness to participate.
_____
Sincerely

Ms Nozipho Mvune
0833963591
noziphomv@gmail.com

My project supervisor is:
Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X03
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**Appendix 2:**

**Informed consent – Parent**

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

**Informed Consent Letter to Parents**

Date:
Dear Parent / Guardian of_____

My name is Nozipho Mvune. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This is a formal invitation to request you to allow your son/ward to participate in the research project titled: Teenage fathers: Culture, Sexuality and Masculinity in rural KwaZulu-Natal. My supervisor is Professor Deevia Bhana.

This study seeks to explore how teenage fathers from rural KwaZulu-Natal define and experience fatherhood. The main question that this study asks is: How do gender dynamics shape teenage fathers' constructions of masculinity and experiences of fatherhood? Such research is particularly relevant in South Africa given the high rate of absent fathers in the lives of South African children especially African children. Recent media reports and studies on family intervention indicate a huge decline in the number of households whereby both parents are present in the lives of children.

The study aims to examine how teenage fathers give meaning to fatherhood and the ways in which these fathers relate to their children. The project will involve interviews with learners who are teenage fathers. All participants and the name of the school will be anonymized. I will take the transcripts back to the participants so that they could check and make changes where they feel necessary. In the various publications that will result from this study I will not use participants' real names or the names of their school. They are also free to withdraw from the project at any time during or after data collection, without penalty.

Whilst every precaution will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of the participants in every group, there will be limits of confidentiality. Participants will be informed that should there be a disclosure/s which indicates that their well-being/other learners' is being compromised or at risk, I will seek their consent in addressing the matter.
If you give your son permission, kindly fill the form below and return to me.

**DECLARATION**

d

I……………………………………………………………… (full names of parent) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to my son/ward participating in the research project.

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

### *Additional consent, where applicable*

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my son/ward's interview / focus group discussion      YES /NO

Video-record my son/ward's interview / focus group discussion       YES/ NO

Use of my son/ward's photographs for research purposes               YES /NO

SIGNATURE OF PARENT                                        DATE

………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your willingness to participate.
_____
Sincerely

Ms Nozipho Mvune
0833963591
noziphomv@gmail.com

My project supervisor is:
Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD
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f

**Appendix 3:**

**Informed consent – Principal**

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**Informed Consent Letter to Principal**

Date:
Dear Sir_____

My name is Nozipho Mvune. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This is a formal invitation to request you to participate in the research project titled: Teenage fathers: Culture, Sexuality and Masculinity in rural KwaZulu-Natal. My supervisor is Professor Deevia Bhana.

This study seeks to explore how teenage fathers from rural KwaZulu-Natal define and experience fatherhood. The main question that this study asks is: How do gender dynamics shape teenage fathers' constructions of masculinity and experiences of fatherhood? Such research is particularly relevant in South Africa given the high rate of absent fathers in the lives of South African children especially African children. Recent media reports and studies on family intervention indicate a huge decline in the number of households whereby both parents are present in the lives of children.

The study aims to examine how teenage fathers give meaning to fatherhood and the ways in which these fathers relate to their children. The project will involve interviews with learners who are teenage fathers. All participants in the school and the names of your school will be anonymized. I will take the transcripts back to the participants so that they could check and make changes where they feel necessary. In the various publications that will result from this study I will not use participants' real names or the names of their school. They are also free to withdraw from the project at any time during or after data collection, without penalty.

Whilst every precaution will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of the participants in every group, there will be limits of confidentiality. Participants will be informed that should there be a disclosure/s which indicates that their well-being/other learners' is being compromised or at risk, I will seek their consent in addressing the matter.

A letter has been written to the parents/guardians of minor learners to ask for their permission for their participation in the study.

**DECLARATION**

I………………………………………………………… (full names of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to my school participating in the research project.

I understand that my learners are at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

### *Additional consent, where applicable*

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my learners' interviews / focus group discussion     YES /NO

Video-record my learners 'interviews / focus group discussion     YES/ NO

Use of my learners' photographs for research purposes     YES /NO


SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL                                    DATE


…………………………………………………………………………………….


Thank you for your willingness to participate.
_____
Sincerely


Ms Nozipho Mvune
0833963591
noziphomv@gmail.com

My project supervisor is:
Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD
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University of KwaZulu-Natal
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**Appendix 4:**

**Semi-structured interview schedule (focus group discussion)**

1. What is an ideal father?

2. What does fatherhood mean to you?

3. How does the community view teenage fatherhood?

4. How do families (your own) and schools respond to teenage fatherhood?

5. Media and common perceptions portray young fathers as uncaring, irresponsible and uninvolved in the lives of their children; do you agree or disagree? Why?

**Appendix 4a: Main generative narrative question (individual)**

Please tell me the entire story of your life. The best way to do this is to start from your birth, the kind of a boy you were, and then tell me all the things that happened in your life one after the other until you became a father. Take all the time you need and give me every detail because everything that pertains to your masculinity, fatherhood and your schooling is of interest to me.

**Appendix 4b: Semi- structured follow-up questions**

1. How old are you, your child and mother of your child?

2. What grade are you and the mother of the child doing (if she is at school)?

3. What does it mean to you to be an African young father?

4. Did you plan on becoming a father? If so, what were your reasons?

5. What was your immediate response or reaction to the news of becoming a father?

6. How was the response of your families (yours and the mother of the child's) to the news that you were going to be parents?

7. How is the relationship between you and your child, you and the mother of the child and between you and her family?

8.  With whom does the child stay? If not with you, how much time do you spend together? What are the most common activities that you do together?

9.  What does fatherhood mean to you?

10. What kind of support do you receive from both families? Is it sufficient? If not, what kind of support would you like to receive in order to be more effective as a father?

11. How does the community view teenage fatherhood?

12. What is your own general view of fatherhood?

13. Media and common perceptions portray young fathers as uncaring, irresponsible and uninvolved in the lives of their children. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

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