

**Using Participatory Visual Methodology to Explore Girlhood and the
Construction of Femininities with Girls and Young Women in Rural
KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

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**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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DECLARATION

I, **Lisa Wiebesiek**, declare that

- i. the research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research;
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Statement by Supervisor

This thesis is submitted with my approval.

Professor Relebohile Moletsane

ABSTRACT

The study reported in this thesis was located within the ambit of a larger, international and interdisciplinary partnership project between McGill University in Canada and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in South Africa. The *Networks for Change and Well-being: girl-led, from the ground up policy-making to address sexual violence in Canada and South Africa* project used participatory visual methodologies (PVM) to work with girls and young women in Canada and South Africa to better understand sexual violence in their communities, and facilitate and support girl-led social and policy change. The focus in South Africa was on working with girls and young women from rural areas who are particularly marginalised due to a combination of factors that intersect in complex ways, including their age, their distance from services and resources, their gender, and the traditional cultural norms and values that still dominate social relations in these areas. My role in the project was project co-ordinator in the South African arm of the partnership.

My study had two aims: the first was to analyse how girls and young women construct and reimagine their femininities within a context of rurality, poverty, and GBV; and the second to investigate how PVM might be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available to girls and young women in their communities towards facilitating social change. Located within the critical and transformative paradigm, the overall approach in this qualitative study was framed feminist postcolonial theory. I also used social constructionist theories of gender to analyse the data. Over a period of approximately three-and-a-half years, I used PVM to work with a group of 15 girls and young women in a deep rural area in the Drakensberg region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I used a number of visual methods to work with my co-researcher participants,

including cellphilms, digital story-telling, and policy posters and action briefs to co-produce knowledge and create visual products to be used as tools for advocacy and awareness-raising towards social and policy change. Building on and using this co-produced knowledge and using the visual products created by my co-researcher participants, between February 2019 and March 2020, we engaged in a process of girl-led community-based policy-making which involved holding a number of community engagement meetings and a community dialogue in an effort to bring about social and policy change. In addition to the visual products created by my co-researcher participants, sources of data included transcripts of post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions, detailed meeting notes taken during community engagement meetings and community dialogues, and my field notes. I conducted an inductive thematic analysis of this data set.

The findings of the study suggest that girls and young women construct their femininities in relation to masculinities and in relation to idealised constructions of femininities, and heavily influenced by the convergence of poverty and ideas about tradition and culture. Girls and young women are required to construct their gendered identities as they navigate the precarity of girlhoods shaped by poverty, gender inequality, and ideas about culture and tradition that silence, commodify, and devalue girls and young women. In combination, these factors form the adverse social and material circumstances that influence girls' constructions of their femininities in relation to masculinities and idealised constructions of femininities, and shape the options available to them to cope with, manage, or respond to such adversity.

Importantly, however, the findings of the study also suggest that as social constructionist theories of gender suggest, formed as they are in particular social and historical contexts locally-specific idealised constructions of gender and hegemonic gender relations can and do

change over time. Further, the findings and outcomes of the study also suggest that PVM enabled my co-researcher participants to challenge gender and cultural norms that were previously thought of as unassailable, and imagine alternative identities and futures in which their health and well-being is not always at risk. PVM was also crucial to the process of girl-led community-based policy-making that ultimately led to the development and signing of a community reporting and response protocol to address early and forced marriage. The findings of this study have important implications for the development of sustainable, holistic, responsive, and context-relevant policy, programming, and interventions to effectively support and promote the health and well-being of girls in the global South.

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to

my girls, the Social Ills Fighters,

my mum and dad,

and Lebo

with my respect, gratitude, and love

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When you've been Doing A PhD for as long as I have, the list of people to whom you will be profoundly grateful for as long as your memory (such as it is) remains intact is inevitably going to be long. Nevertheless, although it is difficult for one as verbose as I, I have endeavoured to be brief.

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To those who I have forgot to name here, my sincere apologies. It is no secret that my memory is dreadful. Also, as you will undoubtedly already know, I have had to write these acknowledgements in a terrible rush because I have been very busy Doing A PhD. Thank you to all those who have contributed, in small ways or large, to making this thesis *finally* happen. I will name you in the acknowledgements of the book I am going to write on how *not* to Do A PhD.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	1
1.2 Background to the Study.....	3
1.2.1 HIV	3
1.2.2 GBV	4
1.2.3 Teenage Pregnancy	5
1.2.4 Early and Forced Marriage	6
1.2.5 Rurality, Poverty, and Gender	9
1.3 Research Questions.....	11
1.4 Why a Study on Girls, Girlhood and Femininities?.....	13
1.5 Theoretical Framework.....	17
1.5.1 Feminist Postcolonial Theory	17
1.5.2 Social Constructionist Theories of Gender	18
1.6 Rurality, Girlhood and Femininity.....	21
1.6.1 Rurality as Context and Concept	21
1.7 Overview of the Research Design and Methodology	23
1.7.1 Study Design.....	23
1.7.1.1 Research Site.....	24
1.7.1.2 Phase One: Negotiating Entry into the Community and Recruiting Co-researcher Participants	24
1.7.1.3 Phase Two: PVM Workshops.....	25

1.7.1.4 Phase 3: Girl-led Community-based Policy-making, February 2019-March 2020	28
1.8 Positionality and Reflexivity: Situating myself in the study	30
1.9 Overview of the Thesis	37
CHAPTER TWO	41
2.1 Introduction.....	41
2.2 Feminist Postcolonial Theory	42
2.2.1 The “two-fold project” of Feminist Postcolonial Theory	42
2.2.2 Creating the ‘Other’	46
2.2.3 The Centre/Periphery	46
2.2.4 Feminist Postcolonial Theory and Unsettling the Global South.....	48
2.2.5 Using Feminist Postcolonial Theory.....	51
2.2.6 Feminist Postcolonial Theory and Participatory Approaches to Research.....	52
2.3 Social Constructionist Theories of Gender	55
2.3.1 Doing Gender: Masculinities and Femininities	56
2.3.2 Femininities: (Re)formulating the Concept	59
2.3.3 Locally Produced: Gender, hegemony, power, and relationality.....	63
2.4 Discussion: A Framework for Analysing Adolescent Girls’ Constructions of Femininities.....	69
2.5 Synthesis	71
CHAPTER THREE	73
3.1 Introduction.....	73

3.2 Girlhood(s) and Girlhood Studies	75
3.2.1 Girlhood Studies	75
3.2.2 Girlhood(s)	78
3.2.3 Girlhoods in the Global North	80
3.2.3.1 The ‘can-do’ Girl and the ‘at-risk’ Girl	80
3.2.3.2 Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia	81
3.2.3.3 Neoliberalism, Post-Girl Power, and Post-feminism	84
3.3 Creating the Girl-in-Crisis: Girlhoods and Femininities in the Global South	85
3.3.1 Confronting Ideology: Colonialism, Neoliberalism, and International Development	86
3.3.1.1 Women and Girls Save the World: Gender Equality as Smart Economics	87
3.3.2 The Girling of Development	88
3.3.3 The Girl Effect	90
3.3.4 Imported Discourse?	92
3.4 Girlhoods and Femininities in South Africa	96
3.4.1 Conservative and Modern Femininities, and Femininities in Transition	97
3.4.2 Marriage, Femininity, and ‘The Good Woman’	102
3.4.3 The ‘Good’ Woman and The ‘Loose’ Woman	105
3.4.4 Femininity, Sexuality, and Culture	106
3.4.5 Love and Relationships	107
3.5 The Socio-cultural Context of Early and Forced Marriage	109
3.5.1 Cultural Nostalgia	109

3.5.2 Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia.....	111
3.5.3 Lobolo	113
3.5.4 Ukuhlonipha.....	115
3.5.5 Ukuthwala	116
3.5.5.1 The ‘Historical’ Practice of Ukuthwala	117
3.5.6 The Legal Framework for Marriage in South Africa.....	121
3.5.7 The Jezile Case	122
3.6 Understanding Agency.....	125
3.6.1 Empowerment, Choice, and Agency	125
3.6.2 Distributed Agency	127
3.6.3 Distributed Agency and Young Women’s Experiences of Decision-making in Contexts of Intimate Partner Violence in South Africa	132
3.7 What Works in Interventions that Work with Girls?	135
3.8 Discussion: Understanding Girls’ Constructions of Femininities	138
3.9 Synthesis	142
CHAPTER FOUR.....	144
4.1 Introduction.....	144
4.2 Research Design.....	146
4.3 The Critical and Transformative Paradigm.....	147
4.4 Qualitative Research	151
4.5 Feminist Research.....	151
4.6 Participatory Research	152

4.7 Participatory Visual Research with Adolescents in South Africa	154
4.8 Participatory Visual Methodology	159
4.9 Data Generation Methods	162
4.9.1 Photovoice.....	162
4.9.2 Cellphilms.....	163
4.9.3 Digital Story-telling	166
4.9.4 Participatory Data Analysis	170
4.9.5 Policy Posters and Action Briefs	171
4.10 Synthesis	172
CHAPTER FIVE	173
5.1 Introduction.....	173
5.2 Phase 1: Gaining Access and Recruiting Participants	173
5.2.1 Selecting the research site: eMangweni.....	173
5.2.2 “Just don’t change anything”: Gaining Access to the Community.....	175
5.2.3 Recruiting co-researcher participants: Introducing the Social Ills Fighters.....	176
5.3 Phase 2: PVM Workshops	177
5.3.1 Workshop 1: Photovoice, February 2017	178
5.3.2 Workshop 2: Cellphilms, April 2017.....	180
5.3.3 Workshop 3: Digital Story-telling & Cellphilms, July 2017	186
5.3.4 Workshop 4: Participatory Data Analysis, February 2018	191
5.4 Phase 3: Community-based Advocacy and Policy-making, February 2019 – March 2020	196

5.5 Data Analysis	199
5.6 Trustworthiness.....	204
5.7 Research Ethics	206
5.7.1 Informed Consent and Assent, and Release.....	206
5.7.2 Ethical relationships.....	208
5.7.3 Ethics in participatory visual research	209
5.7.4 Reporting and Referral.....	210
5.7.5 Choice of Method and Technology.....	211
5.7.6 Power, Agency, Voice and Representation.....	212
5.8 Reflecting on the Study Design and Methodology	212
5.8.1 Language, Interpretation, and Translation	216
5.9 Limitations of the Study.....	224
5.10 Synthesis	226
CHAPTER SIX.....	227
6.1 Introduction.....	227
6.2 Cellphilm Workshop, April 2017	228
6.2.1 The Challenges Faced by Girls in eMangweni: Original Cellphilms	229
6.2.1.1 Early Marriage 1 (05:19)	229
6.2.1.2 Force Marriage 1 (04:43).....	234
6.2.1.3 Substance Abuse 1 (02:13)	237
6.2.1.4 Teenage Pregnant 1 (01:53).....	238

6.2.1.5 Discussion of the Original Cellphilms	240
6.2.2 Challenging the Status Quo? Speaking Back Cellphilms	242
6.2.2.1 Early Marriage 2 (04:06)	243
6.2.2.2 Force Marriage 2 (03:51)	246
6.2.2.3 Substance Abuse 2 (02:23)	248
6.2.2.4 Teenage Pregnant 2 (03:13)	250
6.2.2.5 Discussion of the Speaking Back Cellphilms	252
6.3 Digital Storytelling and Cellphilm Workshop, July 2017	254
6.3.1 Femininities in Context: Digital Stories	254
6.3.1.1 Poverty Leads to Prostitution (02:07)	255
6.3.1.2 Forced Marriage (02:13)	259
6.3.1.3 Drop out of School (01:25)	263
6.3.1.4 Discussion of the Digital Stories	265
6.3.2 Imagining Alternative Narratives: Resisting and Speaking Back Cellphilms	266
6.3.2.1 The Rape (01:32)	268
6.3.2.2 Abuses is the Crime (01:30)	271
6.3.2.3 No Does Not Mean Yes (01:21)	274
6.3.2.4 Discussion of Resisting and Speaking Back Cellphilms	276
6.4 Synthesis	278
CHAPTER SEVEN	280
7.1 Introduction	280

7.2 Girls' Constructions of Girlhood in Rural KwaZulu-Natal	281
7.2.1 Idealised Femininity in eMangweni: The 'Good Girl'	281
7.2.2 The Social Ills Fighters: The Good Girl in Process	284
7.3 Girlhood from the Perspective of Girls.....	285
7.3.1 Girls-in-Crisis? The Precarity of Girlhood	285
7.3.2 Femininity, Marriage, and Fertility.....	292
7.3.2.1 "A woman's grave is with her in-laws": The Importance of Marriage to Femininity.....	292
7.3.2.2 "I do not want a wife who is unable to have children": The Importance of Fertility to Femininity	295
7.3.3 Girlhood at the Intersection of Poverty and Culture: Girlhood as Selfless.....	297
7.3.3.1 Lobolo, Poverty, and Culture.....	297
7.3.3.2 Marriage, Love and (Re)productive Labour	303
7.3.3.3 "they are paying the damages to show that they are buying you": The Commodification of Girlhood.....	305
7.3.4 Girlhood at the Intersection of Love and Violence.....	308
7.3.4.1 "You said you love me": Romance and the (Tacit) Threat of Violence.....	308
7.3.4.2 "When a man rises, a woman takes a back seat": Unequal Gender Relations	312
7.3.5 Girlhood, Sexuality, and Power	315
7.3.5.1 The Impossible Position of Girls	315
7.3.5.2 The 'Right Time': Sexuality and Morality	316

7.3.5.3 ‘At home they are scared to tell us these things...They do not tell us anything’: Taboos about Talking about Sex and Relationships	319
7.3.6 Boys and Men as Villains	321
7.3.7 Girlhood, Agency, Choice, and Responsibility	324
7.3.7.1 Unfortunately, girls do not choose for themselves, but they do make a choice’: The Illusion of Choice	325
7.3.7.2 “The decision she took was a terrible one”: Expecting Girls to Make Decisions They Do Not Have	331
7.3.7.3 “As Social Ills Fighters you need to do something about this”: Holding Girls Responsible for Solving the Problem	333
7.3.8 Rescuing the Girl-in-Crisis?	339
7.3.8.1 “Education is the key in life”: An Overemphasis on the Emancipatory Promise of Education	339
7.3.8.2 Believe in yourself: Expecting Girls to Save Themselves	342
7.4 Synthesis	344
CHAPTER EIGHT	346
8.1 Introduction.....	346
8.2 The Social Ills Fighters and Early and Forced Marriage	347
8.2.1 Hlah.....	348
8.2.2 Khanyoh.....	350
8.2.3 Cynthai.....	352
8.2.4 Veeh	352

8.3 Community Attitudes towards Early and Forced Marriage: Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia	353
8.3.1 Community attitudes towards Early and Forced Marriage	354
8.3.2 Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia.....	359
8.3.3 Early and Forced Marriage and the Patriarchal Bargain.....	362
8.4 Girl-led Community-based Policy-making.....	363
8.4.1 Policy Posters and Action Briefs	363
8.4.2 Working within the System to Change It: Community Engagement Meetings....	370
8.4.3 The SIFs take Centre Stage: Community Dialogue.....	371
8.4.4 A Protocol to Address Early and Forced Marriage in eMangweni.....	374
8.5 “No more vows for cows!”: Girls, Agency, and Resistance.....	376
8.5.1 Girls have Power.....	377
8.5.2 PVM: Building Confidence and Creating Safe Spaces.....	382
8.5.3 Disrupting the Trope: Not Girls-in-Crisis.....	385
8.6 Synthesis	386
CHAPTER NINE.....	389
9.1 Introduction.....	389
9.2 Overview of the Study: Using Participatory Visual Methodology to Work <i>with</i> Girls	391
9.2.1 Overview of the theoretical framework	392
9.2.2 Overview of the Methodology	394
9.3 Reflections on the Theoretical Framework and Methodology	397

9.4 Adolescent Girls’ Construction and Reimagining of Femininities in a Rural KwaZulu-Natal Community.....	400
9.4.1 How do a selected group of adolescent girls in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?	401
9.4.2 How do the girls position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?.....	402
9.4.3 How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?	402
9.4.4 How might PVM be used to explore the construction and reimagining of femininities among girls and young women in a context of poverty, rurality & GBV?.....	403
9.5 Contributions of the Study	406
9.5.1 Methodological Contributions	408
9.5.1.1 Long-term Engagement and the Importance of Relationships in Participatory Visual Methodology.....	408
9.5.1.2 Participatory Visual Methodology as a Tool for Community-based Policy-Making	410
9.5.2 Conceptual Contributions of the Study.....	412
9.5.2.1 Transitional ‘Good Girl’ in Process Femininity	412
9.5.2.2 Early and Forced Marriage and the Patriarchal Bargain.....	414
9.5.2.3 Coerced Marriage as a Form of Forced Marriage.....	415
9.5.2.4 Girls and Young Women as Knowers and Producers of Knowledge	416
9.5.2.5 Distributed Agency and Intergenerational Partnerships	419

9.5.2.6 Creating Space for Reflective Nostalgia.....	421
9.5.3 Theoretical Contribution of the Study	423
9.6 Implications.....	424
9.7 Implications for Future Research.....	425
9.8 Positionality and Reflexivity: Situating myself after the study	427
9.9 Conclusion	430
References.....	433
Appendix A.....	466
Appendix B	468
Appendix C	470
Appendix D.....	480
Appendix E	482

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Number of girls aged between 12 and 17 who are married, divorced, separated, widowed, or cohabiting by province.....	7
Figure 1.2 The gendered nature of early marriage in South Africa	7
Figure 1.3 PVM Workshops with the SIFs, 2017-2018	28
Figure 1.4 Research Design	29
Figure 3.1 Summary of the findings of the literature review.....	138
Figure 5.1 Study Timeline	199
Figure 5.2 Types of data in participatory visual research (Gubrium & Harper, 2013, p. 185)	200
Figure 9.1 Girlhood at the Intersection of Rurality, Poverty, Gender Inequality, and Culture and Tradition.....	405

LIST OF IMAGES

Figure 1.1 Number of girls aged between 12 and 17 who are married, divorced, separated, widowed, or cohabiting by province.....	7
Figure 1.2 The gendered nature of early marriage in South Africa	7
Figure 1.3 PVM Workshops with the SIFs, 2017-2018	28
Figure 1.4 Research Design	29
Figure 3.1 Summary of the findings of the literature review.....	138
Image 5.1 A view of one of the many luxury resorts in the Drakensberg	174
Image 5.2 <i>KwaNdlela</i> , one of the villages in <i>eMangweni</i> , is situated near a river where people do their washing and collect water for cooking, drinking, and ablutions	175
Image 5.3 Making photovoice posters	179
Image 5.4 Exhibition of photovoice posters	179
Image 5.5 The list of key issues affecting girls and young women in the community.....	182
Image 5.6 A storyboard template.....	183
Image 5.7 One of the groups creating a storyboard	183
Image 5.8 One of the groups reviewing their cellphilm	184
Image 5.9 Introducing the SIFs to digital stories.....	187
Image 5.10 The results of the brainstorming and voting	188
Image 5.11 Typing up their story.....	188
Image 5.12 Taking photographs and creating drawings	189
Image 5.13 Practicing reading the narrative	189
Image 5.14 The ‘recording studio’ where the SIFs went to record the narratives for their digital stories	190

Image 5.15 The Social Ills Fighters discussing the key issues in their cellphilms and digital stories to decide on a focus for their policy posters and action briefs	192
Image 5.16 An example of a policy poster	193
Image 5.17 An example of an action brief.....	194
Image 5.18 The SIFs presenting their digital story and being congratulated by the Principal	198
Image 5.19 One of the SIFs’ mothers giving a testimonial about her experience (left), and the <i>iNkosi</i> addressing the community (right).....	199
Figure 5.1 Study Timeline	199
Figure 5.2 Types of data in participatory visual research (Gubrium & Harper, 2013, p. 185)	200
Image 6.1 The Storyboard for Early Marriage 1.....	229
Image 6.2 The Storyboard for Force Marriage 1	234
Image 6.3 The Storyboard for Substance Abuse 1	237
Image 6.4 The Storyboard for Teenage Pregnant 1	238
Image 6.5 The Storyboard for Early Marriage 2.....	243
Image 6.6 The Storyboard for Force Marriage 2	246
Image 6.7 The Storyboard for Substance Abuse 2	248
Image 6.8 The Storyboard for Teenage Pregnant 2	250
Image 6.9 The Storyboard for Poverty Leads to Prostitution	255
Image 6.10 A Still Image from Poverty Leads to Prostitution, caption: She didn’t find a job and she decides to prostitute.....	256
Image 6.11 A Still Image from Poverty Leads to Prostitution, caption: She decide to go back home and tell her mother everything about what she was doing in Joburg and that she HIV positive.....	257

Image 6.12 The storyboard for Forced Marriage.....	259
Image 6.13 A Still Image from Forced Marriage, caption: The young men agreed to do as asked. The boys went to where Smangele fetched water, they got there and it was full of other girls from the community but the boys did not ask anyone, and went straight for Smangele and forcefully put her in a car.....	260
Image 6.14 A Still Image from Forced Marriage, caption: Smangele regretted her decision and she ended up staying from one place to place.....	261
Image 6.15 The Storyboard for Drop out of School	263
Image 6.16 Still from Drop out of School, caption: Nombuso felt sick and went to the clinic and she was told that she was HIV positive.....	264
Image 6.17 The Poster for the 5 th International Cellphilm Festival.....	267
Image 6.18 The storyboard for The Rape	268
Image 6.19 The Storyboard for Abuses is the Crime.....	271
Image 6.20 The Storyboard for No Does Not Mean Yes	274
Figure 9.1 Girlhood at the Intersection of Rurality, Poverty, Gender Inequality, and Culture and Tradition.....	405

LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1 The Social Ills Fighters Pseudonyms and Ages.....	177
Table 5.2 PVM Workshops and Visual Productions	195

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
COGTA	Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoH	Department of Health
DSD	Department of Social Development
EFM	Early and Forced Marriage
IGSA	International Girlhood Studies Association
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
PI	Principal Investigator
PVM	Participatory Visual Methodology
PVR	Participatory Visual Research
SAPS	South African Police Service
SIFs	Social Ills Fighters
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

In his keynote address at the fifth South African AIDS Conference in June 2011, Mark Heywood stated that “[i]n South Africa being young and a woman is a risk factor for unwanted pregnancy, rape, HIV and death.” Immediately after he said this, I leaned over to the person sitting next to me and told them that *that* was what my PhD would be about. I chose to begin the first chapter of this thesis with this story for two reasons. First, because it marked the beginning of my PhD journey; and second, because, as a result, much of this thesis is in conversation with this statement. A decade later, the data that underpinned Heywood’s conclusion then remains largely unchanged. It is perhaps not surprising then, that the ways in which girls are positioned in local and international popular and development discourses in relation to identity, vulnerability, risk, power, and agency continue to paint a picture of the girl, particularly the rural girl from the global South, as homogenously vulnerable, powerless, and in perpetual need of rescue (Bent, 2013; Bent & Switzer, 2016; Gilmore & Marshall, 2010). The girl-in-crisis discourse is reminiscent of representations of women (and girls) in colonial discourses, postcolonial theory, and Western feminist discourses which gave rise to the construction of the category of ‘Third World Women,’ critiqued by feminist postcolonial theorists like Mohanty. In her seminal 1984 essay *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, Mohanty argued that in these discourses the ‘Third World Woman’ and, by extension, the ‘Third World Girl’ is *re-presented* (in contrast to the Western woman’s *self*-presentation) as a singular, monolithic subject who “leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being “third world” (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimised, etc.)” (p.

337). Among other things, these discourses and narratives are limiting and fail to take into account the ways in which girls and young women in challenging or adverse circumstances can and do exercise agency and demonstrate resilience (Moletsane et al., 2008). What seems to be consistent is that the perspectives of girls and young women, at least those that are not mediated through the editing and/or retelling by adults often from the global North, are largely absent in the girl-in-crisis discourse and the narratives of girlhood to which it gives rise.

Thus, of particular relevance to this study are the ways in which girls themselves embody, reproduce or challenge the girl-in-crisis discourse. Developing an understanding of how girls position themselves in relation to risk, vulnerability, and agency, is key to problematising this discourse and the narratives associated with it. Problematising the girl-in-crisis discourse has implications for the development of alternative narratives which reflect girls' lived experiences, and acknowledge and make available to them subject positions in which their agency is recognised in relation to the material conditions in which they live their lives, and the social and structural constraints with which they contend. Recognising the possibilities offered by and the need for alternative narratives has implications for research and programming aimed at supporting girls' health and well-being in sustainable, holistic, responsive, and context-relevant ways. Thus, the study reported in this thesis aimed to analyse how adolescent girls construct and reimagine their femininities within a context of rurality, poverty, and gender-based violence.

In a somewhat awkward move, having begun to problematise narratives of girlhood in which girls in the global South appear as uniformly unagentic, vulnerable, at risk, and in need of rescue, in the following section, by way of background, I discuss some of the evidence that might be used to support and perpetuate the very narratives that I hope to trouble in this thesis.

The discussion that follows makes it clear that many girls and women in South Africa contend with significant and sustained adversity. In challenging the girl-in-crisis discourse, it is certainly not my intention to minimise those experiences of adversity which are represented by the statistics. I seek only to explore alternative narrative(s), informed, written, performed, and lived by the girls and women who live in these contexts of adversity; narratives that might reflect their lived experiences in ways that are more nuanced, complex, and balanced.

1.2 Background to the Study

In the 10 years since Heywood made his chilling statement, the situation for girls and young women in South Africa has remained largely unchanged. South Africa continues to be faced with the challenge of combating two concurrent and interrelated epidemics, namely HIV and gender-based violence (GBV), and linked to these, (the much-lamented) adolescent pregnancy, and early and forced marriage, all of which are driven in critical ways by social norms about gender, power, and violence.

1.2.1 HIV

Although there have been improvements in recent years, HIV continues to disproportionately affect girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 24, with studies suggesting that both prevalence and incidence are higher among girls and young women than their same-aged male counterparts (Abdool Karim & Baxter, 2016; Abdool Karim et al., 2012; UNAIDS, 2019). According to the Fifth South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence, Behaviour and Communication Survey 2017, at 1.51% HIV incidence in the 15-24 age group is three times higher among females than males (0.49%) (Simbayi et al., 2018). The same study found that HIV prevalence in the age group 15 to 19 was 5.8% among females compared to 4.7% among

males. The disparity between the sexes grows larger in the 20 to 24 age group with prevalence among females recorded at 15.6% and 4.8% among males.

1.2.2 GBV

Like HIV, GBV continues to threaten the lives, health and well-being of girls and women (Joyner, 2016; Abdool Karim & Baxter, 2016; Statistics South Africa [StatsSA], 2018). While there is a lack of good data on rates of GBV in South Africa due to a combination of underreporting and the questionable quality of the data (StatsSA, 2018), it is widely accepted that GBV has reached epidemic proportions (Joyner, 2016). For example, the Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) Crime against Women Report, 2018 (p. 8) states that

[r]ape, targeting women and girls, is a serious problem in South Africa. The 2016/17 Victims of Crime statistical release reported that 250 out of every 100 000 women were victims of sexual offences.... Using the 2016/17 South African Police Service statistics, in which 80% of the reported sexual offences were rape, together with Statistics South Africa's estimate that 68,5% of the sexual offences victims were women, we obtain a crude estimate of the number of women raped per 100 000 as 138. This figure is among the highest in the world.

Further, the South African Demographic and Health Survey 2016 found that in the 12 months prior to the survey, one in five South African women experienced physical violence, 17% of women aged 18 to 24 experienced violence from a partner, and 5.2% of women aged 18 to 24 experienced sexual violence (this figure rises to 7% among women aged 25-30) (StatsSA, 2017).

The link between GBV and HIV is well established. GBV increases women's risk of acquiring HIV in several direct and indirect ways, including transmission through sexual violence including coerced sex, and transmission through girls' and women's inability to negotiate condom use with male partners. HIV also increases women's risk of GBV as a consequence of being HIV-positive or in response to disclosure (Artz et al., 2020; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2004; Jewkes et al., 2010).

1.2.3 Teenage Pregnancy

Rates of unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy among adolescents remain high. For example, findings from the South African Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS) 2016 show that at 16%, the percentage of adolescents aged 15-19 who have begun child bearing remained unchanged relative to the 1998 survey (StatsSA, 2017, p. 73). According to the survey, urban women (14%) are less likely to begin childbearing in their teen years than non-urban women (19%) (StatsSA, 2017, p. 73). Among the drivers of teenage pregnancy are gender inequality and gendered expectations of how teenage boys and girls should act. Such gendered expectations include sexual taboos for girls and sexual permissiveness for boys; high rates of GBV including sexual coercion; a lack of access to sexual and reproduction health services, information, and education; and social and economic disadvantages such as poverty (Panday et al., 2009; Ward et al., 2015). These circumstances lead to, among other things, negative health outcomes for girls and young women, including unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. In addition to the social, economic, and health outcomes directly related to pregnancy and child-bearing, one of the most critical concerns regarding rates of teenage pregnancy in SA is the obvious link to HIV infection. If young women are falling pregnant, they are having unprotected sex and are thus at risk of acquiring HIV.

1.2.4 Early and Forced Marriage

A form of GBV not mentioned by Heywood and not often mentioned in the literature about girls and young women in South Africa, is the practice of early and/or forced marriages (EFM) in South Africa. Although these practices receive less media attention than statistics on HIV and teenage pregnancy, EFM in South Africa continues to be a critical challenge facing girls and young women in this country. According to the StatsSA Community Survey 2016, in South Africa just over 83 000 girls aged 12 to 17 were married, divorced, separated, widowed or cohabiting. Twenty-five thousand, two hundred and five of these girls (approximately 30%) were in KwaZulu-Natal, the highest number in the country (see Figure 1.1 below). (StatsSA, 2016).

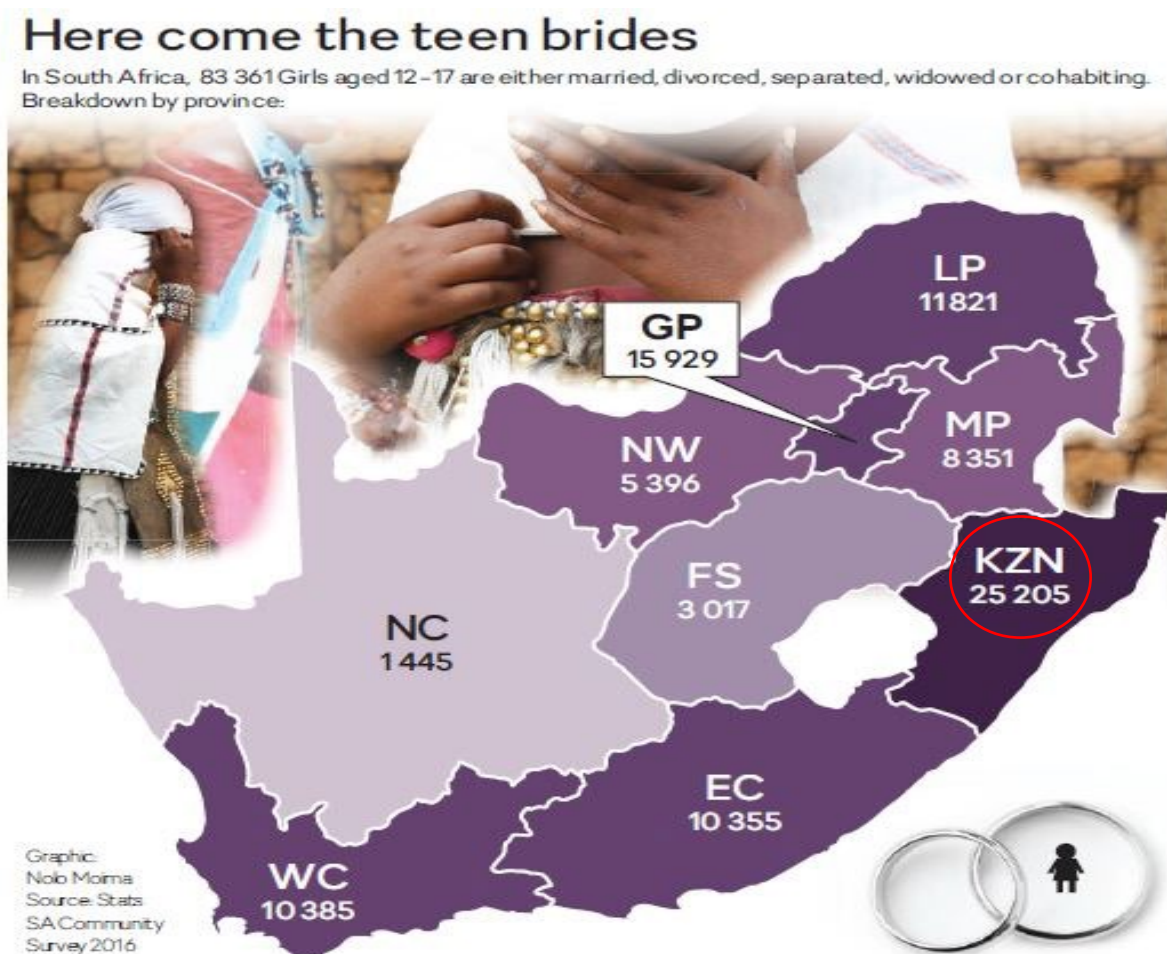


Figure 1.1 Number of girls aged between 12 and 17 who are married, divorced, separated, widowed, or cohabiting by province

The figure below illustrates the gendered nature of the phenomenon of early marriage, with brides under the age of 18 outnumbering grooms under the age of 18 by 12 to one.

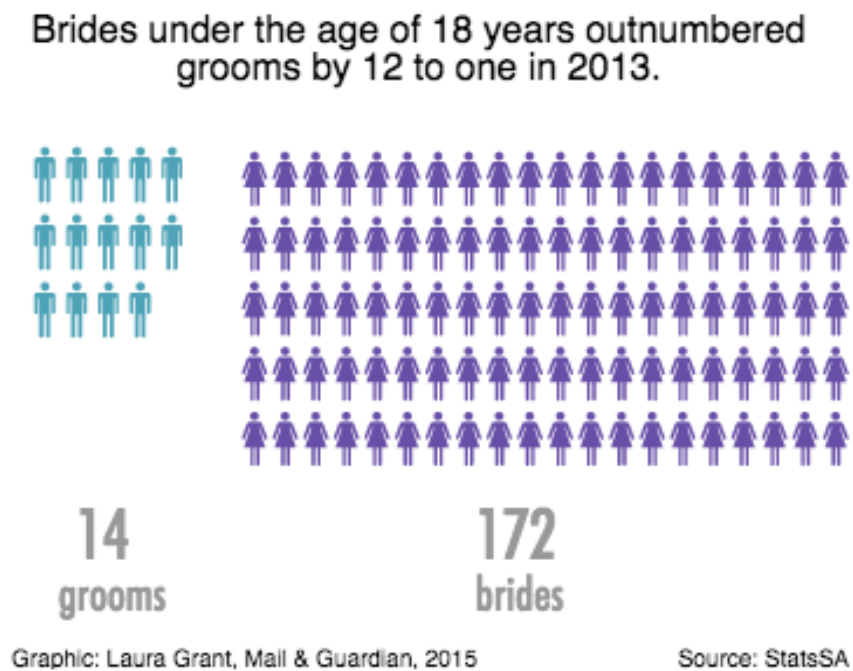


Figure 1.2 The gendered nature of early marriage in South Africa

Early and/or forced marriages take place in what can be thought of as a legislative grey area in terms of the minimum legal age for marriage in South Africa.¹ The legislative framework for marriage or civil unions in South Africa includes three laws: the Marriage Act (No. 25 of 1961), the Recognition of Customary Marriages² Act (No. 120 of 1998), and the Civil Union Act (no. 17 of 2006). The Marriage Act states that no boy under the age of 18 years and no girl under the age of 15 years can enter into a legal marriage, and both the Recognition of Customary

¹ Any form of forced marriage (marriage without the full and freely-given consent of both parties) is illegal in South Africa and is prosecuted as kidnapping and/or human trafficking.

² In South Africa, a customary marriage is one that is concluded in accordance with customary law.

Marriages Act and the Civil Union Act set the minimum age for marriage for both parties at 18. However, both the Marriage Act and the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act make provision for people below the age of 18 to marry legally provided certain conditions are met. In the case of the Marriage Act, the Minister of Home Affairs or a person authorised by him to do so, may grant permission for the legal marriage of a boy under the age of 18 and a girl under the age of 15 in cases where the Minister “considers such marriage desirable.” In the case of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, “[i]f either of the prospective spouses is a minor, both his or her parents, or if he or she has no parents, his or her legal guardian, must consent to the marriage.” Similar to the Marriage Act, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act makes provision for the Minister of Home Affairs or an official authorised by her/him to grant permission for individuals under the age of 18 to enter into a legal customary marriage if the Minister (or authorised official) deem “such marriage desirable and in the interests of the individuals.” (No. 120 of 1998)

The situation is further complicated by the existence of and support for a traditional practice called *ukuthwala* which is often used as a defence in cases of forced marriage. The term and the practice itself are contested (I will return to a discussion of *ukuthwala* in Chapter Two of this thesis). Briefly, *ukuthwala* was historically practiced by the *amaXhosa* and *amaZulu* peoples in South Africa. *Ukuthwala* has been described as a legitimate, though unconventional route to marriage for couples whose families, for whatever reason, would not consent to the marriage (Maluleke, 2012; Nkosi, 2011; Van der Watt & Ovens, 2012). Arranged by the couple, with both of their consent, a staged abduction of the young woman by her suitor (and his friends or members of his family) would take place after which negotiations would be opened between the couple’s families for the marriage proceedings to commence (Koyana & Bekker, 2007). In contemporary South Africa, the abduction of girls and women without their

consent and the confinement and sexual violence that often follows is often perpetrated under the guise of *Ukuthwala*, lending this gross violation of the rights of the victims an air of legitimacy, at least in some spaces.

1.2.5 Rurality, Poverty, and Gender

Due to the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, rural areas are largely populated by black South Africans. These areas are also some of the poorest, most under-resourced and under-developed in the country. According to the *Men, Women and Children: Findings of the Living Conditions Survey (LCS) 2014/15* report (StatsSA, 2018), households in traditional or rural areas were shown to have the highest levels of poverty with almost half (43.2%) of all poor households in the country located in these areas. Further, The *Poverty Trends in South Africa: An examination of absolute poverty between 2006 and 2015* report (StatsSA, 2017), found that poor people living in rural areas were consistently both further away from the poverty line, and poorer than their counterparts in urban areas. As a result, ‘rural’ is often associated with poverty.

As Reddy et al. (2010, p. 27) point out, “the relationship between gender inequality and the greater burden of poverty borne by women has been well documented” (see, for example, Chant, 2003; Godol, 2004; Kabeer, 2003; Kim & Watts, 2005; Sen, 1999). The LCS survey also found that there were more females (65.1%) than males (30.8%) living in rural areas, and that females experienced higher levels of poverty than males. Poverty not only affects more women than men, it affects them differently and more severely (Bentley, 2004; Moletsane et al., 2010; StatsSA, 2017). Kehler (2001) argues that both statistically and in terms of their lack of access to resources, services and support, Black African rural women are one of the poorest population groups in South Africa. Forty percent of South African children reside in rural areas

where poverty levels were the highest. In terms of child poverty, the LCS and the Poverty Trends in South Africa surveys both found that children (aged 0-17) remain among the most vulnerable to poverty. It is clear then, that poverty in South Africa is mediated by social and geographic location, age and sex. Due to their age and their sex, girls in rural areas in South Africa are disproportionately affected by poverty. Girls and young women in resource-poor, rural communities are especially vulnerable to unplanned pregnancy, HIV, GBV. In these contexts, in addition to poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure and service delivery, gendered traditional beliefs and practices continue to have a significant impact on their lives and well-being (Moletsane et al., 2010). Due in large part to the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, tradition and customary law continue to be practiced and observed more strictly in some rural areas than in urban areas. Traditional customs and beliefs tend to be conservative and often privilege boys and men over women and girls although there is also an, at times intersecting, age-related hierarchy in which children are taught to respect their elders. Ngidi (2020) explains that this respect entails children being expected to obey all adults, and to refrain from questioning or challenging the demands or expectations of adults. As he points out, these, sometimes rigid, understandings of respect required of girls and women towards boys and men, and required of children towards adults may leave those in positions of less power unable to challenge beliefs, customs, practices and decisions that affect their lives and well-being. For these reasons, girls, by virtue of their gender and their age, are among the least powerful members of many communities.

It is against this background that the study reported in this thesis had two aims. The first was to explore, with adolescent girls, how they construct their femininities in a context of rurality, poverty, GBV, and HIV&AIDS. The second was to investigate how PVM might be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain

the choices available to girls and young women in their communities towards facilitating social change. Informed by these aims, I developed my research questions.

1.3 Research Questions

The study reported in this thesis forms part of a larger, international and interdisciplinary partnership project between McGill University in Canada and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in South Africa. The *Networks for Change and Well-being: girl-led, from the ground up policy-making to address sexual violence in Canada and South Africa* (henceforth referred to as the Networks for Change) project was framed within the interdisciplinary field of Girlhood Studies, an area of research that is characteristically carried out *with girls, for girls and by girls* (Greenwood & Levin, 2006; Kirk et al., 2010; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2008;). A six-year project (2015 to 2020), the Networks for Change used participatory visual methodology (PVM) to work with girls and young women in Canada and South Africa to better understand sexual violence in their communities, and facilitate and support girl-led social and policy change. While the focus in Canada was on working with indigenous girls and young women, in South Africa our focus was on girls and young women from rural areas. As argued above, this population group is particularly marginalised due to a combination of factors that intersect in complex ways, including their age, their distance from services and resources, their gender, and the traditional cultural norms and values that still dominate social relations in these areas (Jewkes et al., 2002; Kovacs, 2017). The Networks for Change focuses on one broad set of questions: *What can we learn about sexual violence (effects and solutions) from the use of participatory visual and other media and arts-based work with indigenous girls? How can the partnership test out models for affirming those whose voices are typically left out of policy dialogue? and What impact can this work have on changing the policy landscape for girls in relation to safety and security?*

My role in the project was project co-ordination of the South African arm of the partnership. In this role I was not only responsible for the day-to-day administration and co-ordination of the project, but was also actively involved in all research activities including participant recruitment, data generation and analysis. It is for this reason that I conducted my research for my doctorate within the ambit of the project.

In particular, for this part of the study, I was informed by available literature on femininities which suggests that, influenced by prevailing gender norms and expectations, girls and women tend to construct and perform their femininities in ways that maintain social inequalities and put them at risk of or increase their vulnerability to GBV, HIV and other STIs (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Moletsane, et al., 2008). For example, Jewkes and Morrell (2012) found that in their study of young women in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, the most common femininity observed among their participants was a highly acquiescent femininity which involved being subordinate to men. The adoption of this conservative femininity was associated with displays of passivity, obedience, and respect in relations with men. Among Jewkes and Morrell's participants, it was those who embodied conservative femininities who were the most vulnerable. These women appeared to accept and support male dominance without question or resistance. Shai (2018, p. 7) notes that Jewkes and Morrell's concept of acquiescent femininity "suggests the need to explore how traditional notions of femininity are constructed and how the dominant traditional gender identity responds to other forms of female gender identities." This suggestion is particularly relevant in this study given the prevalence of and adherence to traditional beliefs, practices and values in the rural context in which it was located. Reddy and Dunne (2007) describe the femininities performed by their adolescent participants in KwaZulu-Natal as "troubling femininities" because they described certain forms of disempowerment as "integral

to the performance of heterosexual femininity.” (p. 165). Exacerbated by poverty, the performance of such femininities which do not challenge, but rather perpetuate, harmful gender norms is implicated in, among other things, girls’ risk of and vulnerability to gender-based violence, HIV and other STIs and unplanned/unwanted pregnancy.

Informed by this understanding, this study aimed to investigate with adolescent girls in a rural setting in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa how they understand their femininities, and to explore how PVM might be used to challenge the norms and beliefs that heighten their vulnerability. The main research question that I set out to answer through this study was: *How might PVM be used to explore the construction and reimagining of femininities among girls and young women in a context of poverty, rurality & GBV?*

In order to answer this research question, I posed three sub-questions:

1. *How do a selected group of girls and young women in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?*
2. *How do the girls and young women position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?*
3. *How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?*

1.4 Why a Study on Girls, Girlhood and Femininities?

This study focused on girls and the ways in which they understand their femininities in their families, institutions, and community. Within Girlhood Studies, girlhood encompasses the life phases of childhood and adolescence. The term girlhood stands in contrast to the seemingly gender-neutral terms childhood and adolescence. It seeks to make explicit the difference

between the experiences of children and adolescents who grow up girls and those who grow up boys. In patriarchal societies, from birth, the ways in which we learn about ourselves and are understood as gendered subjects, the unequal gendered norms and expectations of girls and boys, ensure that our experiences of the world are sufficiently different that an exploration of these varied and gendered experiences of growing up is warranted. To study childhood assumes that the needs and experiences of girls and boys are the same. As scholars of girlhood have argued, this assumption risks privileging boys' experiences and needs over those of girls (see for example, Griffin, 1985; Kearney, 2009; McRobbie, 1980). Girls have unique needs and experiences that must be understood if we are to support their well-being and success. To study girlhood is to recognise that to study childhood and adolescence does not account for the unique experiences of girls and young women. It also resists the essentialization of childhood and adolescence in terms of gender. Further, it resists the idea that childhood and adolescence are universal experiences, but, rather, taking its cue from feminist research, it acknowledges the intersectionality of experiences and structures and the situated nature of experience.

Aapola et al. (2005, p. 1) understand girlhood "as something that is constructed socially, rather than merely as a stage of life fixed by biological processes and programmed psychological development". It is, according to them, "something that is accomplished through participating in the social, material and discursive practices defining young femininity" (p. 1). Located within a particular timeframe and context, girlhood is constituted at the complex intersections of race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and ability. Happel (2012, p. 3) notes that

[r]ace, class, and sexuality are all central components that inform and influence girlhood, and they intersect with gender and gender identity in complex ways. Therefore, it is important for feminist theorists to investigate social constructions of In the context of South Africa, where this study was conducted, Moletsane (2007, p. 164) has argued

that “[g]irlhood is a complex and multifaceted identity (due to differences in identity, experiences and other factors), which tends to be developed and enacted in often difficult circumstances, characterised by a variety of social ills, most importantly GBV and HIV/AIDS.”

Focusing as it does on girls’ constructions of femininity, the study presented in this thesis is located within Girlhood Studies, a disciplinary area within feminist studies, women’s studies, and childhood and youth studies (Mitchell, 2012). While it originated in the global North, there is a growing body of literature in Girlhood Studies from areas outside of the global North such as South Africa (see, for example Moletsane, 2007; Moletsane et al., 2009; Moletsane et al., 2008;). Much of the work in Girlhood Studies in South Africa focuses on what it is like “to be a girl ... [and] [w]hy, in the context of the various rights-based policies and international conventions we have adopted, girls continue to exist on the margins of society, but also to remain vulnerable to the most violent abuse, including rape, HIV infection, early marriage and transactional sex in and around schools” (Moletsane, 2007, p. 157-8).

While there is no doubt that the situation for many girls in South Africa is challenging and many of them grow up in chronically adverse circumstances, as discussed above, the study sought to challenge the girl-in-crisis discourse. Gilmore and Marshall (2010, p. 667) are worth quoting at length here:

It often seems that girlhood has congealed into a single sad story in which imperilled girls await rescue, with limited hope or success. In this story, girls appear in perpetual crisis and permanently vulnerable not only because of dire circumstances but also because of something intransigent and intrinsic to girlhood itself. Girls in crisis make an ethical claim upon our attention, and they should; but the permanently vulnerable

girl is a deceptively apolitical and amoral figure that blots out representations of gendered autonomy (political, ethical, personal). By focusing on girls in this way, women do not appear as moral and political agents lodged in material conditions of harm, capable of analysing these conditions and proposing means of remediation. The figure of the vulnerable girls is tied to the absent figuration of women as fully human and as political agents. As such, this representation recalls colonial and orientalist histories and the representational politics of racialization; and it is in this figuration that the vulnerable and racialized girl in crisis has become the focus of human rights campaigns, corporate philanthropy, and service learning projects based in the United States.”

As Gilmore and Marshall (2010) suggest, the girl-in-crisis narrative positions girls as always unagentic due not only to their circumstances, but also to something inherent in girls themselves. This narrative is particularly potent when a comparison is made between girls in the global South and their counterparts in the global North. In a parallel narrative, alongside the girl-in-crisis (who is inevitably located in the global South) exists the girl from the global North who embodies a neoliberal, post-feminist girl power existence (see, for example, McRobbie, 2004), in which they are considered and consider themselves already liberated from gender oppression. These two figures are juxtaposed to great effect. Where the girl-in-crisis is oppressed, dependent, in need of rescue, and unable to identify and challenge gender inequality, the girl in the global North is independent, empowered, and confident. Where the girl in the global North is already enjoying the dividends of a feminism that is assumed to be no longer necessary, and is ready to fight for the rights of their oppressed sisters in the global South, the girl-in-crisis sits passively awaiting rescue from her liberated friend.

In this thesis, I attempt to trouble and complicate these parallel narratives by engaging with the complexity of girlhood in context and exploring the ways in which girls in a rural community embody, reproduce and/or challenge the dominant discourses of what it is like to be a girl in the global South, particularly in the context of the ravaging GBV and HIV epidemics. Locating the study within Girlhood Studies, and using participatory visual methodology that recognizes girls as knowledge producers who can and should be involved in mapping their own experiences and concerns, I wanted to examine how girls themselves understand their gendered identities and the subject positions available to them as girls in rural South Africa, and how girls position themselves in relation to the risk factors discussed above including HIV, GBV, and early and forced marriage. I also wanted to explore how using PVM might be used to engage girls and young women in challenging the gendered norms and expectations that make available and/or acceptable certain identities and subject positions towards stimulating and supporting social change.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for my study draws on feminist postcolonial theory and social constructionist theories of gender. Just as there is no single, unified social constructionist theory of gender, there is no single, unified feminist postcolonial theory. Rather, the term feminist postcolonial theory refers to a set of theories within postcolonial studies that share certain focus areas, concepts and approaches. Feminist postcolonial theory frames my approach to the study, and I use both theories to analyse my data and answer my research questions.

1.5.1 Feminist Postcolonial Theory

Where mainstream or Western Feminist theory has tended to assume a white, heterosexual, middle class subject from the global North, and postcolonial theories have tended to assume a

normative male colonial subject, feminist postcolonial theories aim to critically engage with both race and gender. This critical engagement is crucial because, as Connell (2014) argues, colonialism was not only a raced but also an essentially gendered project. Feminist postcolonial theorists like Mohanty (1984, 1988, 2002) and Narayan (1998) criticise both the gender and the cultural essentialism of much Western feminism and Western feminist theory which work to (re)produce the figures of the uniformly oppressed Third World woman and the homogenously vulnerable girl-in-crisis from the global South. With South Africa's colonial and apartheid history, and with me being a white, English-speaking woman working with Black African, isiZulu-speaking girls and young women, feminist postcolonial theory is particularly relevant to my study. Framed by feminist postcolonial theory, my research approach and analysis must consider not only gender but also issues of race, class, historical context, and local and global relations of power. Doing so allows me to co-produce with my co-researcher participants nuanced, non-essentialist accounts of how adolescent girls in a rural community in South Africa construct their femininities.

1.5.2 Social Constructionist Theories of Gender

According to feminist social constructionist theories, gender is socially constructed and relational. It is an organising principle of the overall social order, and incorporates both cultural meanings and material relations (Lorber, 1994). In social constructionist theories gender is understood to be constructed on three levels or dimensions. At an individual level it involves the production of our gendered selves, our gender identities. At an interactional level, the construction of gender involves expectations about the performance of what are considered to be 'proper' gender identities and patterns of behaviour which shape everyday interactions. At a macro level, which includes institutional domains, constructions of gender include the distribution of resources and institutional beliefs and norms (Budgeon, 2014; Risman, 2004).

Social constructionist theories of gender make it possible to explore the role of broader social, institutional, and structural factors in creating the context in which the people construct and negotiate their gender identities, including how gender intersects with other social structures such as race, rurality, and poverty.

Connell's theory of gender and power (1987, 1995) is particularly influential, specifically her conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity. However, Connell's treatment of femininities has been critiqued. Much of this critique has focused on the fact that in Connell's (1987, 1995) formulation femininities are always and only defined in a simple relation of subordination to (hegemonic) masculinity, and her assertion that there is not nor can there be a hegemonic femininity, and the fact that Connell's concept of emphasised femininities does not adequately account for the complexity of gender relations between masculinities and femininities as practiced by male and female bodies (not always corresponding to the gender assigned to them). Schippers' (2007) reworks Connell's conceptualisation of masculinities, emphasising the importance of gender relationality, which, she argues depends on *idealised gender constructions*. Positioned in complimentary and hierarchical relation to each other, these idealised gender constructions are comprised of the qualities and characteristics of masculinities and femininities that men and women are expected to possess. Similar to Connell's theory, the fact that both gender difference and gender relationality are naturalised and normalised in interpersonal relationships, society and institutional domains is important to Schippers' (2007) model.

In addition to emphasised femininity, the concept of idealised gender constructions and the role that they play in sustaining hegemonic gender relations, as well as that of multiple, hierarchical configurations of femininities are useful for the analysis offered in this study. These ideas can

offer insight into the apparent dissonance between how my co-researcher participants view their own constructions of and performances of femininities, and the traditional gendered expectations of their community and the girls' perceptions of those expectations. Similarly, the significance of Schippers' conceptualisation of masculinities, femininities and gender relationality is not just that the normative gender ideology *must* be undone, but that it *can* be undone and therein lies the potential for transformation towards more equitable gender relations.

Building on both Connell (1987; 1995) and Schippers' (2007) work, Paechter (2018) argues that that hegemonic masculinities and femininities should be conceptualised together rather than conceptualising hegemonic (and other) masculinity(ies) and then "trying to fit femininity around it" (p. 123). Paechter (2018) contends that hegemonic and other forms of masculinities and femininities are local and context-specific phenomena. What forms masculinities and femininities take, and which of these forms are hegemonic (through their support of the local gender order) differ depending on the specific contexts in which gender intersects other markers of social identity such as race and class.

Drawing on Foucault (1977, 1978, 1988), Paechter (2018) also argues that gendered power relations are neither automatic nor immutable, but involve constant contest and struggle mirroring the constant interplay of power and resistance within the multiple, networked relations of power in society. Understood as relational and constantly in flux, power and resistance to power are not distinct forces, but co-exist (Happel, 2012; Pincock, 2017). This understanding of power and resistance as relational creates the space to recognise and acknowledge different and unique forms of resistance and agency as exercised by marginalised groups, including girls and women in the global South.

I present and discuss the theoretical framework for my study in detail in Chapter Two.

1.6 Rurality, Girlhood and Femininity

As will be discussed in Chapter Five, data generation, and some of the analysis, for the study reported in this thesis took place in a deep rural area in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Context is not simply a neutral backdrop to research that can be briefly described in a paragraph in the methodology section of a paper or thesis. Context is a dynamic and complex construct encompassing geographic, historical and cultural place and space, all of which play a crucial role in the construction of social practices “where the social is made by individuals and individuals are made by the social” (Groundwater-Smith & Irwin, 2011, p. 58).

1.6.1 Rurality as Context and Concept

In South Africa, Balfour et al. (2008) argue that rurality has tended to be conceptualised in terms of issues like poverty, disease, neglect, backwardness, marginalisation, and exclusion. Drawing on the work of Odora-Hoppers (2005), they observe that “the theoretical constructs we use to study rurality tend to focus on the space rather than the people, and tend to treat the space as homogenous, ignoring and simplifying the variations and complexities in identity, behaviour and nuance” (p. 101). As Moletsane (2012) has pointed out, as a result of this conceptualisation of rurality, with its focus on deprivation and deficiency, research and interventions located within rural contexts often fail to recognise or take into account the need for context-specific understandings of the needs of rural communities, and their strengths and assets.

In job as the project co-ordinator of a rural education development project and the Networks for Change project, I have experienced first-hand that rural spaces are not homogenous, nor are the people who inhabit them. That being said, and at the risk of reproducing these views of rurality in South Africa, earlier in this chapter, I suggested that the rural is often associated with poverty and disadvantage. This disadvantage, which disproportionately affects girls and women, is both material (for example, lack of electricity and proper sanitation), and discursive (for example, not only the literal, but the figurative distance to travel to access services and resources like quality healthcare, education, and the justice system, often mediated by access to the dominant language) (Leibowitz, 2001). Due to these circumstances, rural contexts in South Africa can and have been described as marginalised.

It is a combination of the material and discursive conditions of rurality that increases girls' risk of and vulnerability to GBV, HIV and other STIs, poverty, and early and forced marriage. In addition to the structural issues related to poverty and the rural context, of particular importance are the gendered traditional norms, values, and practices that are widespread in rural communities. Moletsane (2011) calls into question these “‘so-called cultural practices,’ and belief systems that disempower girls and leave them with little control over their lives and bodies” (p. 89). Indeed, gender inequality, GBV, poverty, and HIV tend to affect girls differently and often more severely than boys (Moletsane, 2007). Given these circumstances, it can be argued that girls who grow up and live in rural contexts are particularly marginalised (Moletsane, 2007; Moletsane et al., 2008). It is for this reason that I chose to include rurality as a key concept in my study.

1.7 Overview of the Research Design and Methodology

As discussed above, this study forms part of a larger, six-year, international and interdisciplinary partnership project, the Networks for Change, which used PVM to work with girls and young women to understand and address sexual violence in indigenous communities in Canada and rural communities in South Africa. In my role as project co-ordinator for the South African arm of the partnership, I conducted my research for this thesis within the ambit of the project.

To answer my research questions, I adopted a participatory approach to the inquiry, and used PVM to generate data to answer my research questions. Located within what Mitchell et al. (2017, see also De Lange et al., 2015) have called a critical and transformative paradigm, the methodological choices that I made in the study were informed by the principles of participatory research, but also, because I am a feminist, by the principles of feminist research. Many of the ideas and principles in participatory research, feminist research, and participatory visual methodology are common to all three approaches which can be seen as informing one another.

1.7.1 Study Design

To achieve the aims of my study and answer my research questions, the study comprised of three phases. The first phase involved negotiating entry into the community and recruiting co-researcher participants. In the second phase of the study, five participatory visual methods workshops and one participatory data analysis workshop were held with co-researcher participants between April 2017 and August 2018. In the third and final phase of the study, focus shifted from data generation to a process of girl-led community-based policy-making.

1.7.1.1 Research Site

The study reported in this thesis was located in *eMangweni*³ in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. A vast and sparsely populated deep rural area in the *Injisuthi* Valley, *eMangweni* is comprised of a number of villages and falls under the leadership of the *Amangwe* Traditional Authority⁴. Custom and tradition play an important role in the lives of residents of *eMangweni*. It is governed by an active and influential traditional leadership including the *iNkosi* (the head of the traditional leadership structure)⁵, and *iziNduna*. Sometimes translated into English as ‘headmen’, *iziNduna* are people, usually men, appointed to oversee particular sections of the traditional area⁶ (Koenane, 2009).

To my knowledge, no statistics on the prevalence of GBV are available at the municipal level. However, we have ample anecdotal evidence of GBV, including early and forced marriage, from my co-researcher participants, our community partner and members of the community.

1.7.1.2 Phase One: Negotiating Entry into the Community and Recruiting Co-researcher Participants

In September 2016, with our community partner Ms Xoli Msimanga co-founder and director of Themba lethu Care Organisation, we held the first Networks for Change community engagement workshop with the traditional leadership, community members, and other stakeholders including teachers and nurses from the local clinic. The traditional leadership granted permission for us to work in the community, the spokesperson telling us “you’re

³ *eMangweni* is the indigenous name of the area which is also known as Loskop.

⁴ In South Africa a traditional authority is an institution or structure that is responsible for the practice of customary procedures of governance in line with the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act 41 of 2003 and the Constitution of South Africa (Haffejee et al., 2020).

⁵ The word *iNkosi* is often translated into English as ‘Chief’, although with its association with colonial rule and Apartheid in South Africa, this translation is not always acceptable.

⁶ This traditional leadership structure remains intact and very important in many, though not all, rural areas in South Africa although it has largely broken down in urban areas. I provide more information on this structure in the chapters that follow.

welcome [to work in the community], just don't change anything" (see Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018).

Having received permission to work in the community and having obtained ethical clearance from the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee⁷, fifteen co-researcher participants were purposively recruited for the Networks for Change project in the second half of 2016 with Xoli's help. All 15 participants are first-language speakers of isiZulu, were aged between 14 and 19 years old at the time of recruitment, live in *KwaNdlela*⁸, one of several villages in *eMangweni*, attended a local high school.⁹ All 15 participants assented to participate in the study, and written consent for their participation was obtained from their parents or legal guardians.

1.7.1.3 Phase Two: PVM Workshops

Five PVM workshops were held with my co-researcher participants between February 2017 and August 2018. During these workshops we used several methods, including photovoice, cellphilms, digital storytelling, and policy posters and action briefs. In the first workshop, which took place in February 2019, we introduced the SIFs to PVM and engaged in a photovoice activity aimed at developing a general understanding of the girls' experiences of safety (or lack thereof) in and around their community. Photovoice is "a community-based participatory research method that combines photography, community awareness building, group discussions, and social action" (D'Amico, et al., 2016).

⁷ HSS1631/015BNAP

⁸ This is not the real name of the village.

⁹ Some have now matriculated and others dropped out of school due to marriage. This will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

At the end of this workshop, the girls performed a drama that they had developed unprompted for the research team. The drama focused on a practice that takes place in the community called *ukuphuma Kwezintombi* which roughly translates into English as a “coming out ball for Maidens” (Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018, p. 52). This practice, also known as *eGangeni*, has taken place in the community every second year since the early 1980s, and involves unmarried girls and young women from villages in *eMangweni* dressing in their finest clothes and parading around a particular field in the community. Men who are looking for a wife, sometimes a second or third wife, are able to choose from among these girls and young women. Although the participants in this event are supposed to be over the age of 18, we have heard accounts of girls as young as 12 participating. It was during this workshop that the girls named themselves the Social Ills Fighters (SIFs), and I will refer to them as such throughout the thesis.

In April 2017, we held our second workshop with the SIFs. In this workshop the SIFs created two sets of cellphilms, and used the cellphilming skills that they learned to film the drama that they had performed at the end of our first workshop. Pioneered by Dockney and Tomaselli (2009), cellphilms are short films created by co-researcher participants on a cellular telephone in response to a prompt. The first set of four cellphilms, which I will refer to as the original cellphilms, focused on six key issues that they SIFs identified as affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in their community. Through the second set of four cellphilms that they created, the SIFs had the opportunity to ‘speak back’ to their original cellphilms (Mitchell et al., 2017). The aim of this speaking back activity was for our co-researcher participants to reflect on the cellphilms that they had created and the discussions we had had about them, and create new cellphilms in order to “...contest or contradict the content or messages of the previous productions, and in relation to questions such as the following: what’s

missing? Who's missing? What stories are not being told? What does our doing do?" (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 49).

We held our third PVM workshop with the SIFs in July 2017, during which they made three digital stories and three cellphilms. Digital story-telling involves the creation of a short films using drawings, photographs, voice overs and music (Gubrium & Harper, 2013; Lambert, 2006). The cellphilms that the SIFs produced in this workshop were created for submission to the 5th International Cellphilm Festival¹⁰. The entries to the festival had to be on the theme 'Resisting and Speaking Back' and I therefore refer to them as the resisting and speaking back cellphilms.

Our fourth workshop with the SIFs, held in February 2018, was a participatory data analysis workshop. Participatory Data Analysis (PDA) is a way to learn, from the point of view of co-researcher participants, the meanings and significance of data and findings, and what activities co-researcher participants see as being necessary to address the findings. During the workshops we analysed all of the data generated in 2017.

Workshop 5: Policy Poster and Action Brief Workshop, August 2018

Held in August 2018, our fifth workshop with the SIFs focused on creating policy posters and action briefs based on their cellphilms and digital stories to be used as tools for advocacy and awareness-raising in the SIFs' community and beyond. Policy posters are designed by co-researcher participants in response to a prompt. They typically include an image, usually drawn or photographed by co-researcher participants, along with a simple, clear message directed

¹⁰ The International Cellphilm Festival, run by McGill University in Canada, is modelled on film festivals like the Cannes Film Festival or the Toronto Film Festival. Every year submissions are invited in response to the theme of that year's festival: <https://internationalcellphilmfestival.com/>

towards a particular audience, often policy-makers and/or -implementers. An action brief is, according to Mitchell et al. (2017), “a short, targeted document that maps out a particular social issue and offers recommendations for change” (p. 158).

The timeline of the PVM workshops is illustrated in figure 1.3. below.



Figure 1.3 PVM Workshops with the SIFs, 2017-2018

I used the data generated in workshops two, three, four, and five to address the three sub-questions I posed in this study. The data set comprised the visual data (four original cellphilms, four speaking back cellphilms, three digital stories, three resisting and speaking back cellphilms, seven policy posters, and seven action briefs) and transcripts of the discussions of the visual products created by the SIFs and the participatory data analysis discussions. In my analysis, I also drew on my field notes.

1.7.1.4 Phase 3: Girl-led Community-based Policy-making, February 2019-March 2020

We began the process of girl-led community-based policy-making with a community engagement meeting in February 2019 co-hosted by the university research team and Thembaletu. The meeting was held at the *Amangwe* traditional court building in *eMangweni*. The purpose of the meeting as stated in the invitations issued to the traditional leadership and other stakeholders was to give feedback to the community on the findings of the Networks for Change study. To summarise the process on which I will elaborate in Chapters Five and Eight, over a series of five community meetings and one community dialogue which took place

between February and November 2019, the traditional leadership and community came to acknowledge that EFM was practiced in *eMangweni*, request assistance from UKZN and Thembaletu with the development of a protocol to address these practices, and co-develop what became a reporting and response protocol to address EFM in the community. The protocol was finalised and then signed by the *iNkosi* on behalf of the *Amangwe* Nation in March 2020 shortly before South Africa went into national lockdown in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Members of the university-based research team took detailed notes during each community engagement meeting and the community dialogue and form part of the data set.

The study design is summarised in figure 1.4 below.

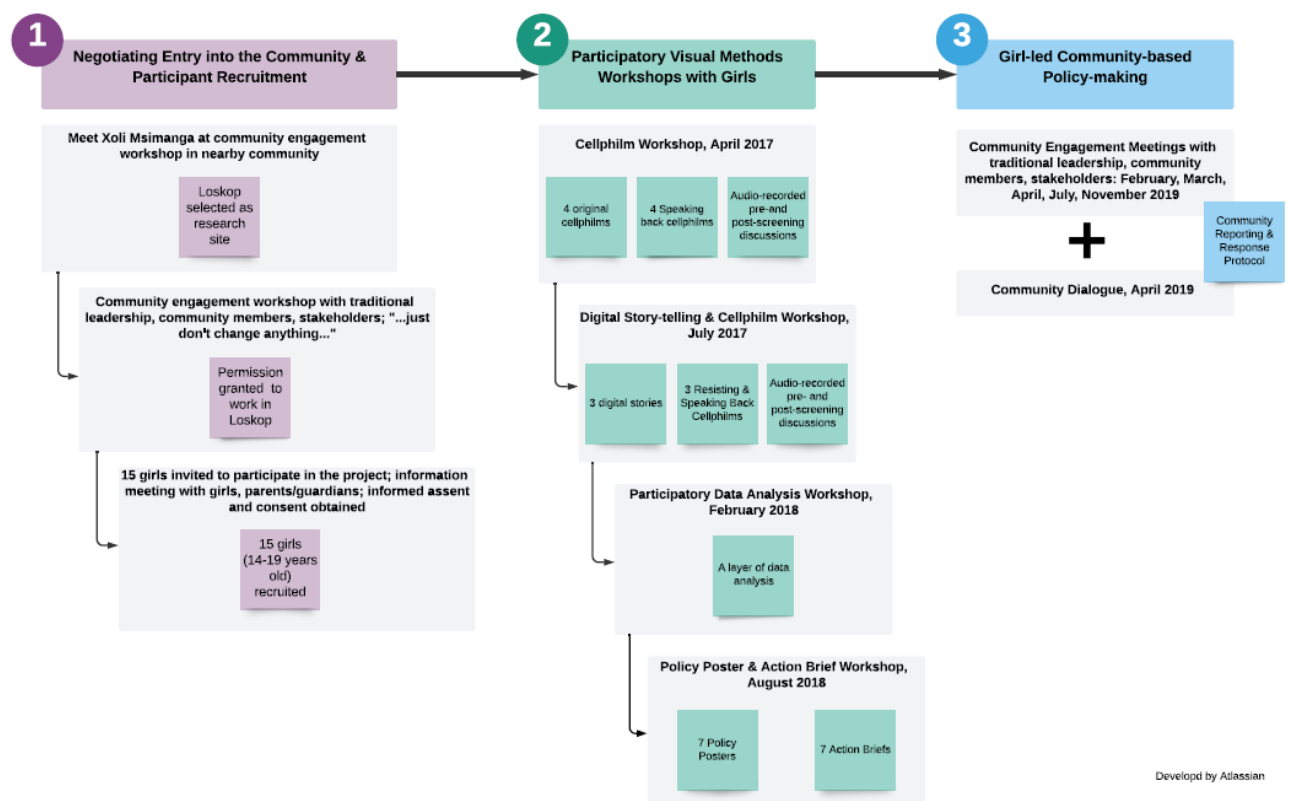


Figure 1.4 Research Design

I discuss the research design and methodology of the study in more detail in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis.

1.8 Positionality and Reflexivity: Situating myself in the study

I began this chapter with an account of the moment it became clear to me what the focus of my doctoral study would be. This remembered moment forms part of what Miller calls “the autobiography of the question” (1995, p. 23), the story of my interest in and motivation for doing this work. With the qualitative turn in social science research, it has become accepted that the ideal of fully impartial, objective research(ers) is neither necessarily desirable nor attainable (Denzin & Giardina, 2018; Wiebesiek & Treffry-Goatley, forthcoming). Embracing instead the idea of research that is acknowledged as situated, subjective and partial, it is necessary to find alternative ways of doing research that allows for the acknowledgement of the role played by the researcher in the research process and outcomes. As Denzin and Giardina (2018, p. 6) argue, “the researcher is historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied.” In particular, feminist and participatory approaches to research call on researchers to examine who they are in the research process, particularly as regards relationships with the communities in which and the people with whom they work.

Researcher positionality refers to those identities that are “ascribed to us by society and those that are achieved; these include race, ethnicity, gender, economic status, and education” (Wiebesiek & Treffry-Goatley, forthcoming). Research takes place in shared, dynamic spaces influenced by both researcher and participant positionalities. Critically important in relationships between researchers and participants is power. The power relations based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability and religion (and other markers of power

and identity) which permeate and structure the world are present in research relationships and processes (see, for example, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These power relations must be acknowledged, examined and negotiated (Sultana, 2007). Reflexivity is the process through which researchers engage with these power relations in research relationships, acknowledging their own subject positions, and seeking ways to lower the power gradient between researcher and participant(s). In order to reduce the risk of perpetuating inequalities, “[s]cholars who aim to produce knowledge with the aim of social transformation need to examine reflexively their own assumptions and authority” (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012, p. 587).

I am not suggesting that through reflexivity, I as the researcher can transcend the differences and power asymmetries inherent in those differences such that they are no longer an issue. Rather, through reflexivity, I can become more aware of these differences and power asymmetries and endeavour to work with, around and in spite of them towards research that is more collaborative, equitable, and not exploitative. Therefore, in this section of the chapter, I explore the autobiography of the question with which this thesis is concerned, and how I came to work with Black African, isiZulu-speaking adolescent girls who grew up and live in an impoverished deep rural area. Bearing in mind Ozkazanc-Pan’s assertion that “there is more to reflexivity than an analysis of the researcher and her positionality” (2012, p. 584), I also reflect on how I attempted to practice reflexivity throughout my study, and how my positionality affected my relationships with the SIFs, and the research being reported in this thesis.

I am a white, English-speaking, cisgendered woman in my thirties who grew up and currently lives in a middle-class urban area in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I am also a feminist. Growing up in South Africa during Apartheid in the 1980s and 1990s, I, like many white South African children, lived in a safe suburb with all of the infrastructure, services and resources I

needed. I attended well-resourced government-subsidised schools with a high standard of education. Consequently, I did well in my final year at school and was accepted into the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) where I eventually obtained a Masters degree in linguistics. After a semester of teaching linguistics at UKZN, I took a year off to travel and decide whether or not I wanted to do a PhD in linguistics or retrain. Having failed to make a decision, but certain that I wanted to do work that “made a difference,” I found myself back in South Africa and working as a project co-ordinator for a fellowship programme focusing on HIV prevention. I have always been interested in gender and have called myself a feminist since my early teens. Exploring the gendered nature of the HIV epidemic in South Africa through my job served to increase my interest in gender and social justice. I was particularly struck by the disproportionate vulnerability of Black African girls and women to HIV infection, GBV, and poverty. Through my job, and my manager at the time (who was encouraging me to do a PhD, and became my supervisor), I also became increasingly interested in rural areas as some of the most under-served, impoverished areas in a grossly unequal country. And so, I found myself sitting at the South African AIDS Conference listening to Mark Heywood’s keynote address and the idea for a PhD study focused on what it was like to grow up a girl in rural South Africa in the midst of HIV, GBV and poverty, began to develop. Before being hired to co-ordinate the South African arm of the Networks for Change project in 2016 and deciding, with my supervisor, to conduct my PhD research within the ambit of the project, I spent a number of years working as a researcher in a rural education development project based in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. My time spent working in rural communities heightened my interest in the rural as both context and construct (Balfour et al., 2008) particularly in relation to the health and well-being of girls.

That is the story of how I came to be sitting in front of my computer writing up this thesis. It is a neat story, a relatively impersonal and sanitised history but, as far as the autobiography of the question goes, it is incomplete. Much of the motivation for doing this work is, for me, personal. I am a survivor of sexual and intimate partner violence. These are not things that I talk (write) about often or with ease, but I do believe that my experiences are relevant here. I have had everything I needed to keep me safe from these sorts of experiences. I have loving, responsible and conscientious parents who did everything they could to keep my sister, brother and me out of harm's way. My parents educated us about stranger danger and no one being allowed to touch our bodies if we did not want them to. They taught my sister and I that we deserved to be respected in our relationships, that we were just as valuable and capable as men, and that there was nothing that we could not do just because we were girls. They taught my brother to respect women. I had access to psychosocial support when I needed it, and I have always known that I would have the support of my family if I were to ever tell them that I had been abused or assaulted. And still I was not safe; still these things happened to me and, when they did, I felt confused and frightened, ashamed and alone, and did not tell anyone for a long, long time. I believe that this is, at least partly, why I am so passionate about and invested in my work. If these things could happen to me, who had so much to keep me safe and so much support available to me, then what of the people who did not and do not share the same privilege? I believe that this is why I want to work with girls and young women, and I believe that I want to work with girls and young women in rural areas in South Africa because they are among the most marginalised people in the country. I am not suggesting that because we might have both experienced GBV, our experiences are the same and I can therefore automatically understand the girls and young women with whom I work. My experiences and those of countless other women in South Africa and across the globe make me want to work towards a

more just society in which girls and young women, who are disproportionately affected by GBV, are safer, a society in which everyone has access to the care and support that they need.

I have more and more often over the years since I started co-ordinating the fellowship programme discussed above thought about my privilege as a white, middle-class, urban-dwelling, English-speaking, educated woman. There are few times in my life when I have felt discriminated against, and few opportunities that I have not had. I have not often found myself in positions where the help I needed was not available to me through some means, and my circumstances have rarely put me in a position where I am vulnerable and at-risk. That I am a woman and was once a girl in an undoubtedly gender inequitable society has impacted my life certainly, but my position is and has been so vastly different to that of so many women and girls in South Africa and around the world in terms of social and material circumstances as to be incomparable. My privilege is not something that I can divide and give to people less fortunate than I am, and it is not something that I can simply shed. What I can do, however, is try to remain mindful of my privilege, try to never abuse it, and try to challenge and question it (both mine and that of other people who share my privilege). I am flawed, and I will fail at times, but it is, I believe, my responsibility to never stop trying. It is also my belief that there are circumstances in which it can be appropriate for a person to consciously deploy their privilege to achieve a favourable outcome in spite of the fact that doing so does not disrupt problematic hegemonic power relations. Naïve it may be, but if I can use the privilege that I have to help someone get a better explanation of their illness from a doctor, or to have a police officer take their statement, or contribute to creating and/or securing a space in which someone can have their voice be heard and really listened to, I believe it is worth doing so while I continue to work towards disrupting the very systems and structures of which I have just taken advantage.

As a white, English-speaking, urban-dwelling person in my 30s employed as a researcher at a university, I am, in very obvious ways, very different to the Black African adolescent girls living in a rural context with whom I worked. Encoded in these differences are power differentials. Unable to change any of these things about myself, Pillow's (2003) suggestion that reflexivity is "not only about investigating the power embedded in one's research but also about doing research differently" (p. 178), was helpful in guiding my approach to working with my co-researcher participants.

Probst and Berenson (2014, p. 814 in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 64) assert that reflexivity is "both a state of mind and a set of actions". My understanding of my co-researcher participants as holders and producers of valuable knowledge, and my desire to work with them in a way that acknowledged the power imbalances between us while seeking to build relationships that were collaborative and in which power was more equitably shared between us, influenced my decision to use a participatory visual approach. The way that I approached working with the SIFs was to be genuine, sincere and respectful. For example, I was open about my ignorance about the rural context, and my struggles with isiZulu. I think that this openness helped to lower the power gradient between me and my co-researcher participants, as, throughout the project, I often deferred to their greater knowledge about the context and their own lives, asked them to explain concepts that I did not understand in isiZulu, and interpret for me when I was completely lost. Following Moletsane et al. (2008) who contend that in order to develop a good understanding of what it is like to be a girl in contexts of GBV, HIV, teenage pregnancy, and early and forced marriage "we need to listen and really hear the authentic voices of girls living in such contexts" (p. 30), I also listened actively and attentively, and responded to any questions the SIFs had (about the project, me, or other topics like sex) honestly.

For me, peer debriefing and the writing of reflexive field notes were important strategies for practicing reflexivity. I was fortunate that my study was conducted within a larger project which meant that I had a team of people with whom to regularly engage in reflexive discussions about my research, my relationships with my co-researcher participants, and ethical issues that arose in the field. These discussions took place over dinner at the accommodation we stayed at during our time spent in the field; in the car during the approximately two-and-a-half-hour journey between Durban, where I am based, and *eMangweni*; and in the office during project meetings, data analysis workshops, and informally over cups of coffee. We also engaged in ‘on the spot’ reflexive discussions during quiet moments during workshops when co-researcher participants were creating drawings or photographs or filming their cellphilms. We are a diverse group in terms of race, age, first language, discipline, background, and experience. This diversity made possible multi-faceted understandings and interpretations of researcher positionality, power relations, and ethical issues. I also wrote reflexive fieldnotes in which I engaged in critical conversation with myself about my relationship with my co-researcher participants, methodological choices and decisions that I made, and how to negotiate more equitable power relations.

Brueggemann (1996) cautions that reflexivity is not an unproblematic solution to the crisis in representation, and I am aware that any attempts to represent the girls with whom I worked, lower the power gradient, encourage authentic collaboration, and ensure that their voices are clearly present in this thesis are inevitably partial and imperfect. However, my understanding of participation, voice, and representation is, I hope, not an uncritical one and I have tried in this thesis to do justice to these considerations within the boundaries of what it is possible to do with words on paper at one moment in time and those of the requirements of the doctoral

degree. It goes without saying, but I would like to say it nevertheless: The findings of the study and the steps towards social change that have arisen from it and the larger Networks for Change project that are presented in this thesis are in no way the results of only my efforts or those of the Networks for Change research team. The hard work and dedication of the Social Ills Fighters and the support of various members of their community including the ward councillor, the principal of the SIFs' school, and one of their teachers made this study and the larger Networks for Change project possible.

In the next and final section of this chapter, I provide an outline of each of the chapters that follow.

1.9 Overview of the Thesis

In Chapter Two I present the theoretical framework of the study which draws on social constructionist theories of gender and feminist postcolonial theory. Feminist postcolonial theory frames my approach to the study, and I use both theories to analyse my data and answer my research questions. Combined, these two theories form a framework that enables me to offer an analysis that is concerned with avoiding recreating and perpetuating colonising ideas about the global South, and the homogenously vulnerable, powerless and oppressed girl-in-crisis. Presenting the theoretical framework before the literature review allows me to use the framework as a lens through which to view the empirical research and theorising about girlhood and femininities in the existing literature, and as tools with which to critically engage with that literature.

In Chapter Three I critically engage with the literature on girlhood(s) and femininities in conversation with the girl-in-crisis discourse and the figure of the Third World girl in an effort

to challenge the coherent “single sad story” about girlhood in the global South. The review of the literature presented in this chapter also lays the foundations for the more nuanced analyses and understandings of girlhood(s) and femininities in a rural community in South Africa from the perspectives of girls and young women themselves that I will present and discuss in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight of this thesis.

I provide an overview of the research design and methodology of my study in Chapter Four, engaging with the principles, assumptions, and values that guided the practical choices and decisions that I made during the study. I discuss the critical and transformative paradigm in which the study is located and introduce qualitative research, and participatory and feminist approaches to research before introducing participatory visual methodology and the data generation methods used in the study.

Having examined the principles, assumptions, and values that guided the practical choices and decisions that I made during the study in Chapter Four, in Chapter Five, I provide a detailed description and discussion of the processes involved in the generation of data and the girl-led community-based advocacy and policy-making in chronological order. I explain in detail the approach that I took to data analysis and the strategies I used to ensure trustworthiness in my study. After discussing the ethical considerations involved in the study, as part of my practice of reflexivity, I offer a brief reflection on the research design and methodology of my study.

In Chapter Six, I present and briefly discuss the four sub-sets of visual data generated during two workshops with the SIFs in the chronological order in which it was generated: original cellphilms, speaking back cellphilms, digital stories, and resisting and speaking back cellphilms. In my discussion of the visual products created by the SIFs I engage with the

primary text, the first of the three layers of textuality identified by Fiske (1987; 1989) in the middle of which meaning is found (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 9). Presenting and discussing the visual data as I have done in this chapter allows me to present the thematic analysis and findings in the next chapter in a clear and coherent way to respond to the first two sub-questions that I posed in the study being presented in this thesis.

In Chapter Seven I respond to the first two sub-questions I asked in the study being reported in this thesis: 1) *How do a selected group of girls and young women in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?* and 2) *How do the girls and young women position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?* Framed by social constructionist theories of gender, feminist postcolonial theory, and guided by the participatory approach I took in my study, the analysis presented in this chapter focuses on the SIFs' understandings of their femininities, girlhood and gender in the context of their community. Drawing on the visual data as well as transcripts from post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions and my fieldnotes, the analysis presented in this chapter generated nine themes: 1) Girls' Constructions of Girlhood in Rural KwaZulu-Natal; 2) Girls in Crisis? The Precarity of Girlhood in Rural KwaZulu-Natal; 3) Femininity, Marriage, and Fertility; 4) Girlhood at the Intersection of Poverty and 'Culture'; 5) Girlhood at the Intersection of Love and Violence; 6) Girlhood, Sexuality, and Power; 7) Girls' Portrayals of Boys and Men; 8) Girlhood, Agency, Choice, and Responsibility; and 9) Rescuing the Girl-in-Crisis?

I respond to the third sub-question I asked in this study in Chapter Eight: *How might PVM (participatory visual methodology) be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?*

My analysis drew on transcripts of post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions, the SIFs' (my co-researcher participants) policy posters and action briefs and the discussions we had while creating them, detailed meeting notes taken during community engagement meetings and community dialogues, and my field notes. My analysis generated three broad themes: 1) Community attitudes towards early and forced marriage: Restorative Nostalgia and Reflective Nostalgia; 2) Girl-led Community-based Policy-making; and 3) "No more vows for cows!": Girls, Agency, and Resistance through participatory visual methodology.

I conclude the thesis in Chapter Nine by offering a summary of the findings, reflecting on the conclusions, contributions, and implications of the study.

In the chapter that follows, I present and discuss the theoretical framework for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Understanding Girlhood and Femininities in Rural South Africa: A

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Building on the background developed in Chapter One, in this chapter I present the theoretical framework of the study, before, in the next chapter, reviewing the literature on girlhood and femininities and situating my study within this body of knowledge. As I engage with the literature, I use the theoretical framework, which draws on feminist postcolonial theory and social constructionist theories of gender, as a lens through which to view the empirical research and theorising about girlhood and femininities in the existing literature, and as tools with which to critically engage with that literature. As I will discuss below, feminist postcolonial theory frames my approach to the study, and I use both theories to analyse the data and answer my research questions.

I begin the chapter by introducing feminist postcolonial theory. I start with a discussion of some of the critiques levelled against both feminist theory and postcolonial theory that shaped its development, I then introduce feminist postcolonial theory and discuss the ways in which it frames my study. I then introduce the social constructionist theorising about gender noting how the theory is pertinent to my analysis and how I use it in my analysis. I move on to a consideration of how feminist postcolonial theory might frame the use of participatory approaches to research in ways that enhance the potential of these approaches to be collaborative, ethical and equitable before concluding the chapter with a synthesis of the key arguments in the chapter.

2.2 Feminist Postcolonial Theory

As the name suggests, feminist postcolonial theory combines the study of colonialism and postcolonialism from postcolonial theory with feminist theory's concerns with including women and other marginalized groups in research where traditionally their experiences, problems and perspectives have been marginalized, silenced, or have gone unnoticed altogether. That said, feminist postcolonial theory should not be thought of as simply another form of either feminist or postcolonial theory because "it intervenes in and changes both of these disciplines by investigating the intersections of gender-sexuality-race-nation-empire in the differing everyday contexts of [marginalised peoples'] lives and subjectivities" (Piedalue & Rishi, 2017, p. 550).

2.2.1 *The "two-fold project" of Feminist Postcolonial Theory*

Feminist postcolonial theory has, according to Lewis and Mills, "engaged in a two-fold project" (2003, p. 17). One component of this project is to bring a feminist lens and the tools of feminist analysis to theorising about colonialism and postcolonialism. In particular, feminist critiques have challenged the tendency in postcolonial theory to assume a normative male colonial subject. Studies of colonial ideologies, conditions under colonial rule, and resistance to this rule and the oppression through which it was sustained were constructed as gender neutral. This allowed the experiences of male colonial subjects to come to represent the experiences of all colonial subjects. The exclusive focus on the male colonial subject served to erase and silence the particular forms of oppression experienced by women in these contexts characterised, at least in part, by double colonisation. The term double colonisation articulates the fact that women, being subject to both "the colonial domination of empire and the male domination of patriarchy," are "doubly colonised" by imperial and patriarchal power (Ashcroft et al., 2007; see also Riyal, 2019). The erasure and silencing of the experiences and perspectives

of Indigenous women in studies of colonialism also render invisible the important role that women played in resistance movements and the struggle for independence from colonial rule.

The second component of the feminist postcolonial theory project (Lewis & Mills, 2003), is to ensure that mainstream or Western feminist theory takes account of race in a critical and productive way. Internal critiques and political contestations levelled against feminist theory largely by Black feminists and feminists from the global South have, over time, expanded the focus of feminist theory from gender narrowly defined to include other social axes of difference and power including class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and global inequities (Brah, 2001). Feminist postcolonial theorists like Mohanty, have criticised the way in which the category of “women” has been (and continues to be) constructed and deployed in Western feminist theory. Mohanty (1984) writes that the idea of “women”

... as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy (as male dominance – men as a correspondingly coherent group) which can be applied universally and cross-culturally. (pp. 336-337)

Mohanty argues that it is Western feminism’s assumption of the ““sameness” of their oppression” (p. 337) that allows all women to be grouped together in this way. From this perspective, based on their shared gender and assumptions about shared experiences of gendered oppression, all women are or should be fighting patriarchy (as it is defined in the West or the global North) as the common enemy towards the common goal of freedom from gendered oppression (defined in terms of Western feminist ideals). The homogenous category of the oppressed woman and the assumptions about the ““sameness” of their oppression” do

not just gloss over the diversity of circumstances and experiences of women across the globe, their context-specific challenges and resistances, but erase it.

Narayan (1998) cautions that in our well-meaning, self-conscious, and necessary efforts to avoid such gender essentialism which effaces the context-specific experiences, challenges, and resistances of women who are marginalised in terms of, for example, their class, race, and ethnicity, we do not become guilty of what she calls “cultural essentialism.” As a response to gender essentialism, there has been a move towards paying greater attention to differences among women in different contexts so that analyses do not fail to consider the concerns of marginalised women, such as those in so-called Third World contexts. However, when this attendance to differences among women successfully avoids gender essentialism only by

... replicating essentialist notions of “cultural differences” between “Western” and “non-Western” cultures ... [t]he project of attending to differences among women across a variety of national and cultural contexts then becomes a project that endorses and replicates problematic and colonialist assumptions about the cultural differences between “Western culture” and “non-Western cultures” and the women who inhabit them.” Seemingly *universal* essentialist generalisations about “all women” are replaced by *culture-specific* essentialist generalisations that depend on totalising categories such as “Western culture,” “non-Western cultures,” “Western women,” “Third World women,” and so forth. (Narayan, 1998, p. 89, emphasis in original)

Where the homogenous universal category of the oppressed woman is created through the “sameness of oppression” assumption of gender essentialism, the cultural essentialism of Western feminist analysis, Mohanty (1991) argues, serves to “discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneity of the lives of women in the [so-called] Third World” (p.

62) thereby creating the conditions necessary for the production and representation of the category of the average oppressed third world woman. Importantly, Mohanty (1984) argues that where “[t]his average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being “third world” (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)”; in contrast, the Western woman is “educated, modern, [has] control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions” (p. 337).

As discussed briefly in Chapter One, the figures of the uniformly oppressed Third World woman and the homogenously vulnerable girl-in-crisis from the global South loom large in Western feminist theory and international popular and development discourse influenced by Western feminist theory (see, for example, Gilmore & Marshall, 2010; Kandiyoti, 1988; Mohanty 1984, 1988, 2002; Narayan, 1988). Guided by feminist postcolonial theory, critically engaging with the construction and deployment of these categories and the ideology within which they are produced is important in the analysis and arguments offered in this thesis. The study with which this thesis is concerned takes place in a postcolonial and post-apartheid context, and is situated within the field of girlhood studies which arose in the global North. Further, because of my positionality as a white, English-speaking, urban-based researcher, it behoves me to be careful to avoid uncritically reproducing these categories in my analysis of how adolescent girls in a rural community in South Africa construct their femininities. Framed by feminist postcolonial theory, my research approach and analysis must consider not only gender but also issues of race, class, historical context, and local and global relations of power. Doing so allows me to co-produce with the SIFs nuanced, non-essentialist accounts of how adolescent girls in a rural community in South Africa construct their femininities.

2.2.2 Creating the 'Other'

The relationship of difference, of contrast, described above is crucial to establishing Western woman as the norm, referent or Self in binary opposition to the oppressed “Third World” woman as the ‘Other’. Influential feminist postcolonial theorist Spivak uses the term Othering to describe the process of constructing the ‘Other’ through colonial (and, in this case Western feminist) discourse. This mode of feminist analysis replicates colonial constructions of the binary oppositions between the civilised and enlightened colonizer and the backward, uneducated colonial subject as ‘Other’ (Mudimbe, 1988) by producing essentialist constructions of the Western woman as the ‘Self’ and the oppressed Third World woman as the ‘Other’ (Uchendu et al., 2019). Riyal (2019) observes that there is indeed “a shadow of imperialism in the feminist studies [sic] that essentialises the difference/particularity of the ‘other’ of local women” (p. 84). Mohanty (1984, 1988) identifies this as a colonising move in Western feminist theory. By taking a participatory approach informed by feminist postcolonial theory¹¹ and using PVM which foregrounds the voices of participants, throughout the study, including the writing of this thesis, I have tried to avoid (re)producing essentialist colonialist constructions of the single story of the perpetually vulnerable, unagentic, girl-in-crisis in the global South as the ‘other’ in need of rescue. Rather, in our work together, the SIFs and I explored the ways in which they embody, reproduce or challenge the girl-in-crisis discourse and developed alternative narratives of girlhood, that reflect the SIFs’ lived realities with all of the complexity and nuance.

2.2.3 The Centre/Periphery

While the idea of the centre/periphery is a contentious one, it can also be a useful one for understanding the ideologies of colonialism and imperialism and relations between the

¹¹ I discuss this in detail below.

coloniser(s) and the colonised during and after the colonial period (Ashcroft et al., 2007). Similar to the Self/Other binary discussed above, the idea describes the binary opposition through which both the civilized coloniser and the uncivilised colonial subject came into being. The colonial project depended on establishing and maintaining a stable and hierarchal relationship of power between the coloniser and the colonised 'Other' (Ashcroft et al., 2007). The colonizing nations or imperial powers came to be seen as the 'centre' in metaphorical geographies of power, culture and civilisation while everything outside of the centre was necessarily understood to be at the margins or the periphery (Ashcroft et al., 2007). Bringing enlightenment and civilisation from the centre to the colonies at the periphery was used as one of the primary justifications for the economically, politically, socially, and environmentally exploitative and oppressive colonial (and neo-colonial) enterprise.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, the world began to be thought of as being divided into three parts. The First World was defined as western, developed and capitalist, the Second World comprised of social states, and the Third World comprised postcolonial and developing countries. Centre-periphery structures could be observed within First and Second World countries in the relationship between urban metropolitan 'centres' and rural peripheries, for example. Although there may have been internal centre-periphery structures within particular countries, the Third World was often considered peripheral in its entirety¹² (Hannerz, 2015).

Problematic though it may be, the idea of the centre/periphery, like that of the 'Other' is useful for the analysis presented in this thesis to describe the multiple and shifting relationships

¹² South Africa serves as a good example of how this understanding fails to capture the complexity of the political, social, and economic structures and power relations in former colonies. During the colonial and apartheid eras, and as a legacy of these systems of oppression and exploitation, the privileged White minority can be thought of as functioning as the 'centre' while the greater portion of the Black majority can be thought of as constituting the periphery due to their continued political, social, and economic marginalization.

between the global North and the global South in relation to scholarship on gender and girlhood. I also attempt to use these ideas to trouble the ways in which girls in particular are positioned in contemporary international development discourse influenced by western feminist theory. These concepts are also useful for analyzing some of the racialized and gendered power dynamics in a post-apartheid context more generally, and the relationship between the urban as centre and the rural as periphery.

2.2.4 Feminist Postcolonial Theory and Unsettling the Global South

Just as the colonial power and the colonized are constituted in relation to each other, so is the global South “co-constituted with the global north through relations of colonialism, past and present.” (Piedalue & Rishi, 2017, p. 544). It is important to recognise in this ideological and material relationship, Piedalue and Rishi (2017) argue,

the colonial logic operative in a contemporary geographic imagination of the global South as a category able to contain and delimit a diverse set of places by virtue of appealing to their association with an incomplete modernity—with poverty, ill health, poor sanitation, ethnic conflict, corrupt governance, cultural backwardness, gender inequality, and so on. (p. 554)

Disarranging the binary configuration of the global South in opposition to the global North reduces the risk of uncritically recreating the First World/Third World dichotomy.

A key concern of feminist postcolonial theory, according to Piedalue and Rishi (2017), is disrupting the implicit dominance of perspectives from the global North in theory and knowledge production – what Connell (2007) has referred to as the “periphery-centre relations in the realm of knowledge (p. viii). Part of what Piedalue and Rishi (2017, p. 553) refer to as

the “project of unsettling the South” is acknowledging that theorizing and social thought (at least that which is considered (more) legitimate) are assumed to take place in the global North, and that the knowledge produced through these processes occupies a privileged position. Further, as part of this privileging of theory and knowledge in and from the global North, referencing Roy and Crane (2015), Piedalue and Rishi (2017) draw attention to the “common pattern of extracting “raw data” ... from the South or from colonized peoples and feeding this data through the mill of social theory (always located in Northern institutions, intellectual histories, and/or geographies)” (p. 553). Continuing the milling metaphor, the output of this milling process is a knowledge product that is considered legitimate and often then imported back into the global South.

Connell (2014) notes that “[t]he thematics of gender analyses in the periphery highlight historical processes of the formation and disruption of gender orders” in these contexts (p. 550). She offers Chakravarti’s (2003) study in historical sociology *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens* as an example of the possible limitations of gender theory from the global North in encounters with social phenomena in the global South. For Chakravarti it is not possible to “cross-classify” ‘caste’ with ‘gender’ “in the style of North American intersectional sociology” (Connell, 2014, p. 560). In Chakravarti’s analysis, caste is a “deep-seated structure of privilege and exclusion that combines gender hierarchy, property ownership, religious ideology and social identity.” As such, for Chakravarti, “caste is gender in a unique configuration” (Connell, 2014, p. 560).

Piedalue and Rishi (2017) note that one of the most important contributions of postcolonial feminist theory arises out of its critical engagement with race and gender *together* which allows for an understanding of “ourselves, our lives, and our knowledge as situated and embodied and

our identities as relationally produced at the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, and class” (p. 551). Considering race and gender together in postcolonial studies makes sense because, as Connell (2014) argues, colonialism was not only a raced but also an essentially gendered project. This integral link between gender and race forged by colonialism is not present in the global North which, Connell (2014) observes “has tended to treat these dimensions through concepts like ‘intersectionality’” (p. 557).

When considering theorizing and knowledge production about the global South and situated therein, it is important to avoid falling into the essentialist trap reproducing homogenous notions of women in the global South. Connell (2014) argues that although there are certainly common themes that emerge from the study of gender in the global South, there is not and cannot be a single southern gender order. To assume that there is, would not be unlike colonial assumptions about the homogeneity of the periphery and the colonial other, essentialist arguments about “Third World Women”, and the “unexamined universalism in Northern gender theory” (p. 559).

These ideas about the tensions between the dominance of theories and perspectives from the global North and knowledge production in and from the global South are pertinent to my study situated as it is within the field of Girlhood Studies, located within the global South, and framed in part by theories of gender developed largely in the global North. I take up these tensions in Chapter Three, particularly in my discussion of how girls and girlhoods in the global South are understood and framed by international development discourse.

2.2.5 Using Feminist Postcolonial Theory

The critiques of feminist theory and postcolonial theory discussed above, and the ways in which feminist postcolonial theory has taken up and reformulated some of the concepts of these theories are particularly relevant to this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, the ‘Third World Women’ described by Mohanty (1984) are strikingly similar to the girl-in-crisis described by Gilmore and Marshall (2010). The gender and cultural essentialism of Western feminist theory that create the conditions for the construction of the ‘Third World Woman’ and, by extension, the ‘Third World Girl’, or girl-in-crisis, as object is a move, Mohanty argues, that is similar to colonialism (Mohanty, 1984; Lewis & Mills, 2003). Spivak has famously argued that the abolition of the Hindu rite sati in colonial India is a case of “White men saving brown women from brown men” (1988, p. 93). Having been constructed in the global North by popular and development discourses, to a certain extent, the response to the girl-in-crisis in the global North (and, through international development organisations and programmes, in the global South as well) could be described as a case of ‘white women saving brown women from brown men and themselves’. Secondly, I am cognisant of my positionality as a white South African whose parents emigrated from Europe, and who is living and working in a postcolonial, post-apartheid context. As such, I must do my utmost to carefully navigate my way between the “Scylla of sameness” and the “Charybdis of difference” (Narayan, 1998, p. 89) and avoid producing (or reproducing) an uncritical, colonialist, essentializing account of how my participants understand their femininities, and the ways in which potentially harmful gender norms can be challenged. Thirdly, the concepts of othering and the ‘Other’ as well as the idea of the centre/periphery are not just useful for understanding dynamics in international development discourse and literature and research and theorising about girlhood, but also for understanding some of the dynamics in what is not only a postcolonial but also a post-apartheid context.

2.2.6 Feminist Postcolonial Theory and Participatory Approaches to Research

Neither social constructions theories of gender nor feminist postcolonial theory are associated with any particular research approach or methodology. However, Phillips (2011) points out that “[t]here are broad parallels between postcolonial and feminist theory and methodology that rely on ... experiences of oppression to inform critical voices or perspectives in research and analysis” (p. 158). She suggests that this aspect of theory as research methodology offers new ways of approaching research that has a transformative and/or social justice agenda. Similarly, in their 2014 paper *Decolonising Health Research: Community-based participatory research and postcolonial feminist theory*, Darroch and Giles suggest that the decolonising potential of participatory approaches to research and the potential of these approaches to be more ethical and equitable, can be enhanced by situating them within feminist postcolonial theory. Darroch and Giles (2014) argue that in addition to the work of Kurt Lewin and Paulo Freire, participatory approaches to research have been influenced and shaped by feminist theorists. The complementarity of feminist postcolonial theory and participatory approaches to research is therefore not surprising. Indeed, feminist postcolonial theory and participatory approaches to research share a number of concepts, principles and commitments.

As discussed briefly in Chapter One, I adopted a participatory approach in my study, and used participatory visual methodology to generate data to answer my research questions and stimulate and facilitate social change in the community in which my study took place. Indigenous, feminist, and/or postcolonial scholars and researchers developed participatory approaches to research in part as a response to some of the critiques of more traditional approaches to research. Many of these critiques focused on the way in which some approaches and methodologies perpetuate and reinforce colonial and other unequal relations of power over

marginalised peoples.¹³ By essentialising, exoticising, and homogenising marginalised peoples and failing to recognise as legitimate their voices and different forms of knowledge, such approaches and methodologies reify existing unequal relations of power (Darroch & Giles, 2014; Mohanty, 2003). Importantly, such critiques echo the feminist postcolonial challenge to existing unequal power relations described above.

Both feminist postcolonial theory and participatory approaches acknowledge that research practices and research relationships are inscribed in relations of power. As such there can be no objective, value-free, or apolitical scholarship (see, for example, Denzin & Giardina, 2018; Mohanty 1997). Further, both feminist postcolonial theory and participatory approaches to research emphasise the importance of foregrounding the voices and experiences of marginalised peoples and recognising them as holders and producers of valuable and legitimate knowledge and as experts on their own lives. Importantly, as Spivak (1985) contends, postcolonial research can be practiced not to ‘give voice’ to the marginalised, but to create a space in which they can speak and be heard and begin to work against their marginalisation. This argument is gaining strength in participatory research (see, for example, Montero-Sieburth, 2020). Linked to this, another aim of participatory approaches to research is to co-construct knowledge *with* research participants rather than producing knowledge *about* them. In this way, rather than seeing marginalised peoples as objects of study, they are recognised as subjects and active participants in the research process. Building on this idea of more collaborative work with research participants, participatory research also aims to work towards more equitable power relations between researcher(s) and participant(s) in efforts to disrupt a

¹³ A good example of such methodologies is earlier iterations of ethnography which developed in the field of anthropology with its problematic and contested historical links to colonialism (see, for example, Asch, 2015; Lewis, 1973; Mafeje 1976; and Rashid et al., 2015). It must be said, however, that examples of contemporary research (often conducted within the positivist and post-positivist paradigms) that continues to perpetuate and reinforce the same colonial and other unequal relations of power abound.

dynamic between researcher(s) and participant(s) that perpetuates colonial and other unequal power relations. For this reason, reflexivity is an important tool in participatory research. It involves the researcher(s) reflecting inwards about themselves and critically examining their positionality especially in relation to the people and communities with whom they work, and reflecting outward about the social, historical, economic, linguistic, and political circumstances that influence the inquiry in general and the research relationship in particular (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002). It is necessary, but not sufficient, for the researcher(s) to become and endeavour to remain mindful of the power relations in the research relationship. Participatory approaches to research call on the researcher to also work to negotiate these power relations in an effort to democratise the research process and reduce the power gradient. The kind of reflexivity discussed here is particularly important for me, as a white researcher working with Black African girls in a postcolonial and post-apartheid context, due to the history of exploitation, abuse, and oppression of Black South Africans at the hands of White South Africans and the on-going dynamics of racial inequality in South Africa.

In addition to the similarities discussed above, the transformative, social change agenda of participatory research is aligned with feminist postcolonial theory's critique of and challenge to the epistemic violence of more traditional approaches to research (Spivak, 1988). Research informed by these traditions enables researchers to challenge the tendency in more traditional approaches to research of using marginalised peoples to generate new knowledge for the sake of new knowledge with plenty of benefit for the researcher(s) and very little or no benefit for the participating individuals and/or communities. Instead, the aim of participatory research is to work collaboratively with participants to co-produce knowledge towards social change such that the research process is about more than generating data, but using this data to contribute to meaningful changes in the lives of co-researcher participants. In this way, participatory

research often takes the form of research as intervention (D'Amico et al., 2016). Situating participatory approaches to research within feminist postcolonial theory makes available conceptual and methodological tools that support efforts to conduct research in such a way that dominant relations of power, including colonialism, can be challenged and disrupted, and context-specific forms of knowledge validated.

2.3 Social Constructionist Theories of Gender

In this thesis, I make use of feminist social constructionist theories of gender according to which gender is socially constructed and relational, “a socially produced practice” (Shai, 2018, p. 1). As an organising principle of the overall social order, gender incorporates both cultural meanings and material relations (Lorber, 1994). As Risman (2004) explains, gender

involves cultural beliefs and distributions of resources at the macro level, patterns of behaviour and organisational practices at the interactional level, and selves and identities at the individual level. Widely held gender beliefs are in effect cultural rules or instructions for enacting the social structure of difference and inequality that we understand to be gender. (pp. 510-511)

Similarly, Budgeon (2014) argues that there are three key dimensions associated with integrative social constructionist theories of gender:

...the production of gendered selves, the cultural expectations regarding the performance of ‘proper’ gender identities which shape everyday interactions, and the structure of institutional domains that form the backdrop for changes to gender identities and norms. (p. 319)

When gender is conceptualised as a social structure, it is possible to identify the conditions under which and the ways in which gender inequality is being produced within these three

dimensions (Budgeon, 2014; Risman, 2004). Informed by an understanding of gender as a social structure, and the three key dimensions of gender identified by Budgeon (2014), in this thesis, I examine the ways in which my participants in this study construct their femininities. From this understanding, I consider the role of broader social, institutional, and structural factors in creating the context in which the participants construct and negotiate their gender identities, including how gender intersects with other social structures such as race, rurality, and poverty.

Connell (1987, 1995) contends that gender relations are arranged hierarchically and are characterised by three overlapping, but distinct structures: the sexual division of labour, the sexual division of power, and the structure of cathexis. These structures work together at two levels: the social and the institutional (see also Wingwood & DiClemente, 2000) to create the historically constructed ‘gender order’. The gender order is a patterned system of ideological and material practices through which power relations between women and men are organised, and forms of masculinities and femininities are made and remade (Connell, 1987; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Gender regimes are particular configurations of gender relations within a specific institutional setting such as a school, family or neighbourhood (Connell, 1987). Connell (2012) defines these two concepts thus: “The structure of gender relations in a given society at a given time may be called its gender order; and the structure of gender relations in a given institution may be called its gender regime” (p. 1677).

2.3.1 Doing Gender: Masculinities and Femininities

Informed by an understanding that masculinities and femininities are culturally specific ways of “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 130), in this study, I wanted to examine the ways in which the participants construct their femininities in the context of their particular rural

community. Connell's theory of gender and power (1987, 1995) is one of the most influential theories in the study of gender. One of the most important contributions of Connell's theory is the conceptualisation of multiple and hegemonic masculinities (Schippers, 2007). Much of Connell's work has focused on masculinities, and the conceptualisation of femininities in her work, and in social constructionist theories of gender more broadly, is less well-developed (Budgeon, 2014; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Paechter, 2006; Schippers, 2007). Understanding Connell's (and colleagues) conceptualisation of masculinities and hegemonic masculinity is important for its application to the study of femininities and how scholars have reformulated and used the concepts of femininities, gender relations, and hegemony in order to do so.

In Connell's (1987, 1995) theory, masculinity is a central feature of gender relations. She defines masculinity as "... simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture" (1995, p. 71). Masculinity, then, as conceptualised by Connell is

an identifiable set of practices that occur across space and over time and are taken up and enacted collectively by groups, communities, and societies. Through their recurring enactment over time and space, these practices structure the production and distribution of resources, the distribution of power in the form of authority, cathexis... (Schippers, 2007, p. 86)

Originally formulated in the 1980s, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been revised in response to critiques of its earlier formulations and ongoing developments in social constructionist theories of gender. In their 2005 paper *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the*

concept, Connell and Messerschmidt provide an account of the genesis of the concept, how it has been used and critiqued, and how it has been and should be reworked. According to them, broadly, the concept of hegemonic masculinity can be understood to refer to certain masculinities which, within the hierarchy of masculinities, are more “socially central, or more associated with authority and social power, than others,” those others being subordinate (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). These relations of power between masculinities are characterised not by “simple domination based on force,” but by a “pattern of hegemony.” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). The location of hegemonic masculinities at the top of the gender hierarchy is maintained through “[c]ultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization or delegitimation of alternatives are widely documented features of socially dominant masculinities” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). The concept, in its various forms, has been particularly productive in education and health research (see, for example, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010; Jewkes et al., 2015). Because, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) contend, gender is relational, hegemonic masculinities are always constructed or produced in relation to other masculinities and femininities. In a patriarchal gender order, femininities tend to be located below masculinities in the gender hierarchy. Importantly, the concept of hegemonic masculinity as articulated by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) takes into account both locally specific forms of (hegemonic) masculinities, and the fact that these masculinities, formed as they are in particular social and historical contexts, can and do change over time.

In her 1987 book *Gender and Power*, Connell argued that “there is no femininity that is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men” (p. 187). This is because, she explains, “[a]ll forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men. For this reason, there is no femininity

that holds among women the position held by hegemonic masculinity among men” (1987, p. 186-187). Instead of a hegemonic femininity, Connell identifies what she refers to as ‘emphasized femininity’. This is a form of femininity that is “defined around compliance with [...] subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men” (p. 183). Connell (1987) suggests that other femininities are “defined centrally by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation” (p. 184). However, it is emphasized femininity, with its focus on compliance, which is “given most cultural and ideological support” (1987, p. 187). Connell stresses that emphasized femininity is “performed, and performed especially to men” and that central to the maintenance of this form of femininity is “practice that prevents other models of femininity from gaining cultural articulation” (p. 1987). Importantly, for Connell (1987), like hegemonic masculinity, emphasised femininity does not necessarily correspond to actual femininities as they are embodied and practiced.

The concept of emphasised femininity, although useful, does not adequately account for the different forms of femininities or the complexities and nuances in gender relations identified in empirical studies reviewed in Chapter Three of this thesis. I now move to a discussion of how Connell’s concepts have been revised in efforts to expand their conceptual complexity and analytical usefulness.

2.3.2 Femininities: (Re)formulating the Concept

Connell’s treatment of femininities has been critiqued. Much of this critique has focused on the fact that, in Connell’s (1987, 1995) formulation, femininities are always and only defined in a simple relation of subordination to (hegemonic) masculinity, and on her assertion that there is not nor can there be a hegemonic femininity. Further, although Connell (1995, p. 44) states that “[m]asculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in

relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition,” the concept of emphasised femininities does not adequately account for the complexity of gender relations between masculinities and femininities as practiced by male and female bodies (not always corresponding to the gender assigned to them). It does not fully account for the complexity of relations between femininities, including the fact that certain kinds of femininities are devalued and marginalised while others are assigned privileged status (Budgeon 2014). This dynamic closely resembles that between hegemonic and other forms of masculinity. In response to these critiques and to fill the conceptual gap in current understandings of femininities, a number of scholars have worked to reformulate the concept to account for empirical evidence that shows that femininities and the relationships between femininities, and between femininities and masculinities is more complex than originally conceptualised by Connell (Budgeon, 2014; Schippers, 2007). Much of this work has focused on the application of Connell’s conceptualisation of multiple, hierarchical masculinities and hegemonic masculinity to femininities, and establishing where masculinities and femininities sit in relation to each other in the gender hierarchy. Schippers’ (2007) model of hegemonic gender relations is an example of this work. Its aim is to

reclaim and re-work Connell’s theory of masculinities and gender hegemony in a way that 1) offers a conceptualization that does not reduce masculinities to the behavior of boys and men or femininity to the behavior of girls and women, 2) provides a definition of femininity that situates it, along with masculinity, in gender hegemony and allows for multiple configurations, and 3) is empirically useful for identifying how masculinity and femininity ensure men’s dominance over women as a group locally, regionally, and globally (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), and how they legitimate and perpetuate race, class, ethnic, and sexual inequality. (p. 89)

In Schippers' (2007) model emphasis is placed on gender relationality. In this model, rather than being defined simply in a relation of subordination to masculinities, femininities play an essential role in sustaining hegemonic gender relationality. Budgeon (2014) notes that in Schippers' model, gender relationality depends on *idealised gender constructions*. Positioned in complimentary and hierarchical relation to each other, these idealised gender constructions are comprised of the qualities and characteristics of masculinities and femininities that men and women are expected to possess. Similar to Connell's theory, the fact that both gender difference and gender relationality are naturalised and normalised in interpersonal relationships, society and institutional domains is important to Schippers' (2007) model. Using the model, it is possible to identify multiple and hierarchical configurations of femininities (as well as masculinities) in terms of their positioning in relation to the idealised relationship between masculinity and femininity rather than only in terms of their difference from and subordination to hegemonic masculinity. In addition to emphasised femininity, the concepts of idealised gender constructions and the role that they play in sustaining hegemonic gender relations, and of hierarchical configurations of femininities are useful for the analysis offered in this study. These ideas can offer insight into the apparent dissonance between how my co-researcher participants view their own constructions of and performances of femininities, and the traditional gendered expectations of their community and the girls' perceptions of those expectations.

Importantly, as Budgeon (2014) observes, this formulation of the concept of gender relationality allows for

[c]ritical engagement with shifting configurations of gender relationality [which] contributes to the project pursued by feminist social constructionists such as Lorber (1994) and Martin (2004), who argue that if the 'commonsense' view of women and

men as fundamentally and *naturally* different, despite contrary evidence of commonalities, is to be challenged then the gender ideology which structures people's perceptions and expectations must be undone. (p. 318, emphasis in original)

As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) point out, even in the original formulations of the concepts of multiple and hegemonic masculinities and gender relations, there was some emphasis on the possibility of change in gender relations. Similarly, the significance of Schippers' conceptualisation of masculinities, femininities and gender relationality is not just that the normative gender ideology *must* be undone, but that it *can* be undone and therein lies the potential for transformation towards more equitable gender relations.

Schippers' (2007) argues that her reworking of Connell's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity creates conceptual space for a complementary hegemonic femininity. She contends that although the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity is characterised by "ascendancy for the masculine and for men, there is ... an ascendancy of hegemonic femininity over other femininities to serve the interests of the gender order and male domination" (p. 94). With its emphasis on the relationship between masculinities and femininities, in Schippers' (2007) model, other forms of femininity are not considered subordinate or inferior to hegemonic forms of femininity. It is rather the failure of other forms of femininity to embody ideal constructions of femininity in a complementary relationship of subordination to hegemonic masculinity (thereby challenging the hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity) that results in them being stigmatised or sanctioned. For Schippers (2007), the hegemonic gender order is maintained by preserving the hierarchy between masculinity and femininity.

2.3.3 Locally Produced: Gender, hegemony, power, and relationality

Paechter (2018) builds on both Connell's (1987, 1995, 2005) and Schippers' (2007) work in her reformulation of hegemonic gendered forms and hegemonic gender order. Schippers' (2007) reworking of Connell's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity to create space for a complementary hegemonic femininity does not satisfy Paechter (2018) who suggests that hegemonic masculinities and femininities should be conceptualised together rather than conceptualising hegemonic (and other) masculinity(ies) and then "trying to fit femininity around it" (p. 123). In her reformulation of the concepts, Paechter (2018) argues for an understanding of hegemonic gender forms and relations that is closer to Gramsci's (1971) original formulation of the concept of hegemony¹⁴. Drawing on Foucault (1977, 1978, 1980, 1982), she also makes a case for conceiving of gendered power relations as "multiple and networked", rather than hierarchical (Paechter, 2018, p. 123).

Paechter (2018) suggests that by conceptualising masculinities and femininities together and in relation to each other, hegemonic femininities can be understood to be parallel to hegemonic masculinities in that they are constructed not in a relation of subordinate 'other'¹⁵ to a particular form of hegemonic masculinity, but in relation to other femininities. She argues that

[r]ecognising the possibility of hegemonic femininities, and conceptualising them as working with hegemonic masculinities to preserve a still patriarchal and binary gender order, should enable us to gain further and more nuanced insights into the mutual

¹⁴ "The normal exercise of hegemony... is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 80 in Paechter, 2018).

¹⁵ I use the term 'other' here to describe the relationship between the dominant group and the subordinated or marginalized group. The 'other' is defined and understood to exist only in its relation to the powerful dominant subject and only as the negative of the dominant subject. In the case of gender, femininities are defined and understood to exist only as not masculinities.

relationship of masculinities and femininities and how power moves and is mobilized between them. (Paechter, 2018, p. 127)

Closely aligned with Gramsci's original formulation of hegemony, Paechter (2018) understands hegemonic gendered power relations as being established, maintained, and reproduced largely through the consent of marginalised peoples, this consent is buttressed by the ever-present tacit threat of coercive force. Hegemonic gender relations come to be naturalised, serving a normalising function which "makes it appear to those oppressed by them that such forms are not just how things are but how they ought to be. Those oppressed by a particular local gender ideology are nevertheless caught up and invested in it" (Paechter, 2018, p. 123). Moreover, normalised and fundamental to our understandings of ourselves and our world, hegemonic gender relations often do not 'appear' to people at all in that they are so unremarkable as to go entirely unnoticed and therefore unquestioned and/or unchallenged. Understanding gender hegemony in this way makes it clear that making visible what tends to be invisible in terms of gender relations is an important step in the process of questioning and challenging hegemonic gender relations in efforts to work towards more equitable gender relations.

As Paechter (2018) argues, hegemonic gender relations are neither automatic nor immutable, but involve constant contest and struggle mirroring the constant interplay of power and resistance within the multiple, networked relations of power in society (Foucault 1977, 1978, 1988). Instead of understanding power as something the powerful have and use to oppress and marginalise the less powerful or powerless in a uni-directional pattern, something that can be given, exchanged, or taken away, in Foucauldian terms, power is relational and constantly in flux (Happel, 2012). In this configuration, power and resistance to power are not distinct forces, but co-exist; "resistance is not external to power, but configured by and within the systems of

power it contests” (Pincock, 2017, p. 19). This understanding of power and resistance as relational creates the space to recognise and acknowledge different and unique forms of resistance and agency as exercised by marginalised groups. Further, understanding power to function through a network of power relations captures the complexity and dynamic nature of power relations as various systems of power intersect, interact, and converge in a way that a strictly hierarchal understanding of power and power relations does not. For these reasons, the conceptual link that Paechter makes between hegemony and a more Foucauldian understanding of power is useful for the analysis of data presented in this thesis.

Among the consistencies in Connell’s theory (1997, 1995, 2005), Schippers’ model (2007), and Paechter’s (2018) revised conceptualisations, is the recognition that few (if any) men or women embody hegemonic forms of masculinity or femininity. In this way hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity, locally produced, unique to their context, are understood to be the ideal forms of masculinity and femininity to which all men and women should aspire and against which all men and women should measure themselves (and each other).

Particularly important for the analysis in this thesis, Paechter (2018) emphasizes the context-specific nature of hegemonic and other forms of masculinities and femininities which, she argues “have to be thought of as local phenomena” (p.124). What forms masculinities and femininities take, and which of these forms are hegemonic (through their support of the local gender order) differ depending on the specific contexts in which gender intersects other markers of social identity such as race and class.

In summary, Paechter’s conceptualisation of hegemonic gendered forms and hegemonic gender order

allows for a wider, more intersectional and more fluid understanding of hegemonic masculinities and femininities in the local context [and] permits a more nuanced understanding of how different forms of femininity (not just those that are hegemonic) contribute to hegemonic gender relations. (2018, p. 124)

This understanding of hegemonic masculinities and femininities makes it possible to focus inquiries such as mine on the content of the ideal constructions of femininities in particular contexts, and the ideological role that they play in maintaining the established gender order. It also makes it possible to examine the role that different femininities play in securing the status of hegemonic femininity in those contexts (Budgeon, 2014). From this perspective, the complex, shifting, and nuanced relationships between masculinities and femininities and between different forms of femininities within the hegemonic gender order in a particular context can be accounted for.

2.3.4 The Patriarchal Dividend and Patriarchal Bargain

An important and productive concept in Connell's theory of gender and power, the patriarchal dividend refers to the social and material benefits that men gain, and are considered entitled to, from the maintenance of the unequal patriarchal gender order (Connell, 1987, 1995; Demetriou, 2001; Hall, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2015). Motivated by the promise of the patriarchal dividend, to preserve the patriarchal gender order, (many) men and boys, particularly those whose gender expression more closely resembles that of the ideal form of masculinity in a particular context, invest and are complicit in the maintenance of the patriarchal gender order.

In my analysis, Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the patriarchal bargain is linked to the patriarchal dividend. Linking these two ideas, for me, helps to explain why women also consent to and are complicit in the maintenance and reproduction of a hegemonic gender order which, at best,

benefits them far less than it does men. While the patriarchal dividend is part of the incentive for men and boys, it is the potential benefits of “bargaining with patriarchy” (Kandiyoti, 1988) that can explain (again, at least in part) what induces women and girls to be complicit in the perpetuation of a gender order.

Kandiyoti (1988) observes that different socio-historical contexts give rise to different forms of patriarchy. These different forms of patriarchy can, according to Kandiyoti, be identified through an examination of the different responses of women to patriarchy in different contexts, and the different strategies that women use within the set of concrete constraints imposed by the local form of patriarchy to “maximise their security and optimise their life options” (1988, p. 274; see also Sa’ar, 2005). In other words, women and girls learn to ‘play’ within or manipulate the distinct ‘rules of the game’ that characterize different forms of patriarchy in order to derive the most favourable outcome (Kandiyoti, 1988). Within the constraints of particular forms of patriarchy and the “rules of the game” are, according to Kandiyoti (1988), varying levels of potential for active or passive resistance to gendered oppression. Like the hegemonic gender order which, as discussed above, is locally produced and subject to contestation, resistance, and change, forms of patriarchy are not immutable. As patriarchy evolves and changes, so do the patriarchal bargains women and girls use as coping mechanisms which “open up new areas of struggle and renegotiation of the relations between genders” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274).

Sa’ar (2005) observes that women’s responses to and strategies for dealing with patriarchy range from accommodation and acquiescence to enthusiastic collaboration and reinforcement of patriarchal norms and values, to subtle manipulation and manoeuvring to ensure favourable outcomes while avoiding direct conflict, to different levels of passive or active resistance.

Further, as Weitz (2001) notes, the practice of femininity often combines elements of both ‘accommodation’ and ‘resistance’ to hegemonic norms in the same act. Within the system of rules and constraints certain women stand to benefit from the patriarchal gender order, and it is these women who are more likely to bargain with than resist patriarchy (Sa’ar, 2005).

Importantly, opportunities and choices for women and girls which are constrained and limited by gendered inequality, are further constrained by its intersection with other forms of inequality, such as poverty, racism, and colonialism. A central argument in feminist postcolonial theory¹⁶, the intersection and interaction of different forms of inequality amplifies or compounds the marginalisation of women and girls. These intersecting inequalities influence the form that patriarchy takes in particular contexts, as well as the form of patriarchal bargain(s) available to women and girls and the form of and opportunity for active or passive resistance. The patriarchal bargain is a useful tool for my analysis of the ways in which my co-researcher participants and the women in their lives respond to the form of patriarchy (and other forms of inequality that intersect with it) with which they contend, and the strategies that they use to “[m]aximise their security and optimise their life options.” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274)

Much of the theory and most of the conceptual tools that I have discussed in this section of the chapter were developed in the global North (Connell, 2014). As I use this theory to guide my analysis of my data and answer my research questions, I am wary of importing whole and uncritically a theory developed largely in the global North into the postcolonial, post-apartheid context of my study and this thesis. To contextualise my use of social constructionist theories of gender both literally in terms of geography and figuratively in terms of local and international power relations, in my analysis of my data, I use feminist postcolonial theory to

¹⁶ and in Black feminist theory.

understand the broader (local and international) social and historical context and power relations in which these femininities are constructed from the perspectives of my co-researcher participants.

2.4 Discussion: A Framework for Analysing Adolescent Girls' Constructions of Femininities

I have found social constructionist theories of gender, particularly the reformulations of some of Connell's original ideas and concepts, useful in my analysis of how my participants construct their femininities. In particular, the notions of idealised constructions of gender, and hegemonic gender relationality have been generative. Connell (2012) has suggested that relational theories of gender allow for a certain optimism about gender inequalities because, as can be observed throughout history, gender structures do change (see also Maharaj, 1995). This potential for change is fundamental to my analysis, as it opens up the possibility for challenge and change, albeit slow (Risman, 2004).

Feminist postcolonial theory frames my overall approach to the study in three ways. First, I use feminist postcolonial theory to guide my use of social constructionist theories of gender, a theory largely developed in the global North, in my analysis of how my co-researcher participants construct their femininities. I also use feminist postcolonial theory to situate my analysis of the way in which girls in/from the global South are produced and positioned in Western feminist and international development discourses, and in my analysis of if and how my participants embody, reproduce or challenge the problematic girl-in-crisis discourse in their constructions of their femininities. Second, I use feminist postcolonial theory to frame my analysis of the potential of participatory visual methodology, which works towards democratising and decolonising the research process, to facilitate the co-development of

collaborative approaches to addressing challenges in context as an alternative to development interventions that are formulated by so-called experts elsewhere, and then applied and evaluated in a top-down fashion in communities understood to be in need of saving. Third, I situate my use of participatory visual methodology within feminist postcolonial theory, to realise my commitment to doing collaborative social research *with* my co-researcher participants that generates co-produced knowledge that can be used to stimulate and support transformation and social change.

The main research question that I set out to answer through this study was: *How might PVM be used to explore the construction and reimagining of femininities among girls and young women in a context of poverty, rurality & GBV?* To answer this question, I posed three sub-questions: 1) *How do a selected group of girls and young women in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?;* 2) *How do the girls and young women position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?;* 3) *How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?* Linked to these research questions and informed by feminist postcolonial theory and social constructionist theories of gender, three propositions informed the study reported in this thesis, including my analysis of the data. The first is that adolescent girls construct nuanced and complex, locally specific femininities influenced by the social and material context. These femininities are constructed in relation to masculinities and idealised constructions of femininities. The second proposition is that adolescent girls position themselves in relation to risk based on the tensions between their individual production of their gendered selves, social and cultural expectations about acceptable constructions of gender, and the normative gendered patterns of behaviour and practice of institutions and organisations. The third proposition is

that through the use of PVM, it is possible to create enabling spaces in which adolescent girls feel safe and comfortable to engage in a critical analysis and critique of their own context including the normative, naturalised hegemonic constructions of gender that serve to shape and constrain (or facilitate) the choices available to them.

Guided by these propositions, the study and the analysis of the data focused on adolescent girls' constructions of their femininities in a rural context, and how PVM might be used to engage them in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available to them in their communities.

2.5 Synthesis

The aim of this study was to investigate how adolescent girls in a rural community in South Africa construct their femininities and how participatory visual methodology might be used to challenge idealised constructions of femininities and the hegemonic gender order and regime in this context. To frame the study, I use feminist postcolonial theory and social constructionist theories of gender. Feminist postcolonial theory brings a feminist lens and feminist tools of analysis to theorising about colonialism and postcolonialism, and works to ensure that Western feminist theory takes account of race in a critical and productive way. This theory emphasises the need to avoid both gender and cultural essentialism in work with or focusing on marginalised groups, particularly girls and women in the global South. The theory challenges the assumptions of Western feminism about women across diverse contexts as a homogenous and coherent group who share the same experiences and interests. Similarly, colonialist assumptions about the difference between the global North and the global South that (re)create the poor, uneducated, and oppressed Third World woman or the girl-in-crisis as the 'other' in binary opposition to 'empowered' women and girls in the global North are challenged by

feminist postcolonial theory. The theory also disrupts the centre-periphery structure of relations between the global North and the global South which sustains and reinforces the hierarchical relations of power which positions the global South as subordinate to the global North. Combined, these two theories form a framework that enables me to offer an analysis that is concerned with avoiding recreating and perpetuating colonising ideas about the global South, and the homogenously vulnerable, powerless and oppressed girl-in-crisis.

According to feminist social constructionist theories of gender, gender is socially constructed and relational, shaped by cultural meanings and material relations, and intersecting with other social structures including race and class. Gender is constructed at three levels: the individual (our gendered identity and sense of self), the interactional (patterns of behaviour and organisational practices), and the macro (cultural beliefs about gender and the distribution of resources). Gender relations are arranged hierarchically and the structure of gender relations in a given context at a given time create a locally specific gender order. Like masculinities, femininities are multiple and certain forms come to be valorised and socially sanctioned. These hegemonic femininities or idealised gender constructions tend to be aspirational in that they rarely correspond with the ways in which femininities are embodied and practiced. An important tenet of social constructionist theories of gender, particularly for this study, is that normative gender ideology and the hegemonic gender order to which it gives rise formed as they are in particular social and historical contexts, can and do change over time.

Having developed and discussed the theoretical framing of the study in this chapter, in the next chapter I use this framing as a lens through which to view the empirical and theoretical research literature on girlhood and femininities.

CHAPTER THREE

A Single Story? Girlhood(s) and Femininities: A review of the literature

“So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.”

(Adichie, 2009, 09:24-09:35)

3.1 Introduction

In her 2009 TED Talk¹⁷, Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie cautioned against the danger of a single story. Reflecting on her childhood in Nigeria, and her experiences moving to the United States of America (US) and travelling to other parts of the world, Adichie spoke not only about the single story of Africa that she encountered on moving to the US (and being expected to embody that story), but also her experiences with challenging the ‘single stories’ about others that she herself had come to believe. Interestingly, Adichie’s words are echoed in those of Gilmore and Marshall (2010, p. 667), quoted in Chapter One, who argue that “[i]t often seems that girlhood has congealed into a single sad story in which imperilled girls await rescue, with limited hope or success.” This single story of girls in the global South as perpetually vulnerable, helpless, and victims in need of rescue features heavily in international development discourse of the last twenty years during which international development has become increasingly girl-focused.

The main research question that I set out to answer through this study was: *How might PVM be used to explore the construction and reimagining of femininities among girls and young*

¹⁷ https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en

women in a context of poverty, rurality & GBV? In order to answer this research question, I posed three sub-questions:

1. *How do a selected group of girls and young women in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?*
2. *How do the girls and young women position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?*
3. *How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?*

Building on the background developed in Chapter One and drawing on the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two, in this chapter I critically engage with the literature on girlhood(s) and femininities in conversation with the girl-in-crisis discourse and the figure of the Third World girl in an effort to challenge the coherent “single sad story” about girlhood in the global South. In doing this, I also lay the foundations for the more nuanced analyses and understandings of girlhood(s) and femininities in a rural community in South Africa from the perspectives of girls and young women themselves that I will present and discuss in Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis.

I explore the ways in which girls’ constructions of their femininities are analysed in existing literature on girlhood and femininities, what is thought to influence these constructions, and the extent to which theoretical and conceptual framings of girlhood and femininities align with what can be observed in empirical studies. I am particularly interested in locating the discussion within the global and local historical, social, political, and economic context in which girls construct their femininities working with the ideological and conceptual tension between the global North and the global South. In considering how agency and choice are conceptualised

in relation to girls and young women in the global South, I emphasise how central these concepts are in efforts to understand how girls construct their femininities in context and how best to support girls' agency and efforts to address challenges like early and forced marriage (EFM).

I begin the chapter with a discussion of girlhood and girlhood studies, including a discussion of girlhood studies in the global North. Building on this foundation, I then explore how girlhoods in the global South have been framed in and through international development practice and discourse to produce the single story of the girl-in-crisis. In the following section I consider empirical research on gender and femininities in South Africa. I then move on to a discussion of the socio-historical context of EFM in South Africa in which I draw attention to the importance of ideas about culture and tradition to girls' constructions of their femininities, and the support for practices like EFM. The discussion of agency and choice that follows draws on the preceding sections to illustrate the centrality of how these concepts work with girls in general and this study in particular. Before concluding the chapter, I briefly explore literature on what effective strategies that work *with* girls to address the challenges they encounter in their communities and institutions might look like.

3.2 Girlhood(s) and Girlhood Studies

In this section of the chapter I return to a discussion of girlhood and girlhood studies, introduced in Chapter One.

3.2.1 Girlhood Studies

Girlhood studies as a disciplinary area had its genesis in the global North, particularly the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. This field of study began gaining traction in

the 1990s at the intersection of child and youth studies and feminist research (Driscoll, 2008; Gonick, 2006; Johnson & Ginsburg, 2015; Kearney, 2009). Prior to the 1990s, the study of girls, girlhood and girl culture had been marginalized in both child and youth studies and feminist research (Gonick, 2006; Johnson & Ginsberg, 2015; Kearney, 2009). This marginalisation of girls, girlhood, and girl culture was due in large part to the historical dominance of men and the perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies in child and youth studies and the academy more broadly, which contributed to men and boys being constructed as normative. In the feminist movement and feminist scholarship, a tendency towards an adult-centred perspective which considered girls important almost exclusively in terms of their future womanhood, resulted in a strong focus on the study of the lives and experiences of adult women¹⁸. Notable exceptions to this pattern of marginalization include the work of scholars like Angela McRobbie, Carol Gilligan, and Meda Chesney-Lind (Gonick, 2006; Johnson & Ginsberg, 2015; Kearney, 2009).

Since the 1990s¹⁹, however, growth in the field of girlhood studies has been rapid, appearing as a focus in a number of disciplines (Johnson & Ginsberg, 2015; Kearney, 2009). The focus of research on girls, girlhood, and girl culture within and across these disciplines includes a wide range of issues and phenomena. These include girls' socialization according to norms of gender, race, class and other markers of identity; self-esteem; eating disorders and self-harming behaviours; social silence and passivity; sexuality; equity and achievement in education; and girls as both consumers and producers of media (Driscoll, 2008; Johnson & Ginsberg, 2015;

¹⁸ more often than not, white middle- and upper-class women until critiques of the mainstream, Western feminist movement by Black and Third World feminists began to lead to greater emphasis on intersectionality and the experiences of women of different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds, and women in the global south.

¹⁹ Coinciding with the paradigm shift in child and youth studies towards the 'new sociology of childhood' in which children and young people are viewed not as vulnerable, passive, and unable to analyse their own lives, but rather as agentic social actors (see Chapter Four of this thesis, as well as Coyne & Carter, 2018 and James et al., 1998).

Kearney, 2009; Mazarella & Pecora, 2007). The growth of girlhood studies as a field and its incorporation into the academy is reflected in the founding of *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* in 2008 published by Berghahn, the establishment of the International Girls Studies Association (IGSA) in 2011, and the IGSA's annual conference.

Research in girlhood studies as a nascent field tended to focus on and naturalise “white, Western, middle class, heterosexual, and able-bodied girls” (Kearney, 2009, p. 19). Although studies that take an intersectional approach and recognise the diversity of girls' circumstances and experiences in the global North have become increasingly common since the late 1990s/early 2000s, an increase in studies focused on girls in the global South has not kept pace. However, as girlhood studies began to expand its reach across the globe in the last ten to 15 years, there has been a steady (although somewhat slow) increase in interest in and the number of scholarly studies located in the global South. This growing body of literature comprises studies conducted by scholars from the global North with girls in the global South (For example, MacEntee 2015, 2016; MacEntee & Mandrona, 2015; Pincock, 2017, 2018, 2019), and studies conducted by researchers from the global South (for example, Haffejee et al., 2020; Moletsane, 2000, 2007, 2018; Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018; Wiebesiek & Treffry-Goatley, 2017). The study reported in this thesis is an example of the latter and, although it is located in the global South and I am South African, it is illustrative of the fact that geographic location or nationality do not necessarily give a researcher from the global South a great deal more ‘insider’ status or knowledge than a researcher from the global North. This is particularly true in South Africa, where the history of colonialism, and of apartheid, means that the literal and figurative distance between white South African researchers and the Black African people and communities with whom they might work, and the unequal power relations encoded therein often remains significant. There is a sense in which or a degree to which, as a first-generation

white South African born in the 1980s and having grown up with and still enjoying enormous privilege, I have more in common with researchers from the global North than I do with Black South African researchers.²⁰ It is a sad reality that as a white person being born and/or living in South Africa is no guarantee that I will have much more substantial or more nuanced knowledge or understanding about the lives, histories, and experiences of Black South Africans than an international researcher might have. Privileged as we are, many white South Africans have never ventured into a township, informal settlement, or rural area (an exception would be travelling to or through rural areas for holidays) and have never made an effort to find out about how other South Africans live. They know only one South Africa, the middle- to upper-class, well-resourced, suburban or peri-urban areas many of which are still remarkably (after nearly 30 years since the transition to democracy) segregated. Even those areas that are integrated in terms of people of different races and ethnicities living in close proximity to each other, are not integrated in the true sense of the word. In 1997, Pandey et al. pointed out that “South Africa is a first world country with a third world country operating within it” (p. 4). This remains true today as the gap between the wealthy and the poor grows ever larger.

3.2.2 *Girlhood(s)*

In keeping with the feminist social constructionist theory of gender that forms part of the theoretical framework for this study, like Moletsane et al. (2008), I understand girlhood as a social identity that is

socially constructed and ... performed through practices and social relations in families, communities, and social institutions such as schools, churches, and others (Prinsloo, 2003). ... based on their experiences as members of these institutions and organisations,

²⁰ In this way this study and studies like it also draw attention to the limitations of the discursive divide between the global North and the global South.

girls come to understand what it is to be a girl and what it is to act accordingly.” (pp. 66-67)

Importantly, as Mitchell (2005) points out, these social identities are constructed and practiced within particular local and global contexts. Understood in this way, it follows that in different contexts, shaped as they are by local and global politics and economics, histories and religions, among other things, there will be different ways of ‘doing girl’ (Paechter, 2006; Renold & Ringrose, 2011; Pincock 2017, 2018; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and ‘being girl’. Constituted during a particular historical moment and context, girlhood is constructed at the intersections of other social identities and systems of power in those contexts, including race, class, and location/place (along the continuum of rural and urban, configurations of centre-periphery, and the categories of global North/global South). Femininities and masculinities have long been understood as multiple both within and across contexts. To understand young femininities (see Aapola et al., 2005), I use the plural, girlhoods, in recognition of the context-specificity and multiplicities in the lived experience of girls across the globe. In doing so, as I seek to understand how girls construct their femininities in a particular context at a particular historical moment, I also create conceptual space to resist the ‘single story’ of girlhood in the global South.

As argued in Chapter Two, feminist postcolonial theory makes a case for the need to acknowledge heterogeneity in the experiences of girls and women across the globe while avoiding an over-emphasis on difference. Acknowledging heterogeneity resists colonialist moves towards understanding and treating *all* women and girls, regardless of context and circumstances, as part of “an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions” (Mohanty, 1984, pp.

336-337) based solely on their shared sex²¹. Over-emphasizing difference allows for women in contexts outside of the global North to be othered via essentialist generalisations of girls and women in the global South (Narayan, 1998) which, as observed by Gilmore and Marshall (2010) seem to “congeal into a single, sad story” (p. 667).

3.2.3 Girlhoods in the Global North

Given its roots in the global North, it is useful to briefly discuss literature on girlhoods and girlhood studies emanating from this region as a form of background to the discussion of the literature focusing on and/or emerging from the global South. In the following section, therefore, I briefly discuss some of the literature on girlhoods in the global North.

3.2.3.1 The ‘can-do’ Girl and the ‘at-risk’ Girl

In her 2004 book *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century*, Harris introduces the figures of the ‘can-do’ girl and the ‘at-risk’ girl. The can-do and the at-risk girl are mutually constitutive and juxtaposed. The middle-class can-do girl is committed to being and is expected to be a success in all aspects of her life – socially and economically, and in terms of family and relationships. The can-do girl, ready to take her place as part of the economy as both a producer and consumer, is the model neoliberal subject who embodies ideals like power, success, and individualism. In contrast, the working class and/or ‘ethnic minority’ at-risk girl is understood to be lazy and to have made bad choices including not making a success of the opportunities that are assumed to be available to everyone in a neoliberal society (Harris, 2004). At-risk girls must bear the consequences of their failure to achieve neoliberal ideals (or at the very least give the impression of having achieved them). Harris (2004) argues that through the figures of the

²¹ The homogenizing of girls and women across the globe also relies heavily on the notions of sex and gender as binary, and tends to be heterosexist thereby excluding transwomen and transgirls, gender non-conforming people, and non-binary people.

can-do and the at-risk girls, “success and failure are constructed as though they were dependent on strategic effort and personal choices” (p. 23). Girls are thus held individually responsible for their success or failure independent of circumstance or context, structural and systemic inequality and disadvantage. Through these two figures, a normative, ideal young femininity is constructed around independence, individualisation, consumption, and success. Harris (2004) contends that the term ‘girl power’ (she writes it as one word: girlpower) is one of the most important words in what she calls “the new lexicon of young female success” (p. 16) which teaches young women that “while girlpower is about being confident and assertive, it should not be taken too far” (p. 29) – girls and women should not feel so powerful that they are or appear to be a risk to the status quo.

3.2.3.2 Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia

Interested in “how emerging forms of femininity are linked to shifting cultural ideals of personhood, individuality, and agency and how these are, in turn, reflective of social, economic, and political changes,” Gonick (2006, p. 2) identifies two discourses of girlhood. As she argues, these discourses emerged almost simultaneously in the 1990s and frame the meanings of girls and girlhood in the neoliberal context of the global North: Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia. The first is named for a durable phrase (and concept) that became popular in the 1990s first through its association with a group of girls and young women (mostly white and middle-class) from the United States and linked to the punk music scene who called themselves the Riot Grrrls, and later, in a commodified form, the Spice Girls²². The second is named for Mary Pipher’s bestselling 1994 book *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*.

²² A group of young women singers from the United Kingdom who achieved international fame in the 1990s.

At first glance, argues Gonick (2006), these two discourses appear to offer opposing constructions of femininity. Where Girl Power represents a girl who is “assertive, dynamic, and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity” (similar to Harris’ can-do girl), Reviving Ophelia “presents girls as vulnerable, voiceless and fragile” (p. 2). Unlike Harris’ at-risk girl whose failure to succeed is attributed not to her lack of access to opportunities and resources, but to her laziness and poor decision-making, the girl produced through the Reviving Ophelia discourse is an object of pity, in need of (and deserving of) rescue; she is the girl-in-crisis (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007). This girl-in-crisis is not to be confused with the Third World girl-in-crisis introduced in Chapter One (to be discussed again below), although she is, in a sense, her foremother.

The neoliberal ideals of individualisation and meritocracy play an important role in the Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia discourses as they do in Harris’ (2004) conceptualisation of the can-do and at-risk girls. Neoliberal ideals are at work in phrases like ‘if you work hard enough, you will be a success,’ ‘if I did it, so can you,’ ‘if you can dream it, you can be it,’ and ‘you can do anything you set your mind to.’ The effect of the underlying message of these platitudes is that individuals come to understand successes and failures – their own and those of others – as a product or consequence solely of their (lack of) individual effort or merit independent of the context in which these supposed successes or failures occur (Gonick, 2006). In a dynamic similar to that in which Harris’ (2004) archetypal girls operate, both the Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia discourses, according to Gonick (2006), “participate in processes of individualization that ... direct attention from structural explanations for inequality toward explanations of personal circumstances and personality traits” (p. 2). Local and global networks of power and inequality, and differences in material circumstances are not considered, only individual girls’ effort, skills, talents, and desire and determination to succeed are taken into

consideration. All of the responsibility of a girl's success is hers and hers alone and if she fails to succeed, the blame is all her own as well. These critiques of individualisation and meritocracy are important for girls in the global North as they negotiate their gendered, classed, raced, and sexed identities. When these discourses are exported to the global South, they become problematic in additional ways, echoing colonialist discourses (I discuss these later in the chapter).

Gonick (2006) argues that, on closer inspection, Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia are not, in fact, opposing discourses, but rather function together to produce and regulate the neoliberal girl subject. Girl Power represents the "idealized form of the self-determining individual," while Reviving Ophelia represents the personification of the anxiety about people who fail to achieve this ideal (Gonick, 2006, p. 2). In this configuration, girls are "simultaneously recognised as the potential idealised autonomous neoliberal subject" *and* at risk of failing to achieve this ideal (Gonick, 2006, p. 19). Unlike Harris' (2004) can-do and at-risk girls, these discourses, as described by Gonick (2006), are not in a relation of dominance and subordination based on class. In producing the ideal neoliberal girl subject, both Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia are directed at middle class girls.

Gonick (2006) argues that a critical engagement with the discourses that shape and frame meanings of girl and girlhood, and the relationship between these discourses and neoliberalism is underpinned by "a conceptualisation of girls and women that understands them not as a universal, biological grounded condition of female experience, but rather as produced within shifting socio-historical, material, and discursive contexts" (p. 3). This distinction, Gonick (2006) contends, is important because it disrupts the naturalising and essentialising of girls and women that too frequently appears in both academic and popular accounts of girls and girlhood.

As discussed in Chapter Two, feminist postcolonial theorists make a similar argument in relation to the essentialising of Third World women and girls.

3.2.3.3 Neoliberalism, Post-Girl Power, and Post-feminism

Within the shifting relationship between neoliberalism and (gendered) identity in the 2000s, Girl Power, argue Gonick et al. (2009), is a discourse that has become implicated in “a post-feminist narrative of women’s and girls’ successes that works to render continuing gendered/sexual inequalities largely invisible” and disrupts collective challenge to gender and other forms of inequality. They argue that “[w]hile girl power emerged within the economic, socio-political context of the 1990s where girls *could* be active, in the 2000s they are now *expected/demanded* to be fully self-actualized neo-liberal subjects” (Gonick et al., 2009, p. 2, emphasis in original). Understanding post-feminist sensibility and the production of the post-feminist girl is important here because she co-exists with the girl in crisis.

Gonick and colleagues argue that at the time of writing in 2009, “[i]n an important sense, we are already in an ‘after girl power’ period” and need new approaches to respond to the “rapidly changing social, economic, political and global media contexts emerging out of neoliberalism and what Gill (2007) has called a post-feminist sensibility” (Gonick et al., 2009, p. 2). The individualised neoliberal subject “constructing a lifelong ‘choice’ biography” (Gonick, et al., 2009, p. 2), meets Gill’s (2007) post-feminist sensibility and political discourse. As discussed above, Gonick et al. (2009) contend that this discourse insists on individualisation and a dismissal of sexism and other forms of discrimination and oppression as no longer relevant. These liberated, already empowered girls who no longer need to fight for their own rights and gender equality in their own contexts because they have already achieved equality, are thus poised/positioned to focus their attention and efforts on liberating and empowering their

helpless, oppressed sisters in the global South so that they can become the ideal neo-liberal subject in their image. This post-feminist, empowered girl “constitute[s] normative views in national and international contexts with privilege a model of ‘West vs. the Rest’” (Gonick et al., 2009, p. 3).

Following the ideological trail of neoliberalism into the field of international development, the already liberated post-feminist girl in the global North, whom I will call the ‘empowered’ girl, encounters the girl-in-crisis in the global South.

3.3 Creating the Girl-in-Crisis: Girlhoods and Femininities in the Global South

Investing in girls is not only the right thing to do; It is the smart thing to do.

Ban Ki-Moon²³

A number of feminist scholars, including Emily Bent, Heather Switzer, and Shenila Khoja-Moolji²⁴ have offered insightful analyses of the reasons for girls becoming the object of intense focus within international development over the last decade. Central to these analyses are the way in which the international development project is framed in international development discourse, and the way in which this discourse constructs girls in the global South, particularly the girl-in-crisis. This framing of international development discourse as benign and altruistic and the construction of the girl-in-crisis are relevant to this study, because, as I will argue in this section, in South Africa, this discourse seems to have been imported whole and without alteration into constructions of Black African girls and programmes and interventions designed to help them.

²³ Then Secretary-General of the United Nations, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2008/obv684.doc.htm>

²⁴ See, for example, Bent, 2013; Bent & Switzer, 2016; Khoja-Moolji 2015, 2018; and Switzer, 2013.

3.3.1 Confronting Ideology: Colonialism, Neoliberalism, and International Development

International development is often framed as neutral, apolitical, ahistorical, and altruistic. Framed in this way, the influence of colonialism and neoliberal ideology on international development is obscured (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Cornwall and Brock (2005) argue that the combination of pragmatism, emotive calls to action, and the allure of optimism and purpose, the “feel-good rhetoric” (p. 2) and euphemism of international development discourse creates the impression that it is motivated by altruism, humanitarianism, unity, collaboration between the global North and the global South, and the illusion of consensus. Concealing dissonance and competing ideologies, international development discourse masks the impact of the legacies of colonialism, and the economic and political motivations behind development policy and practice which serve to maintain and perpetuate unequal social, political and economic power relations between the global North and the global South (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Wilson, 2015). Bearing a striking resemblance to discourses around emancipating native women that were used to justify colonial intervention²⁵ (Khoja-Moolji, 2018), this discursive framing of international development “lend[s] the legitimacy that development actors need in order to justify their interventions” as part of the “normative project that is development” (Cornwall & Brock, 2005, p. 1).

Instead of a neutral, ahistorical, apolitical, humanitarian project, international development is value-laden and has been shaped by and has influenced “the reconfiguration of imperialism after formal colonialism” (Wilson, 2015, p. 12), concerns around the threat posed to global capitalism and the unequal distribution of wealth by communism particularly during the Cold War era, and the neoliberal turn in global economics and politics in the 1970s. The spread and

²⁵ More recently, this discursive framing is discernable in the US government’s justification of the so-called “war on terrorism” post-9/11 as motivated, at least in part, by the desire to ‘liberate’ the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, particularly the women from religio-political extremism and oppression.

increasing influence of neoliberal ideology, political and economic policy since the 1980s, is reflected in the rise of neoliberal development discourses in the 1980s (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Labonté & Stuckler, 2015; Wilson, 2015). Wilson (2015) describes international development as a

complex of unequal material relationships and processes which structure engagement between the global South and the global North, as well as the primary discursive framework within which these relationships have been constructed for more than 60 years. (p. 2)

With roots in colonialism and underpinned by neoliberal ideology, international development is underpinned by raced, classed and gendered values and assumptions and the neoliberal ideology behind the social, economic, and political development policies which flow from the global North to the global South and structure the flow of wealth from the global South to the global North (Cornwall et al., 2008; Wilson, 2015). Packaged in feel-good rhetoric, the neoliberal focus within international development on narrow economic goals rather than rights, development, and gender equality for their own sake is relatively thinly veiled (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Wilson, 2015). This is perhaps the most clearly illustrated in the ‘smart economics’ approach in international development that has become ubiquitous in the field.

3.3.1.1 Women and Girls Save the World: Gender Equality as Smart Economics

Calls to invest in women and girls for better and more effective development outcomes have come from a wide range of development actors. These range from the World Bank with the slogan ‘Gender Equality as Smart Economics’ (World Bank, 2006, 2011), to international NGOs like Plan International and even South Africa’s own Archbishop Desmond Tutu who, in a 2012 interview, stated that “if you want real community development, you need to invest

in women.”²⁶ The smart economics approach is premised on a number of problematic assumptions (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Kabeer, 1999; Wilson 2015). The first is that “greater gender ‘equality,’ understood as an increase in women’s participation in [neoliberal] labour markets, will have a significant impact on economic growth” (Wilson, 2015, p. 5). Linked to this, the second assumption is that women’s increased participation in neoliberal labour markets will increase their economic independence which will automatically lead to greater gender equality (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Cornwall et al., 2008; Wilson, 2015). The third assumption to which I will draw attention is that women will always work harder than men for the benefit of not just themselves but their families and communities (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Kabeer, 1999, 2003; Khoja-Moolji, 2018; Switzer, 2013; Wilson, 2015). The, perhaps unintended, result of this focus on investing in women as smart economics is the “feminisation of responsibility/obligation” in international development. As Chant and Sweetman (2012, p. 523) argue, “[s]mart economics seeks to use women and girls to fix the world.”

3.3.2 *The Girling of Development*²⁷

The construction of the figure of the “poor women in the global South” (Wilson, 2015, p. 9) as “hyper-industrious, altruistic entrepreneurial female subjects” (Wilson, 2015, p. 6) is central to the smart economics approach of neoliberal development practice and discourse. Based on arguments (supported by sometimes dubious evidence) that ‘poor women in the global South’ work harder, more reliably pay back loans, spend less time and money on themselves than men, and invest more in their families and communities (Chant, 2008; Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Wilson, 2015), these women with their potential to be efficient neoliberal subjects can be seen as good investments. Framed thus, the patriarchal structures, institutions, and ideologies and

²⁶ <https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/society/the-world-needs-a-revolution-led-by-women/article2878306.ece>

²⁷ A term coined by Hayhurst, 2011, p. 532 quoted in Khoja-Moolji, 2015, p. 87.

the version of ‘good’ femininity women are expected to embody, and the structural injustice involved in neoliberal economic policy remain concealed (Chant, 2008, Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Chant et al., 2007; Wilson, 2015).

Controlling women’s fertility has long been a focus of development and education has been seen as a key strategy to support the management of the fertility of women in the global South (Bent & Switzer, 2016; Kabeer, 1999; Khoja-Moolji, 2015, 2018; Switzer, 2013; Wilson, 2015). The logic is that women who are educated get married later, start bearing children later, and have fewer children. Women with fewer children are more productive, and productive women are more efficient neoliberal subjects. It is, at least in part, their greater potential to be efficient neoliberal subjects that has prompted the shift in focus from women to girls in international development over the last two decades.

In what Hayhurst (2011, cited in Khoja-Moolji, 2015, p. 87) has referred to as the ‘girling’ of development, the ‘girl’ replaces the woman as the ideal subject of neoliberal development because it is already ‘too late’ for the woman who has already left school, got married, had babies (and possibly acquired HIV along the way) and in this way no longer has the potential to contribute to the neoliberal development project – she no longer holds the promise of a good return on investment. The ‘girl,’ however, can still be rescued from a fate of early marriage and child-bearing, perpetuating the poverty cycle and living a life of deprivation and oppression (Khoja-Moolji, 2015, 2018; Wilson, 2015) to become the solution to her problems, and her family’s and community’s problems by her enhanced productivity for global capital (Switzer, 2013; Wilson, 2015). Again, it is through education that the potential of the girl in the global South can be harnessed in the service of economic development (Khoja-Moolji, 2015, 2018; Switzer, 2013). In a 2018 blog post for the world bank, Jim Yong Kim, former president of the

World Bank Group, stated that “[t]here is no question the biggest bang for the buck in development is girls’ education.”²⁸

3.3.3 *The Girl Effect*

*The Girl Effect, n. The unique potential of 600 million adolescent girls to end poverty for themselves and the world*²⁹

Launched in 2008, The Girl Effect is perhaps the best known and most studied of a number of large campaigns³⁰ (see Bent, 2013; Bent & Switzer, 2013; Khoja-Moolji, 2015, 2018; Switzer, 2016; Wilson, 2015) focused on raising awareness about the plight of girls in the global South among their counterparts in the global North, and, less so, on empowering girls in the global South to become development actors (Bent, 2013; Bent & Switzer, 2016; Khoja-Moolji 2015, 2018; Wilson, 2015). The Girl Effect and campaigns like it are premised on the smart economics ‘invest in girls’ logic. In large, bold font, the landing page of The Girl Effect’s website urges the viewer to “[i]magine the world if 600 million girls unlocked their power?”³¹ Scroll a little further down and it continues

It’s time to put girls in control. When we do, everyone wins. Because when one girl finds her power to make different choices that change her life, it inspires others to do so too. She starts a ripple effect that impacts her family, her community, her country.

That’s the Girl Effect.³²

²⁸ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/build-brighter-future-invest-women-and-girls>

²⁹ A definition of the ‘Girl Effect’ <https://rewirenewsgroup.com/article/2012/02/27/understanding-girl-effect/>

³⁰ Other examples include *Girl Rising* (<https://girlrising.org/>), Plan International’s *Because I am a Girl* campaign which ran from 2012-2018 (<https://plan-international.org/because-i-am-a-girl>), and the United Nations Foundation’s *Girl Up* movement (<https://girlup.org/>)

³¹ <https://www.girleffect.org/>

³² <https://www.girleffect.org/>, emphasis in original

Here we meet the empowered, girl-as-saviour. Somewhat paradoxically, the girl-as-saviour co-exists with the girl-in-crises in the figure of the third world girl. As well as holding the potential to “end poverty for themselves and the world,”³³ the girl in the global South is also perpetually vulnerable, passive, and “at risk from ‘cultural practices’ such as early marriage and from highly racialised figures of predatory men in their own communities” (Wilson, 2015, p. 19). Neoliberal, post-feminist girl power discourse shapes the girl-as-saviour who needs only the right education and the self-confidence to be ‘empowered’ to “make choices and changes” and “act differently at a time that can define their future.”³⁴ Switzer (2013, p. 355) observes that in this discourse it is “through the alchemy of postfeminist girl power” and “[a]s the object of investment, [that the girl in the global South] becomes the ‘self-invented neoliberal feminine subject’.” As for the girl-in-crisis, neoliberal development practice and discourse “problematically (re)inscribes colonialist divides between Western and Third World girlhoods that reify the dichotomies of Western empowerment and Third World vulnerability” (Bent, 2013, p. 4). Instead of the empowerment and key to gender inequality that it is sold as, the success of the smart economics approach of what Wilson (2015, p. 18) has called “the ‘Girl Effect’ model” relies on constructions of ‘good’ girlhood that require girls to be hardworking, tireless, selfless, and altruistic which “are embedded in, rely on, and actively reinforce and extend, existing patriarchal structures and gendered relationships of power” (Wilson, 2015, p. 5).

The focus on neoliberal girl power in development discourse and practice which encourages girls to invest in ideas of individualized choice and responsibility allows the “legacies of colonialism, corruption of state institutions, reliance on foreign aid, imperialist intervention in

³³ <https://www.girleffect.org/>

³⁴ <https://global.girleffect.org/what-we-do/our-approach/>

developing countries” to be dismissed, and the “global relations of domination” and the structural causes of poverty and inequality to be ignored (Khoja-Moolji, 2015, p. 100). Instead, like the girls described by Harris (2004) and Gonick (2006) above, girls in the global South are expected to take “sole responsibility for their successes and failures” (Bent, 2013, p. 13).

Of the Girl Effect and other similar campaigns, Switzer (2013, p. 351) asks “what story do they tell about girls and girlhood [in the global South]?” I would argue that they tell a single story that has two potential endings. The story tells of the girl-in-crisis who is rescued by her already liberated, post-feminist sisters from the global North through visually appealing media campaigns, slogans full of “feel-good rhetoric,” and education that teaches them that they can overcome any obstacle if they believe in themselves and choose to do so. As the story goes, the girl-in-crisis is the victim of poverty, culture, and predatory men. However, when she is ‘empowered’ to make the ‘right’ choices and embrace her girl power, she will get her happy ending. She will overcome all (unnamed) obstacles to become the savior of herself, her family, and her community through becoming the ideal neoliberal subject and fully participating in economic growth, thereby providing a good return on the initial investment in her. But, if there is no intervention to teach her how to be empowered and make the right choices, or if she fails to make the right choices, the girl’s happy ending will evade her and she will remain perpetually in crisis. In this story, responsibility for the girl’s success or failure is entirely hers.

3.3.4 Imported Discourse?

Pandy et al. (1997) draw attention to the pitfalls of the uncritical adoption of imported development paradigms and discourses which fail to take into account and respond to the historical and current political, social, and economic contexts in which mainstream international development is practiced. It seems, however, that neoliberal development

discourse about girls in the global South has been imported into South Africa and influenced how Black African girls are positioned in relation to agency, vulnerability and risk, and the interventions designed to help them.

Reflecting the “invest in girls” message of the girl-in-crisis/girls-as-saviours discourses of international development, in South Africa, campaigns like *ZAZI*, and *She Conquers* (described below) frame girls and young women, and encourage them to think of themselves, as the solution to all of their problems, the saviours of themselves and their communities. As I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, the success of these discourses and the programmes and interventions through which they are delivered in spreading ideology and shaping girls’ constructions of their femininities is evident in the way that the participants in this study talk about themselves and their roles and responsibilities, and the way the stakeholders like NGOs, and the community in *eMangeweni* talk to and about the roles of girls and young women in securing good futures for themselves and the community. To a certain extent, the SIFs (as the participants refer to themselves) appear to have internalised these discourses of responsibility that rest on constructions of good girl (and woman) femininities, and the extent to which they claim successful girlhood or femininity is measured by these standards.

A multi-partner project³⁵, according to the website, the *ZAZI* campaign “encourages women and girls to draw on their inner strength, power, and self-confidence to know themselves and what they stand for in order to guide their decisions about their future.”³⁶ According to Bronwyn Pearce, the Deputy Country Director at the USAID/JHU HIV Communication Programme,

³⁵ Including the Department of Health, USAID/Johns Hopkins University HIV Communication Programme, PEPFAR, the Department of Social Development, and the South African National AIDS Council Women’s Centre.

³⁶ <https://www.zazi.org.za/articles/new-campaign-calls-south-africas-women-and-girls-zazi.html>

The ZAZI campaign has been developed by women for women and celebrates the strength of South African women. ZAZI is a Nguni word, meaning 'know yourself'. We hope the campaign creates a movement that encourages women to defy the silence that allows the pain in their lives to thrive, to define their own values and their own path in life.³⁷

Chairperson of the SANAC Women's Sector, Nomfundo Eland, describes the campaign as "an opportunity for young women to take charge in the prevention of HIV, draw on their inner strength and define who they are."³⁸

The advocacy, mass media, and community mobilisation activities through which ZAZI is delivered, include a song, 'ZAZI', which was written by a South African musician, Zonke, with King Nova, a South African poet. It is performed by Zonke and King Nova supported by the University of Pretoria Youth Choir.³⁹ The lyrics of the song and the poem emphasize the importance of girls knowing and loving themselves and making good choices, and the music video depicts examples of "young women ... drawing on their strength to make decisions for their own future."⁴⁰ Among the scenarios is a teenage girl rejecting the advances of an older, lascivious man. In another, a young woman is at a clinic discussing family planning with a nurse when she notices an elderly woman observing the interaction. Assuming that the older woman is judging her, the young woman is surprised when she offers a show of approval and support.⁴¹

³⁷ <https://www.zazi.org.za/articles/new-campaign-calls-south-africas-women-and-girls-zazi.html>

³⁸ <https://www.zazi.org.za/articles/new-campaign-calls-south-africas-women-and-girls-zazi.html>

³⁹ Interestingly, it is not unlike UN Women's song 'One Woman' which, according to their website, "spread[s] a message of unity and solidarity: We are 'One Woman'" (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women/un-women-song>)

⁴⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPLH3NEgqO0>

⁴¹ <https://www.zazi.org.za/articles/new-campaign-calls-south-africas-women-and-girls-zazi.html>

Although Pearce states that the campaign recognises that the needs of girls and young women cannot be understood or addressed without taking into consideration the contextual factors that influence their decision-making,⁴² the ZAZI campaign slogans, the song, and the music video still focus on the inner resources and strengths of girls who, it seems, need only know themselves to be able to overcome the not insignificant challenges they face, including poverty, moral panic and taboos around adolescent sexuality, gender inequality and GBV, and a lack of access to adequate sexual and reproductive health information and care.

The tagline of the *She Conquers*⁴³ campaign is ‘empower, protect, advance.’ A three-year (2016-2019) multi-partner initiative,⁴⁴ the campaign is described on the website as

uniting to work towards providing every adolescent girl and young woman in the country with access to the resources that they need to lead a happy, healthy and successful life. We believe that every girl should have the power to decide their future. This means being educated, healthy, and safe from violence. When girls gain knowledge, they get the chance to become independent. And this gives them more ways to transform their communities and break the cycle of poverty. Societies succeed when their women and girls succeed. Whoever you are and wherever you come from, let’s work together and empower girls to take charge of destiny to become the women they want to be.⁴⁵

The focus on education as the key to empowering girls and the emphasis on girls’ individual power, agency and choice in these campaigns is reminiscent of the Girl Effect model discussed above. This emphasis places enormous responsibility on girls and young women to be the

⁴² Including, according to the website, HIV, transactional sex, and GBV

⁴³ Including the Department of Health, UNFPA, and SANAC

⁴⁴ <http://sheconquerssa.co.za/>

solution to their own problems, and relies too heavily on the internal strengths and resources of girls and young women to overcome adversity and thrive. Linked to this, there is inadequate emphasis on the social, structural and material constraints on girls and young women which prevents them from being able to exercise agency and make the ‘right’ choices. Rather than the reality of girls’ lives, these interventions seem to present an ideal. They tell a story in which, given the right information, girls can make the right choices to secure a healthy, happy, successful future for themselves, the communities and societies regardless of the circumstances which may constrain the choices available to them or the opportunity to make these choices.

This analysis of campaigns like *ZAZI* and *She Conquers* is not just an interesting exercise. The discourses of responsibility, and the over-emphasis on girls and young women’s internal resources and the opportunities available to them to make different (read: better) choices have a real impact on the lives of girls and young women. Popular and powerful discourses like these need to be disrupted and challenged in order to provide girls and young women like the SIFs with the kind of support that is useful, realistic, and responsive to their needs and their context.

3.4 Girlhoods and Femininities in South Africa

I argued in Chapter Two that while Connell’s (1987) concept of emphasised femininity is a useful one, it does not sufficiently account for the multiple and varied femininities that can be observed in empirical research. I also noted that while masculinities have been studied extensively, femininities have, in general received less scholarly attention. In this section of the chapter, I review the literature on femininities in South Africa which illustrates the multiplicity of and variation in the femininities that women and girls construct and perform in their day-to-day lives. In the discussion that follows, there are a number of similarities between the forms of femininities that have been identified through different studies. Fairly consistent

is the fact that, although there appears to be some movement towards challenging patriarchal gender norms, none of the femininities directly challenge or disrupt the hegemonic gender order. What the literature reviewed in this section of the chapter demonstrates is that femininities are not simply constructed and performed in response to masculinities, but rather in relation with masculinities and other femininities, and in relation to the material context in which these gendered identities are constructed. Further, in all of the studies reviewed, gendered beliefs about culture and tradition play an important role in the ways in which Black African women in South Africa construct and perform their femininities.

3.4.1 Conservative and Modern Femininities, and Femininities in Transition

In their influential 2012 article, “Sexuality and the limits of agency among South African teenage women: theorising femininities and their connections to HIV risk practices”, Jewkes and Morrell report on qualitative research conducted with 16 teenaged girls from the rural Eastern Cape as part of an evaluation of the Stepping Stones intervention.⁴⁶ The focus of this qualitative work was to explore the ways in which girls and young women in South Africa construct their femininities and exercise agency.

Drawing on Connell’s theory of gender and power (1987, 1995) to frame their analysis, Jewkes and Morrell (2012), identified three femininities among their young women participants. The first was a *conservative femininity*. This femininity was characterized by acquiescence and the acceptance of patriarchy and unequal gender relations. Important to this femininity was that women at least appear in public to be passive, obedient, and respectful towards men: “[c]onservatism was often not reflected so much in rigid adherence to rules of elders and

⁴⁶ Stepping Stones is an intervention that was designed to target 15- to 26-year-olds to address HIV, gender inequality and GBV, and life skills: <https://www.samrc.ac.za/other/stepping-stones>

boyfriends, as in discretion and moderation in their transgression” (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012, p. 11). The acquiescence, obedience and respect required of women support what Jewkes and Morrell (2012) refer to as “highly oppressive traditional practices” (p. 11) like *ukuthwala*⁴⁷. It was the most vulnerable women among Jewkes and Morrell’s participants who invested in conservative femininity. Although some of their participants expressed a desire for some respect and power in their relationships, this was to be negotiated within the boundaries of patriarchy and the dominance of men. This valuing of acquiescence, conservatism, and tradition as a sign of successful femininity was supported not only by men, but women across generations.

In contrast to this conservative femininity, the second femininity that Jewkes and Morrell (2012) observed among their participants was a *modern femininity*:

[t]he modern girl was presented as a young woman, wooed by men with cell phones, steering a course through the pitfalls of teenage sexuality – pregnancy, HIV, heart-break, and embarrassment caused by immature boyfriends – to complete school and have a career. In a clear rejection of the conservatism and acquiescence, this femininity was framed around replicating some of the practices and assertions of empowered men. (p. 12)

While these young women presented themselves as having more agency and power in their lives and relationships than women who embraced the conservative femininity, this was, according to Jewkes and Morrell (2012, p. 12) “part reality, part fantasy.” Pretending to not be jealous or hurt by unfaithful, cruel, and/or violent partners, fighting back when boyfriends were

⁴⁷ I discuss *ukuthwala* in relative detail later in the chapter and am therefore reluctant to offer any kind of definition of this practice here. However, it will suffice at this point to clarify that what Jewkes and Morrell are referring to here is the abduction of girls and young women with the aim of forcing them into customary marriage.

physically violent, and having multiple partners were central to this highly sexualised femininity. The young women incorporating aspects of the masculinities they observed into their constructions and performances of femininities in an effort to ‘beat them at their own game,’ so to speak. The fantasy of agency, power, and control that they cultivated required the young women who embraced this femininity to sacrifice their emotional vulnerability, and put them at greater risk of acquiring HIV, unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy, and GBV.

The third femininity identified by Jewkes and Morrell (2012) was one that “showed signs of an emerging ‘feminist’ consciousness which incorporated non-acceptability of violence and control and a demand for respect” (p. 13). This aspirational femininity, described as a femininity “in transition” (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012, p. 12), blended aspects of the conservative and modern femininities described above such that the women who assumed this femininity worked towards having more agency and power in their relationships, but did not challenge or disrupt the established gender order.

Jewkes and Morrell’s young participants had considerable agency in their choice of partners in the form of accepting ‘proposals’⁴⁸ from men and boys. They did not, however, initiate relationships this being considered the role of men. Once they were in a relationship, the young women had very little agency and were rarely in the position to end unsatisfactory, unhappy, and/or violent relationships. They were, therefore, careful to try to accept the proposals of men or boys who they thought would not be violent and controlling, and who they thought were or had good prospects of being financially stable. In spite of fighting, disrespect, and often violence, the young women in Jewkes and Morrell’s (2012) study rarely ended relationships

⁴⁸ ‘Proposals’ or ‘proposing’ is a common term for men and boys indicating their romantic and/or sexual interest in women and girls and the desire to pursue a romantic and/or physical relationship with them. This process is also sometimes referred to in terms of proposals of love.

themselves, although they often fantasised about doing so. These fantasies were a “substitute for real power, perhaps also a reluctance to end relationships because of their importance for self- and peer-esteem, or possibly out of fear of violence” (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012, p. 9).

Ideas of appropriate feminine behaviour and preserving their reputation as respectable young women were also important to Jewkes and Morrell’s participants who wanted to “be able to respect their partner and (appropriately) submit to him in order to feel good and feminine” (2012, p. 6). Their young participants also indicated that being able to respect their partner(s) gave them “a sense of dignity,” (p. 6) and many of them wanted to be respected by their partner(s) in turn. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) are careful to note that, while they explore women’s agency in their analysis of femininities, they do not do so out of the context of the social, material, and structural constraints that shape women’s agency and their ability to exercise it (or not). An important part of this context is, argue Jewkes and Morrell (2012, p. 3), that “there are strong cultural roots to messages girls receive, that they should be passive, innocent and will be held accountable for how they are treated by men.”

The transactional element of a number of the relationships described by many of the young women was complex. Many of Jewkes and Morrell’s participants emphasised the importance of love and distance themselves from the transactional elements of their relationships. Nevertheless, gifts and money played an important role in courtship for many of the young women and were an indication of respect and power. For others, however, transactional sexual relationships were motivated by need, trapping them in abusive relationships. Material circumstances were also often cited as part of the reason for having multiple partners which many of the young women did.

Jewkes and Morrell (2012) conclude that the young women's agency was constrained by a combination of intersecting factors including patriarchy, poverty and cultural norms around 'appropriate' femininity. They contend that the activities of flirting, accepting partners, and having multiple partners suggest a degree of agency that "did not in fact exist" (p. 9). In the naturalised age and gender hierarchy, girls and young women are subordinate to men, boys, and older women. Further, as the scholars point out, men had better prospects of employment or earning than women increasing the power of men over women. The young women in the study described violence, manipulation, and control as routine features of relationships. Men expected to be respected and obeyed, and women to be respectful and obedient. Agency was often, sometimes unconsciously, exchanged for financial security, and the social benefits of having a partner as proof of successful femininity. It was important to avoid being single, and threats of abandonment could ensure compliance or obedience. The withdrawal of financial support was also a strong motivator for many of the young women who relied on partners to stay in unhappy, violent relationships.

In their analysis of femininities and agency among their participants, Jewkes and Morrell (2012) draw attention to "the multiplicity and fluidity of identities, and contradictions between aspirations and actions" (p. 4). They conclude that among their participants none of the three femininities they identified were hegemonic in the way that Connell has argued certain masculinities are. Instead, the femininities, none of which challenged patriarchy and the established gender order, were arranged horizontally in relation to each other and all subordinate to masculinity.

3.4.2 Marriage, Femininity, and 'The Good Woman'

In her doctoral study, Shai explored constructions of femininity among women in rural Pondoland in the Eastern Cape province in South Africa in relation to gender norms, socio-economic conditions, and relationships with men and with other women. Shai identified a number of femininities. Of particular interest is how central marriage was to constructions of femininities for both married and unmarried women, including notions of the “good woman.” (Shai, 2018, p. 63). Childbearing was also significant.

Similar to Jewkes and Morrell’s conservative femininity, the ideal femininity in Shai’s research setting was characterised by notions of “dignity, perseverance, respectfulness, being constructive, and sexual passivity” (Shai, 2018, p. 121). Accessed through marriage, this femininity was associated with certain ‘customs,’ ‘traditions,’ and expectations including *lobolo*⁴⁹, strict practices of *hlonipha*⁵⁰, child-bearing, even *ukuthwala*⁵¹. Perseverance, demonstrated through the ability to stay in highly unsatisfactory, even abusive marriages, to be acquiescent, tolerant of disrespect and violence, and not challenge the dominance of husbands or mothers-in-law was a highly valued attribute among women.

Shai’s participants saw marriage as an essential marker of ‘successful’ or ideal femininity. Indeed, being married was key to achieving the status of the “good woman.” Failing to get married or stay married, then, implied a failure to achieve successful femininity. The participants attributed this failure to something wrong or missing in the woman herself, the

⁴⁹ A practice which involves the family of the groom giving the family of the bride an agreed upon amount of wealth in the form of cattle and/or cash prior to the customary marriage being concluded.

⁵⁰ I discuss *hlonipha* in more detail below. Simply put, it is a set of physical and linguistic behaviours that signal respect of social superiors. *Hlonipha* is generally practiced by women and children.

⁵¹ Like *hlonipha*, I discuss *ukuthwala* in more detail below. For now, it can be described as the abduction of a girl or woman with the intention of concluding a customary marriage.

implication being that had she been a ‘good’ girl and woman, she would have been rewarded with marriage.

Although they were positioned above unmarried women in the gender hierarchy, married women in Shai’s study experienced their share of unpleasantness, even abuse. The relationship between a new/young wife and her mother-in-law is often presented as particularly fraught. Historically, when women get married they are expected to respect the authority of their mother-in-law and be guided by and take instruction from her about things like house-keeping and *hlonihpa* (Shai, 2018). Shai’s participants drew attention to the fact that conflict between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law was often a major source of unhappiness for new/young brides. Some of the women described their mothers-in-law as controlling and belittling, even abusive and violent. Mothers-in-law were presented by a number of Shai’s participants as defending their son’s behaviour even when it was violent and abusive.

In Shai’s research site, unmarried women were seen as not having reached adulthood, and could therefore be referred to as *izintombi* (girls). Once an unmarried woman had born a child, however, she would be referred to as *idikazi*⁵². Shai (2018) refers to the modified version of the ideal, dignified femininity that was available to married women as the *idikazi* femininity. This femininity was characterised by aspiring to at least the appearance of the ideal ‘good woman’ femininity to which married women could lay claim through displaying the attributes of dignity, respectfulness, and virtue that signalled successful femininity. Being seen as a good woman, behaving ‘well,’ being respectful, and having ‘good manners,’ was highly valued in the *idikazi* femininity. However, the *idikazi* femininity was also associated with having

⁵² In everyday use, *idikazi* is equivalent to ‘a whore’. However, in this case, it is used to denote a ‘good’ femininity, but one that is inferior to that of married women (the ideal femininity).

multiple partners and having relationships with married men. Like Jewkes and Morrell's (2012) participants, for the women in Shai's study, the key was moderation in and not flaunting the engagement in behaviours, including premarital sex, having multiple partners, having relationships with married men, drinking and partying, that were seen as the opposite of the highly valued characteristics of dignity, modesty, and respect associated with married women.

The *idikazi* identity, despite its negative connotations, enjoyed a slightly higher status among unmarried women for its resemblance to the dignified femininity of married women. Shai's (2018) participants sometimes described women who had long-term, stable relationships with their married partners as having achieved a status similar to a second wife. These women described their relationships with their married partners in similar terms to the normative husband and wife relationships, including the dominance of the man in the relationship, and his right to control his female partners. They incorporated ideas of perseverance in these relationships even when they were unhappy mirroring the 'good wife' role of married women.

A third femininity identified by Shai was what she described as an "accentuated" version of the *idikazi* femininity. Associated with risky sexual behaviour, this femininity revolved around having fun, and acquiring money and other material resources from men. Shai analyses this femininity as a subgroup of the *idikazi* femininity, and argues that women in this subgroup "adopted the socially derogatory label of *isifebe*⁵³," a word which Shai explains as the English equivalent of the word bitch (2018, p. 17). The *isifebe* identity was associated with multiple partners, explicit sexuality, and sometimes "cunning" measures to acquire material resources (Shai, 2018, p. 14). In this way, this identity appeared to be flouting the expectations of passive, dignified femininity and conservative morals; there was the appearance of a degree of independence and defiance among

⁵³ This word is most often translated into English as 'loose woman' or 'slut.'

these women, who were, according to Shai (2018), often subject to censure and stigma. As understood by Shai, this version of femininity has similarities with the modern femininity identified by Jewkes and Morrell (2012). Associated with this femininity was risky sexual behaviour. Some of the women in this subgroup, identified themselves as ‘female players.’ Shai observes that, like Jewkes and Morrell’s (2012) modern femininity, the *isifebe* femininity may be part reality and part fantasy for these women who had to contend with gender inequality, economic uncertainty, and the constant threat of HIV and GBV. These women shrewdly played on gendered power imbalances to use their sexuality to manipulate men in order to receive money and other material resources from men who they understood to want only sex from them.

Shai found that the femininities that she identified were arranged hierarchically with the ideal, dignified femininity available to married women located above the femininities available to unmarried women. Shai observed that this dignified femininity was sometimes more of an ideal to which women aspired than a reality. In this way this femininity could be thought of as hegemonic in Shai’s study setting. Shai also observed that the femininities were not static and that women, mostly unmarried women, moved within and between these femininities depending on their desires and aspirations, their relationship status and status of their relationship(s), and economic conditions. Overall, none of the femininities identified by Shai (2018) demonstrated a challenge of the hegemonic gender order. Instead, the acceptance of the subordinate status of women was a common feature across all three identities.

3.4.3 The ‘Good’ Woman and The ‘Loose’ Woman

In his thorough and extensive ethnography of life and love in an informal settlement and a township in Mandeni in KwaZulu-Natal documented in his 2010 book, *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender, and Rights in South Africa*, Hunter identifies two femininities.

The first is that of the *isifebe* (loose woman)⁵⁴. *Izifebe* (loose women), according to Hunter's friends, neighbours, and informants had more than one boyfriend at a time or boyfriends in quick succession, and frequented taverns⁵⁵. This highly sexualised femininity was contrasted with what Hunter calls "The Good Woman" (p. 149). Conservative in dress, considered chaste and "traditional," these women were perceived as respectful, particularly of men, and adopted practices and behaviours associated with *ukuhlonipha*.

3.4.4 Femininity, Sexuality, and Culture

Shabane's (2011) qualitative study with girls aged 16 to 17 in a high school in a large township near Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, sought to investigate how girls understand sexuality and sexual risk, and the role that gender plays in these understandings. Shabane (2011) found that the girls in her study negotiated the meanings of their sexuality and femininities at the intersection of complex factors including poverty, gender inequality, culture, HIV, and discourses about women's rights. Drawing on Bhana and Pillay (2011), Shabane challenges the view of Black African girls simply as victims, arguing that this essentialized view of girls is an "analytically unhelpful dichotomy" (Bhana & Pillay, 2011, p. 67), and obscures the multiplicity of femininities. Indeed, Shabane's (2011) participants describe constructions and performances of femininities, and understandings of their sexualities that are complex, multi-faceted, and, at times, contradictory.

Focused as it was on girls' sexualities and femininities, HIV was an important focus of Shabane's (2011) study. However, it is her focus on the role of culture in the girls' meaning

⁵⁴ This femininity is contrasted also with what Hunter (2010) calls the *isoka* masculinity. An *isoka* is a man who is successful with women (or has many girlfriends). While *izifebe* (loose women) are judged as immoral, are celebrated in a familiar slut/stud dichotomy (Hunter, 2010).

⁵⁵ Taverns, also known as shebeens, are informal, sometimes unlicensed, bars or drinking places in townships, informal settlements, and rural areas. Unlike shebeens, Taverns sometimes serve food and may even offer lodging.

making about the femininities and sexuality that is particularly relevant to my study. Shabane (2011) observes that it is “crucial that one should look at how ‘culture’ is invoked and constructed in different ways through different discourses” (p. 20). Culture and tradition were implicated in the ways in which the girls understood the unequal gendered power relations that are so central to the ways in which they construct meaning about sexuality and femininities. Drawing on discourses of culture and tradition, some of Shabane’s (2011) participants argued that it is “nature” for a woman to “obey her man’s rules” (p. 60), expressed pride in their culture, and used conservative notions of culture to frame their investment in ideas of sexual purity (in which virginity is extremely important) that were central to their femininities. Some of Shabane’s participants, however, took a more critical view of culture, observing that cultural norms about women’s subordinate status to the dominance of men, make them vulnerable to GBV and HIV.

3.4.5 Love and Relationships

In their qualitative study of IPV, agency and understandings of love relationships among young women in urban informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Willan et al. (2019) found that women’s constructions of love and love relationships were “decisive” in determining whether to stay in or leave a violent relationship. Willan et al.’s study addresses a noteworthy gap in the literature and body of knowledge about how young women understand love and relationships and how this understanding affects their behaviours relating to relationships. Much of the literature on femininities, girls, and young women focuses on their risk and vulnerability in relation to HIV, GBV, unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy. This limited and limiting approach to girls and young women’s sexuality and relationships frames them in terms only of pathology. The social and emotional aspects of romantic and/or sexual

relationships receive less attention providing an incomplete understanding from which to design programmes and interventions to support and assist girls and young women.

As Willan et al. (2019) point out, the work of Hunter (mentioned above) is an exception. I first read Hunter's (2010) book shortly after it was published in South Africa in 2010. Having only recently become more closely acquainted with the literature, policy, and programming related to HIV&AIDS in South Africa through my job, I was struck by how very obvious it suddenly seemed once it was pointed out that I rarely heard or read anything about love and intimacy in the messaging and literature around HIV&AIDS and GBV. This in spite of both HIV and GBV being very present in the romantic and/or sexual relationships or encounters of South Africans.

Hunter (2010) identified two types of love: romantic love and provider love. Romantic love is about care, affection, kindness, and enjoying spending time together, while provider love is about a man's ability to provide for or support his partner(s) financially through money, gifts, and *lobolo*. Hunter notes that although for some the ideal was to find romantic and provider love in the same person/relationship, the materiality of love, as he conceptualises it, is not so much about the absence of love in relationships as it is about the way in which love and money have come to be connected in new ways. This connection has much to do with the gendered precarity of people's ability to support themselves and their families in contexts of poverty, high rates of unemployment, low wages, migrancy in the search for employment, and food insecurity. In these circumstances, men are far more likely than women to be able to find employment in the formal economy and earn a decent wage. The resulting economic dependency of women on men plays an important role in the materiality of love. Characteristics of romantic and provider love, and the connection between them, i.e. the materiality of love, are evident in Willan et al.'s (2019, 2020a, 2020b) participants' understandings of love-

relationships and in Jewkes and Morrell's (2012) participants' explanations of the dynamics of heterosexual relationships and agency.

The studies reviewed in this section of the chapter illustrate the multiplicity and complexity of femininities as they are constructed and performed in girls' and women's everyday lives. Importantly, these studies also draw attention to the central role of the material and social contexts, particularly poverty and ideas about culture and tradition, in how girls and women construct and perform their femininities. These studies also reveal some of the ways in which girls and women understand their agency in context.

3.5 The Socio-cultural Context of Early and Forced Marriage

From the discussion above, it is clear that ideas about culture and tradition play a central role in constructions and performances of femininities in South Africa. Linked to this, ideas about culture and tradition shape practices associated therewith, including *ukuthwala* and EFM. In this section of the chapter, I explore the relationship between gender, culture and tradition, and *ukuthwala* and EFM to locate these practices and my analyses of them within the socio-historical context.

3.5.1 Cultural Nostalgia

South Africa's colonial and apartheid past has created fertile ground for complexity and contestation around tradition, culture, identity, and rights (Hunter, 2010; Moletsane, 2011, 2013). The systematic undermining and destruction of Indigenous peoples' ways of life throughout the colonial period and apartheid has created a strong desire to retrieve, restore, preserve and protect culture, tradition, and practices that were devalued, lost or destroyed and to use this reclaimed culture and tradition as the basis upon which to construct and perform

their identities in post-apartheid South Africa. This urge to ‘go back to our roots’ that has emerged in popular discourse in post-apartheid South Africa is not unproblematic. For example, Moletsane (and others, for example Desiree Lewis) asks, “Can we really remember and retrieve our past cultural and traditional practices? Should we? And what should we do with what we remember?” (2011, p. 302).

As Moletsane (2011, 2013) points out, the understanding of culture shaping and being shaped by the ‘return to culture’ discourse, and the “nostalgia for the cultural (and social) past” (Moletsane, 2011, p. 302) is problematic for a number of reasons. Statements like ‘It is my/our culture...’ or ‘In my culture...’ are common refrains. However, it is clear from the different ways in which different groups and individuals interpret and practice ‘their culture’ that there is not a single, uniform, and immutable meaning of culture. This means that people are invested in the idea of an intact immutable ‘culture’ that does not, in reality, exist. Rather,

when linked to a restored, retrieved and reinterpreted notion of ‘going back to our culture,’ what individuals and groups end up having to adhere to are reinterpreted and reimagined traditional values that may or may not resemble what the original authors of these intended and that may, instead, negatively impact on the most marginalised in society (Moletsane, 2011, p. 306).

Moletsane (2011, 2013) uses the examples of virginity testing and male circumcision to illustrate this phenomenon at work in South Africa. In this study, EFM and the abusive form of *ukuthwala* is a neat illustration of exactly this.

Vague and ill-defined, this understanding of culture is left open to interpretation by anyone with the inclination and credentials considered to be legitimate. Unfortunately, this makes it prone to interpretations in the service of particular agendas such as the patriarchal agenda of

maintaining unequal gendered power relations through the policing of girls' and women's dress, behaviour, sexuality, exclusion from decision making and domestic responsibilities (Moletsane, 2011, 2013). The vague and ill-defined nature of 'culture' also creates a situation in which the idea itself becomes sacred and unassailable. As Rudwick & Shange (2009, p. 72) argue, people "tend to essentialise the patriarchal Zulu cultural system and do not see it as something mutable or revisable." Notions of culture and tradition can be invoked to justify and support practices that can be experienced as harmful, versions of practices that bear only passing resemblance to what those practices were in previous times, and foreclose any possibility for critical engagement with these understandings and practices. In this way, "It's my culture" becomes the beginning and end of arguments in defence or support of practices like the violent form of *ukuthwala* and EFM. This argument carries weight precisely because the way of life of indigenous people in South Africa was, in fact, very much under attack by colonialism and apartheid. Seen through the lens of the intervening years, framed by current values, norms, and beliefs, and valued sometimes simply because they have been devalued in the past, the "orthodoxy, conventionality and acceptance of traditional values [are considered] authoritative, and therefore not to be questioned or rejected" (Moletsane, 2011, p. 306).

3.5.2 Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia

Moletsane (2011, 2013) makes use of Boym's (2001) concepts of restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia to frame her analysis of the 'return to our roots' remembering described above. For Moletsane, this kind of remembering is an example of restorative nostalgia, "a longing for [a way of life] that no longer exists [and possibly] has never existed ... a sentiment of loss and displacement" (Boym, 2001, p. xiii in Moletsane, 2013, p. 20). Following Boym (2001), Moletsane (2013) argues that restorative nostalgia is underpinned by two self-reinforcing narratives. The first is 'going back to our roots' and restoring 'the good old days'

narrative described above. The second narrative is that culture and tradition are under overt and covert attack and need to be protected and preserved (Moletsane, 2013). In this narrative, a common enemy can be identified in anyone or anything that is perceived as a threat to culture and tradition which are understood to be sacred and unassailable, and retaliation against the enemy is justified, even necessary. Moletsane (2011, 2013) argues that this retaliation against any real or perceived opposition to what is believed to be the culture and tradition lost or destroyed during colonialism and apartheid can take several forms. It has, for example,

resulted in the silencing of alternative youth and women's voices. In many families and communities, the expectation of young people to respect their elders and of women to bow to their social 'superiors' (men) is re-emerging and/or being reemphasized in many families and communities as culturally as well as religiously ordained (Moletsane, 2013, p. 24).

In contrast to restorative nostalgia, reflective nostalgia "reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment or critical reflection" (Boym, 2001, pp. 49–50 in Moletsane, 2013, p. 20). For Boym (2001) reflective nostalgia is "more about individual and cultural memory" which allows different stories to be told so that the idea of culture, history, and experience, can be understood to be dynamic and varied. Moletsane contends that "[u]sing the notion of nostalgia this way, it is possible to legitimise people's need to 'go back to the past', but also to view that 'past' critically, and to make it 'usable'" (2013, p. 54). An awareness of this use of the notion of nostalgia is critical to efforts to challenge ideas of reclaimed culture and tradition that can be harmful and perpetuate and exacerbate forms of age- and gender-related inequalities that render women and girls particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse.

In much the same way that hegemonic forms of masculinity are ideal forms of gendered identity to which men and boys should aspire rather than the masculinities performed by men in context (Connell, 1987, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), in this thesis, I understand culture as a broad concept based on a sometimes romanticised remembering of an ideal past rather than a representation of a cohesive, consistent, and coherent lived group identity comprising the same beliefs, values, and practices. People are invested in this ideal and their interpretation of it and are able then to speak of ‘my culture.’ I use Boym’s (2001) definition of tradition as “...a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Boym, 2001, p. 42). I use the concepts of restorative and reflective nostalgia as articulated by Boym (2001) and Moletsane (2011, 2013) to frame my analysis of the impact of culture, tradition and practice on the SIFs constructions of their femininities, and the process of community-based policy-making around EFM in Loskop.

3.5.3 *Lobolo*

Historically, *lobolo* has been central to the process of negotiating and concluding customary marriages among the amaZulu (and others, including the amaXhosa) (Hunter, 2010; Shai, 2018). The *lobolo* process still forms an important part of the marriage process for many South Africans. Simply put, following a negotiation between the families, the groom’s family gift an agreed upon amount of wealth⁵⁶ in the form of cattle to the family of the bride after which, assuming the bride’s family accepted the *lobolo*, the customary marriage can proceed (Haffeejee et al., 2020). Historically, one of the purposes *lobolo* was to cement the relationship between

⁵⁶ Historically in the form of cattle, but in contemporary South Africa often money the amount of which is calculated based the cost of purchasing a cow.

the two families as marriage was considered to be between two families rather than two individuals (Hunter, 2010). This understanding of marriage plays a role in the discussion of *ukuthwala* below. Describing *lobolo* as a ‘payment’ or translating it into English as ‘bride price’ gives the impression that the bride is being sold by her family to her intended husband’s family and indeed, some girls and women, including the SIFs, as I will discuss in the chapters that follow, do feel that the practice of *lobolo* positions them as commodities.

Child-bearing was and still is considered central to marriage, femininity and *lobolo* (Hunter, 2010). A failure to ‘provide’ children within a marriage could result in a woman being returned to her family of origin and a demand for the return of some or all of the *lobolo* that had been given by the groom’s family.

In the context of Loskop, the site of the study analysed in this thesis, *lobolo* is still central to the marriage process and, for impoverished families, may be a motivator for encouraging daughters to marry. Along with the prestige associated with having a daughter married, the *lobolo* would do much to relieve a possibly dire situation at home, and would reduce the number of mouths to feed as well. Where prospects for employment or further study after school are poor, securing a daughter’s marriage into a family that is better off may appear to be an attractive option. In this way, *lobolo* contributes to the practice of EFM in the community.

3.5.4 *Ukuhlonipha*

A central concept in ideas about culture, the notion of *hlonipha*⁵⁷ encompasses a set of beliefs and behaviours that encode a certain understanding of respect based on age and gender hierarchies (Hunter, 2010). Hunter (2010) describes *hlonipha* as

an embodied set of acts of deference that maintained social hierarchies, typically from the young to the old, subjects to chiefs, or wives to husbands. To act with *inhlonipho* was to be bashful and shy, shun certain places, and avoid using certain words and phrases. Everyday spaces were demarcated along these lines. Notions of *hlonipha*, for instance, ensured that women were rarely allowed to enter the centre of the *umuzi*, the *isibaya* (cattle kraal). And these practices linked the present to the past because not practicing *inhlonipho* could upset *amadlozi* (the ancestors).” (p. 40)

Highly gendered, the physical and linguistic forms of the practice of *inhlonipho*, are, for girls and women, designed to demonstrate submissiveness to males and perceived social superiors. It is often young wives in the household or family that are expected to practice and demonstrate *hlonipha* and deference to their husbands and their husband’s family (Msibi & Rudwick, 2015; Rudwick & Shange, 2009). The practice of *inhlonipho* is, for many Zulu people, particularly in rural areas, considered to be an essential part of being a “dignified, respectable, and ‘proper’ Zulu woman” (Rudwick & Shange, 2009, p. 71). For Shai’s (2018) participants, *ukuhlonipha* was an essential practice among married women embodying the dignified ideal femininity (2018, p. 69).

⁵⁷ *hlonipha* is the stem form, which denotes the concept; *ukuhlonipha* is the verb “to respect”; and *inhlonipho* is the noun form, “respect” (Hunter, 2010, p. 40).

In contemporary South Africa, *hlonipha* is a contested concept that has been heavily influenced and shaped by Christianity which arrived with colonialism. Hunter (2010) argues that “[t]oday *hlonipha* is usually seen as a “traditional” form of respect – a set of practices that reflect the very essence of being Zulu” (p. 58). What seems to have remained consistent over time is the profoundly gendered nature of *hlonipha* (Hunter, 2010; Msibi & Rudwick, 2015; Rudwick and Shange, 2009).

Through the lens of restorative nostalgia, ideas about *hlonipha* can be interpreted, manipulated, and used wittingly or unwittingly, to control, police and dominate. *Ukuhlonipha* as a value and a practice can be implicated in claims that excluding women and girls from discussions of and decisions about their lives is part of ‘culture;’ that girls be expected to obey adults, especially men, unquestioningly; and that girls and women are unable to object to or refuse to participate in decisions taken on their behalf out of respect (*ukuhlonipha*), plays an important role in the maintenance and perpetuation of practices like *ukuthwala*, EFM, and virginity testing. *Ukuhlonipha* is often considered central to a historically dominant form of femininity. As will become apparent in the chapters that follow, *ukuhlonipha* also looms large in the SIFs’ narratives about the lives of girls and women in their community in relation to *ukuthwala* and EFM.

3.5.5 *Ukuthwala*

In South Africa’s National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide, *ukuthwala* is defined as

[a] A form of abduction under the guise of patriarchal tradition and culture that involves kidnapping a girl or a young woman by a man and his friends or peers with the intention

of compelling the girl or young woman's family to agree to marriage. It has been marked by violence and rape. (Government of South Africa, 2020)

It is a practice that is located at the intersection of restorative nostalgia, gender inequality (also part of restorative nostalgia-based ideas about culture and tradition), and the parallel legal systems in South Africa. The rights/tradition binary (Hunter, 2010) that was created by colonial and apartheid approaches to 'understanding' and regulating the way of life of indigenous people in South Africa remains central to discourses around *ukuthwala*. The binary features heavily in debates about the practice, particularly in relation to current efforts to regulate it so that it cannot be abused with impunity because it is part of culture and the right to practice one's culture is enshrined in South Africa's democratic constitution.

A highly contested concept and practice, a definitive description of the historical practice of *ukuthwala* is difficult to produce. The discussion of culture and restorative nostalgia above provides an explanation for this difficulty. Various accounts of the exact processes and motivations involved in the historical and the contemporary practice exist, likely because it was and is practiced differently by different communities (even within communities). Capturing the nuance of practices like *ukuthwala* which exist in the dynamic space of time and place is, if not impossible, then certainly very challenging. The account of the historical practice that I offer below is necessarily partial and incomplete.

3.5.5.1 The 'Historical' Practice of Ukuthwala

Ukuthwala as it was practiced historically is a remembered practice. Both scholarly and popular understandings of it are built on information drawn from various sources including, accounts offered by community elders and accounts that appear in historical documents written by

colonial administrators, anthropologists, and, more rarely, indigenous scholars and lay historians.

In efforts to develop a clearer understanding of *ukuthwala* as a so-called cultural practice amidst the conflicting descriptions and representations of it, Msimang (1991) notes that there exists no consistent and exact meaning and description of the practice. He describes two forms of what has been and is called *ukuthwala*. The first form of the practice is, according to Msimang, a means of opening up the marriage negotiation process when there are barriers including opposition to the marriage from the prospective bride and/or groom's family. Importantly, in this form of the practice, the abduction would be staged in that the prospective bride would willingly participate in the abduction and consent to the customary marriage that was supposed to result from it. The second form of *ukuthwala* that Msimang describes takes place without the consent of the prospective bride and/or her family and could well include force, coercion, and violence. Msimang cautions against romanticising the first form of the practice described because of the potential for the second form to be practiced in the guise of the first, thereby obscuring the role played by patriarchy in the abduction of girls and women, sexual assault and forced customary marriage.

Similarly, Nkosi and Wassermann (2014), observe that “[a]s a practice, like any other, it has morphed and evolved over space and time as political, economic and social circumstances have changed” (p. 133). Like Msimang, Nkosi and Wassermann (2014) draw a distinction between *ukuthwala intombi* which they describe as characterised by traditional elements of Zulu culture, consensual, and not involving any form of violence or sexual coercion; and *ukuthwala ngenkani* which they describe as the “direct opposite of traditional *ukuthwala*” (p. 134). *Ukuthwala ngenkani*, according to Nkosi and Wassermann (2014) involves violence, and a lack

of consent. *Ukuthwala ngenkani* does not take into account the legal age of sexual consent and, for Nkosi and Wassermann (2014), is a violation of women's rights and bodily integrity. Nkosi and Wassermann (2014) conclude that

it is clear that *ukuthwala*, as with many other customs, has been reimagined over time so as to blend in with the changes happening in society. In this fast changing contemporary society, *ukuthwala* finds itself locked in a legal wrestling match between Zulu traditions and Western modernity. (p. 146)

It is clear from both Msimang (1991) and Nkosi and Wassermann's (2014) discussions of *ukuthwala* that consent is central to distinguishing between the practice as an acceptable form of opening up marriage negotiations and as an unacceptable form of attempts to conclude a customary marriage against the wishes of the prospective bride and/or her family.

The South African Law Reform Commission, the South African Human Rights Commission, and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) have all been involved in discussions about *ukuthwala* and attempts to ensure that the rights of girls and women in South Africa are not violated by criminality disguised as culture. Scholars of law, Mwambene and Sloth-Nelson (2011, p. 4) provide the following description of the historical practice of *ukuthwala*:

The intending bridegroom, with the help of one or two friends, will waylay the intended bride in the neighbourhood of her own home, quite often late in the day. They will then 'forcibly' take her to the young man's home. Sometimes the girl is caught unawares, but in many instances she is caught according to a prior plan and agreement. In either case, the girl will put up a show of resistance to suggest to onlookers that it is against her will when, in fact, it is seldom so. As Bekker explains: 'The girl, to appear unwilling and to preserve her maidenly dignity, will usually put up strenuous but pretended

resistance, for, more often than not, she is a willing party.’ Once the girl has been taken to the man’s village, her guardian or his messenger will then follow up on the same day or the next day and possibly take her back if one or more cattle are not handed to him as an earnest promise for a future marriage. Consequently, if the guardian does not follow her up to take her back, tacit consent to the marriage at customary law can be assumed. After the girl has been carried to the man’s family hearth, negotiations for *lobolo* between the families of the bride and the groom would then follow. If the families cannot reach an agreement, the girl will return to her parental home, while the man’s family will be liable for damages.

In this form, as Mwambene and Sloth-Nelson (2011) argue, *ukuthwala* is a culturally legitimated staged abduction of a girl as part of the preliminary processes of concluding a customary marriage. “The main aim of *ukuthwala* is,” according to Mwambene and Sloth-Nelson (2011), “to force the girl’s family to *enter into negotiations* for the conclusion of a customary marriage” (p. 4, emphasis in original). Important for this thesis is Mwambene and Sloth-Nelson’s (2011) conclusion that *ukuthwala* is *not* the equivalent of forced marriage. To use Nkosi and Wassermann’s (2014) terms, whether *ukuthwala intombi* or *ukuthwala ngenkani*, the *ukuthwala* precedes the customary marriage. *Ukuthwala* can but does not always result in a forced marriage. Further, abduction under the guise of *ukuthwala* is not necessary for forced marriage to take place. Forced marriage is, according to the CGE (2021), the “intentional conduct of forcing an adult or child to enter into marriage, lacking the personal expression of the full, informed, and free consent of one or both of the parties” (p. 19). Understood thus, forced marriage does not require violence or acts of physical force, but can be the result of coercion.

3.5.6 The Legal Framework for Marriage in South Africa

In South Africa, the legal framework for marriage comprises three core pieces of legislation: the Marriage Act (No. 25 of 1961), the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (No. 120 of 1998), and the Civil Union Act (No. 17 of 2006). The Civil Union Act made legal same-sex unions, and the Marriage Act and Recognition of Customary Marriages Act are used more often than the Civil Union Act to form the legally recognised partnership known as marriage between women and men. It is these two acts, then that are particularly pertinent to this study.

According to the Marriage Act, no boy under the age of 18 and no girl under the age of 15 may legally get married except with written permission from the Minister of Home Affairs or a person authorised by him to do so. The Minister or an officer in the public service authorised by him to do so “may grant [permission] in any particular case in which he considers such marriage desirable.” The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (No, 120 of 1998) states that both of the prospective spouses must be above the age of 18, and must both consent to the marriage. The Act states that if either of the prospective spouses is a minor, both of the minor’s parents or their legal guardian must consent to the marriage on behalf of the minor. Here, minor refers to a person below the legal age of majority in South Africa which is 18. Like the Marriage Act, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, allows for the Minister of Home Affairs or an officer in the public service authorised by him to do so to authorise the marriage of a person under the age of 18 via written permission should he consider such marriage “desirable and in the interests of the parties in question.”

Other legislation that is implicated in debates around early and forced marriage include the Children’s Act (No. 38 of 2005), and the The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (No. 32 of 2007) (henceforth referred to as the Sexual Offences

Act).⁵⁸ The Children's Act states that a child is a person under the age of 18; that children have the right to not be subjected to social, cultural or religious practices which compromise or are detrimental to their well-being; and that no person "below the minimum age set by law for a valid marriage" be given out in marriage or engagement and no person above the minimum age for marriage can be given out in marriage or engagement without their consent. According to the Sexual Offences Act, the age of sexual consent for both girls and boys is 16.⁵⁹ As Haffeejee et al. (2020) have argued, the provisions that have been made for the legal marriage of people below the age of 18, the inconsistency in the stated minimum legal age for marriage in South Africa, and the inconsistency between marriage legislation, the Children's Act, and the Sexual Offences Act create a legislative grey area in which the marriage of people, most often girls, below the age of 18 take place.

3.5.7 *The Jezile Case*

Known as the Jezile Case, the landmark prosecution of an eastern cape man, Nvumeleni Jezile, provides unique insight into the contested nature of the concept and practice of *ukuthwala*, and the tension between culture, custom and customary law on one hand, and the legal system based on Roman and Dutch civil and common law on the other. Jezile claimed that the abduction of the girl involved, who was 14 at the time, was the traditional practice of *ukuthwala*. *Lobolo* negotiations were concluded between Jezile's family and the girl's family after which the girl was considered by Jezile, his family, and her family to be his customary wife. After some time and following a number of attempts to return to her family, the girl laid charges against Jezile. Jezile was charged with the offences of three counts of rape, human trafficking, assault with

⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion of the legislation as it pertains to *ukuthwala*, early and forced marriage, see Mwambene and Sloth-Nelson (2011).

⁵⁹ If both partners are between the ages of 12 and 16, the law considers them able to consent. The Act also allows for consensual sex between a person under the age of 16 and a partner who is less than two years older than they are. For example, if a person is 15 and their partner 17, this is not considered statutory rape. The Act states that no child under the age of 12 can consent to sex.

intent to cause grievous bodily harm, and common assault. He was found guilty of all offences by the Wynberg Regional Magistrates Court and sentenced to a 22 years' imprisonment. On appeal, the Western Cape High Court upheld the Magistrate Court's conviction and sentencing of Jezile for the offences of rape and human trafficking but set aside his convictions and sentencing for both counts of assault.

In his appeal Jezile contended that he was in a customary marriage with the girl, and that coercion is part of the custom of *ukuthwala* as it is practiced in their village, as is the pretence of objection on the part of the girl or woman being abducted (Mwambene & Kruuse, 2017). In response to this "cultural defence," to assist in the matter, the High Court called on a number of experts on *ukuthwala* and customary law, including experts from the National House of Traditional Leaders, and independent legal experts, including Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo, an expert on customary law. Based on

the young age of [the girl involved], her lack of consent, and the fact that *lobolo* was paid before the *ukuthwala* occurred, both Professor Nhlapo and an expert from the House of Traditional Leaders held the view that the facts of the case did not amount to *ukuthwala* but a misapplied and aberrant form of the practice (Mwambene & Kruuse, 2017, p. 39).

In their 2017 article: "The thin edge of the wedge: *ukuthwala*, alienation and consent", Mwambene and Kruuse report on findings from their qualitative research with the two families involved and the community none of whom believed that Jezile had done anything wrong. They argued that Jezile was practicing his culture as he had every right to do and contended that since the families of both Jezile and the girl concerned were involved in the incident, it was entirely legitimate. Further, Mwambene and Kruuse (2017) report that neither family believed

that a man could be charged with raping his wife. Jezile's own testimony confirms that his understanding of a husband's rights over his wife and to sex, and the expectations of a wife in a customary marriage are aligned with those of the two families. Mwambene and Kruuse (2017) report that, asked by the prosecutor "As your wife did it mean that she had to do as you told her? Was she a subordinate to you? Did she have to listen to you as being your wife?" Jezile responded "That is right, yes." (p. 33).⁶⁰

Mwambene and Kruuse observe that the Jezile case highlights the complexity and confusion around the issue of consent. Consent is inextricably tied up in power relations related to age and gender and here again the tradition/rights binary that Hunter (2010) draws attention to is at play. Further complicating the matter of consent in debates about *ukuthwala* is the gendered requirement in some versions of *ukuthwala* for the girl or woman to at least appear to resist the abduction, initially refuse consent, and 'run away' back to her family in order to protect her reputation of maidenly virtue (Mwambene & Kruuse, 2017; Mwambene & Sloth-Nelson, 2011).

As will be shown in the chapters that follow, a complication in this thesis arises from language and translation. In particular, the girls tend to understand what the elders in the community refer to as *ukuthwala* very differently.

In order to proceed with the discussion of *ukuthwala* and EFM in this study in a coherent way, I use the CGE's (2021) definitions of early marriage (defined above) and forced marriage. Early marriage is a "[m]arriage or union between two people in which one or both parties are

⁶⁰ Note that Jezile's family and the community felt that the fact that the court proceedings were in English was a disadvantage to Jezile who is a first-language speaker of isiXhosa.

younger than 18 years of age” (p. 12). Further, I use Nkosi and Wassermann’s (2014) terms *ukuthwala intombi* and *ukuthwala ngenkani* to distinguish between the culturally-legitimated practice which involves consent, no violence and (usually) results in customary marriage, and the practice of abduction as *ukuthwala* which involves violence, a lack of consent and results in forced customary marriage. The distinction between *ukuthwala intombi* and *ukuthwala ngenkani* and EFM is both necessary and useful for the discussion of the SIFs’ understandings of and feelings about *ukuthwala* and EFM in the chapters that follow.

3.6 Understanding Agency

As discussed above, agency and empowerment are central to the construction of the girl-in-crisis/girl-as-saviour, and the policies and interventions designed to empower or ‘rescue’ her. In this section of the chapter, I discuss the concept of agency and how I use it in my study, as well as the related concepts of empowerment and choice. The concepts of agency, choice, and empowerment are central to understanding how the SIFs position themselves in relation to EFM and to shaping efforts to address EFM in their community.

3.6.1 Empowerment, Choice, and Agency

‘Empowerment’ of women and girls is so often cited as the aim of development organisations and interventions. UN Women, for example, describes itself as “the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.” World Vision offers “7 Ways to Empower Women and Girls”, the second of which is to “Support girls and women in crisis.”⁶¹ Volunteerworld.com encourages young people in the global North to “[v]olunteer for women's empowerment projects and help to give a voice to those who are otherwise unheard,” claiming that “[v]olunteers can truly empower girls by giving them the support and guidance

⁶¹ <https://www.worldvision.org/gender-equality-news-stories/seven-ways-empower-women-girls>

toward a powerful, independent future.”⁶² Empowerment is clearly important and something girls and women in crisis need. What is less clear is what exactly is meant by ‘empowerment.’

Rather than the nebulous idea of ‘empowerment’ that is so often used in development discourse, or the oversimplified, instrumentalist understanding of empowerment often used in gender mainstreaming, Kabeer (1999), argues that empowerment must be understood in relation to the values embedded in understandings of choice and agency, and the material factors and contexts that shape them. These values reflect, shape, influence and are influenced by the wider historical, social, political and economic contexts both local and international. Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as “the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability” (p. 437). This ability to make choices comprises three interrelated dimensions. The first, *resources* (pre-conditions), includes access and future claims to material and human and social resources. *Agency* (process), the second dimension, involves decision-making, as well as other, “less measurable manifestations of agency such as negotiation, deception, and manipulation” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 435). The third dimension, *achievements* (outcomes), relates to well-being outcomes. In other words, resources are the pre-conditions to agency, what a group or individual needs in order to be able to decide and act. Agency is the process of and mechanisms through which groups or individuals decide and act on those decisions towards achieving certain outcomes. It is “the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them ... encompass[ing] observable action, meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their *sense* of agency, their “power within”” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438, emphasis in original).

⁶² <https://www.volunteerworld.com/en/volunteer-abroad/women-empowerment>

For Kabeer (1999), central to this conceptualisation of empowerment and choice is a consideration of the “structural parameters of individual choice in the analysis of women’s empowerment,” i.e. the conditions, content and consequences of choice for groups or individuals. Kabeer contends that for it to be useful in an analysis of empowerment, the notion of choice needs to be understood as including the possibility of alternatives, i.e. the option to have made a different choice. If there is no alternative course of action for a person to take, they cannot be said to have made a choice. An understanding of choice must also incorporate a recognition that not all choices are equally significant in peoples’ lives, some have greater consequences than others. The significance that choices have for people must also be understood to be determined on the terms of those groups or individuals who are making the choice. Power relations are clearly implicated in the exercise of agency and choice as well as through the *kinds* of choices that people make (Kabeer, 1999).

Although Kabeer’s conceptualisation of empowerment has considerable merit, I remain wary of using the term because it seems to have become something of a platitude as a result of uncritical overuse, particularly in neoliberal development policy and programming. I have, however, found Kabeer’s understanding of choice and agency useful as I have sought to understand the role that agency and choice play in the SIFs’ constructions of their femininities, and how they position themselves in relation to ukuthwala ngenkani and EFM.

3.6.2 Distributed Agency

In the introduction to their 2016 guest edited issue of *Global Public Health*, titled *Conceptualising the agency of highly marginalised women: Intimate partner violence in extreme settings*, Campbell and Mannell argue that although “[t]he concept of agency has acquired tremendous currency in academic and activist inquiry, ... it is also often inadequately

problematised and under-theorised” (Campbell & Mannell, 2016, p. 1). Campbell and Mannell (2016) explore the ways in which agency is conceptualised and deployed in research, programming, and intervention with a focus on intimate partner violence (IPV). In doing so, they draw attention to a number of limitations in the way that agency has been understood and measured, and the resulting limitations of the interventions and programming that have been designed around this understanding of agency.

Echoing arguments made by postcolonial feminists about the way in which Western liberal feminism has positioned Third World Women, the way in which girls in the global South have been and are constructed within development discourse, and Gonick et al.’s (2009) critique of the neoliberal ‘choice biography’ narrative, Campbell and Mannell (2016) contend that there is a “poor fit between the realities of women’s lives and the assumptions underpinning international programmes and policies” (p. 1). They argue that policies, programmes, and interventions are based on “inappropriately individualistic understandings of women’s potential for action,” insufficient knowledge of and attention to the constraints on women’s agency in diverse contexts (including economic constraints like poverty, and social and cultural norms), and insufficient recognition and inclusion of the perspectives of the women themselves and their understandings of their lived realities. As a result, these programmes have limited, small, or no chances of successfully addressing, in the case of Campbell and Mannell’s work, intimate partner violence (IPV).

Instead of an overly individualistic understanding of agency as a set of actions undertaken or choices made by individual girls or women independent of context, Campbell and Mannell (2016) develop the concept of *distributed agency* which I have found particularly useful in my

analysis of the SIFs' understanding of their own agency. As a starting point, Campbell and Mannell (2016) argue that

opportunities to exercise agency are heavily constrained by social contexts, including the material resources available to women in coping with life challenges in extreme situations (Kabeer, 1999), the nature of the social relationships in which a woman is embedded (Cleaver, 2007), and the limits or opportunities presented by her physical health and strength (Nguyen, 2005) (p. 2)

Programmes and interventions that fail to take into account these constraints, and measure women's agency (and the success of the programme or intervention) in narrowly defined terms of women leaving violent relationships or reporting abuse, are unable to recognize and support the ways in which women and girls can and do exercise agency within these constraints. For example, in relation to women staying in violent relationships, Campbell and Mannell (2016) observe that for women who

lack alternatives to marriage...relationships with violent husbands, and commitments to conservative cultural and religious norms that scaffold these relationships, may be the most promising economic survival strategy for women and their children.

This dynamic is observable in Jewkes and Morrell's (2012) study, and is also clearly illustrated by the motivations for the practice of EFM in Loskop that are described and discussed in the chapters that follow.

Research, programmes or interventions that understand a woman as either a victim or an agent, "essentialise the way in which poverty, age, gender and culture shape the social construction of gender and limit women's opportunities for ... agency" (Campbell & Mannell, 2016, p. 5).

This binary understanding of agency-victim plays a role in sustaining the harmful gender stereotypes that support violence against women. Portraying women only as helpless victims, disregards the ways in which they can and do exercise agency, albeit in ways that are not necessarily recognised as such. At the same time, however, Shefer (2015) cautions against going to the opposite extreme by attempting to characterise marginalized women as having more agency than they do. In order to better reflect the lived realities of women, understandings of agency and power must take into account the “tensions, contradictions and complexities that characterize [their] lives” (Campbell & Mannell, 2016, p. 5).

In their conceptualisation of agency as involving the negotiation of multiple constraints, Campbell and Mannell (2016) draw on Kabeer’s view that agency is about more than observable action, and includes “the meaning, motivation and purpose people bring to their activit[ies].” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). According to this view, agency can be exercised in many more ways than just observable action, including covert strategies such as “bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance, and more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). Importantly, this view of agency creates opportunities to identify a wide range of strategies, decisions, and actions that can be considered agentic in a particular context. In addition to this “multiplicity of agency,” Campbell and Mannell (2016) argue that agency is a multi-level phenomenon that can exist and be exercised at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, relational, and collective levels. They point out that agency is not necessarily consistent at all levels and may fluctuate across levels over time. They draw attention to the temporality of agency – just as agency does not increase at all levels simultaneously, neither does it increase in a consistent and linear way. In other words, groups and individuals develop agency in some situations and on some levels faster than others, the increase in agency is greater in some situations and on some levels than

others, and agency might increase in a certain situation and then decrease again sometimes then increasing in a different situation. For these scholars, “[s]uch temporal complexity reveals the limitations of those who would seek to label particular women as either victims or agents, or to identify particular discrete actions by women as possessing or lacking agency” (Campbell & Mannell, 2016, p. 12).

Campbell and Mannell’s insights call on (feminist) researchers to question how agency is defined, assessed, and measured. In this regard, Madhok et al. (2013) criticise the tendency of Western liberal feminism to consider the neoliberal concept of the “feminist revolutionary subject” as the ideal agentic subjectivity to which all women should aspire irrespective of their context and the multiple constraints with which they must contend. Openly challenging and resisting power, oppression, and injustice in this way is simply not an option for women and girls in many contexts around the globe.

Campbell and Mannell (2016) conclude that agency is a distributed phenomenon rather than a narrow and individualistic pattern of beliefs, choices, and behaviours. They identify four dimensions of this distribution: across time, social networks (personal and institutional), space, and along what they refer to as a more “distributed continuum of activism” (p. 13). While the idea of the continuum of activism is useful, given that ‘activism’ tends to imply open resistance to power while ‘resistance’ can include a range of overt and covert strategies to challenge and subvert existing power relations, I prefer the phrase ‘distributed continuum of resistance’. The first three of Campbell and Mannell’s (2016) dimensions relate to the situations in which agency is constructed, and the fourth to the different forms that this agency can take.

3.6.3 Distributed Agency and Young Women's Experiences of Decision-making in Contexts of Intimate Partner Violence in South Africa

In their qualitative study with a group of 15 women in two urban informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal that formed part of an RCT of the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures intervention,⁶³ Willan et al. (2019, 2020a, 2020b) use the concept of distributed agency to understand “the role of agency in women’s decisions to remain in or leave violent love-relationships.” (Willan et al., 2019, p. 1). Observing that agency is often thought of as “a radical exercise of power,” and that the excessive focus on “clear, measurable, ‘agentic actions’” ignores or overlooks the covert or smaller strategies that women use in contexts where their agency is heavily constrained (Willan et al., 2020b, p. 2), Willan et al. (2019) argue that distributed agency aligns more closely with the degree of agency women can achieve in their day-to-day lives.

Willan et al. (2019, p. 2) note that “much recent agency discourse places excessive responsibility on the individual woman to overcome her circumstances on her own, without recognising the broader structural factors limiting her choices.” Similar to the way in which neoliberal development discourse places excessive responsibility on individual women, this understanding of agency assumes that women have many choices available to them and that they are free to make those choices without material or social constraints. According to these scholars, distributed agency accounts for the “often temporal, fluid, and context specific” (Willan et al., 2020b, p. 2) nature of agency in patriarchal settings and the fact that women are not either agentic or not, but rather agentic at times and not at others.

⁶³ <https://www.heard.org.za/research-post/stepping-stones-and-creating-futures-randomised-control-trial/>

Like Campbell and Mannell (2016) Willan et al. (2019, 2020a, 2020b) stress the importance of social and economic contexts in shaping, and often limiting, women's individual goals, actions, and agency. They identify a number of factors that shape and constrain women's agency in violent relationships, and that shape and limit the kind of choices available to women and their ability to make those choices. Among these are structural factors such as poverty, unemployment, and limited and/or poor-quality education, and patriarchal social norms about femininity and 'appropriate' behaviour in relationships that include high levels of controlling behaviour and violence by men and acceptance of this by women. Often absent from analyses of women in violent relationships, Willan et al. (2019) emphasize the role played by meanings and constructions of love in shaping and constraining the agency of the women in their study.

Importantly, Willan et al. (2019, 2020a, 2020b) argue that for the women in their study, rather than exemplifying their passive, unagentic victim subjectivity, the decision to stay in violent relationships was at times an example of their exercising their agency. Given the structural realities of poverty, gendered power relations and social norms around male violence and women's acceptance of it, and their participants' understandings of love and love-relationships, Willan et al. (2019, p. 13) argue that

[w]omen's narratives in this study support the growing body of research calling for a more nuanced understanding of agency that recognises that women who remain in violent love-relationships have often made agentic decisions to do so. Such behavior questions the dominant orthodoxy that women only show agency in the context of violent relationships when they leave a violent partner or report him to the police.

Willan et al. (2020b) found that a key challenge in their work with the young women in the Stepping Stones and Creating futures intervention was "supporting [them] to imagine new

identities and shift towards, and sustain, these, partly as there were limited ‘alternative identities’ available to the women, and those available were difficult to achieve” (p. 8).

Hunter (2010), Jewkes and Morrell (2012), and Shai (2018) conclude that ideas about culture and material circumstances like poverty have significant impact on the ways in which girls and women construct and perform their femininities, and are constraints on their agency. Using the concept of distributed agency, Willan et al. (2019, 2020a, 2020b) demonstrate the important ways in which the women in their study exercised agency in smaller, less obvious ways, working towards the most beneficial outcome within the, sometimes severe, constraints of their social and economic context.

In this thesis, I use Campbell and Mannell’s (2016) concept of distributed agency, and Kabeer’s (1999) conceptualisation of choice and agency to identify the multiple constraints on the SIFs’ agency in relation to EFM, how these constraints shape the choices and decisions available to them, and the opportunities to make these choices and decisions. I also use these conceptualisations to understand the kinds of choices and decisions that the SIFs make and the mechanisms through which they make them. Understanding these nuances of the SIFs’ agency in relation to EFM is essential to successfully avoiding the ‘poor fit’ between the SIFs’ lived realities, my analysis, and work towards addressing EFM in their community. It would do no good, and may well do harm, to ‘empower’ girls and young women by teaching them about their rights and urging them to openly challenge and resist EFM and the unequal gendered power relations and gendered ideas of culture and tradition, encouraging them to know who they are and what they want and make different choices and then send them into a reality in which these things are not simple, sometimes not possible, and sometimes dangerous armed with little more than what Cornwall and Brock (2005) call ‘feel good rhetoric.’

3.7 What Works in Interventions that Work with Girls?

In this chapter I have discussed the limitations of and criticisms levelled against neoliberal international development discourse and practice and South African interventions underpinned by this imported discourse. To borrow Campbell and Mannell's (2016) phrasing, I have suggested that there is a 'poor fit' between such interventions and the lived realities of girls in the global South. This poor fit is the result of a number of factors, including the limitations of the single story of the girl-in-crisis; an inadequate understanding of girls' agency; insufficient attention being paid to the historical, social, and economic context in which girls live and construct and perform their femininities; and the unrealistic and unreasonable expectation that girls take full responsibility for their 'success' or 'failure' in overcoming their challenging circumstances. Due to this poor fit, interventions have limited chances for success. So, if the Girl Effect model, ZAZI, and She Conquers do not work, what does? How can girls be supported in effective, relevant, and responsive ways? While it is not possible to provide a definitive answer to these questions here, it is useful to explore interventions and studies that have been undertaken with girls and young women in South Africa that aim to provide or at least learn more about how to provide this kind of support.

The Stepping Stones and, more recently, the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures programme are examples of interventions aimed at addressing HIV, GBV (particularly IPV), and economic vulnerability among young people in South Africa. The effectiveness of both Stepping Stones and Stepping Stones and Creating Futures have been evaluated using randomised controlled trials and qualitative process evaluation.

A participatory intervention that includes activities based on critical reflection, Stepping Stones, now in its third South African edition, is delivered to single sex groups in ten sessions covering topics like HIV risk and prevention, GBV, and gender and power (Gibbs & Washington, 2018). A randomised controlled trial of the intervention in rural sites in the Eastern Cape in South Africa, which included a qualitative process evaluation, showed that Stepping Stones reduced men's self-reported IPV perpetration but no reduction in women's experience of IPV. The qualitative process evaluation indicated that while women's agency increased, "they were unable to reduce their experiences of IPV because they were economically dependent on the men they were dating and could not leave relationships" (Gibbs et al., 2019, p. 324).

Creating Futures is an eleven-session intervention designed to be delivered with Stepping Stones in South Africa (Jewkes et al., 2014). The focus of Stepping Stones, which was initially designed as an approach to HIV prevention (Jewkes et al., 2006) is on gender, communication, relationships, GBV, and sexual health. Creating Futures focuses on strengthening sustainable livelihoods and includes sessions on setting goals, saving and spending money, and skills for job seeking and keeping jobs. Combined, Stepping Stones and Creating Futures comprises 21 peer-facilitated sessions delivered twice a week to single sex groups of 20 people.

The approach taken in Stepping Stones and Creating Futures is based on adult learning theories which emphasize the importance of discussion and critical thinking. Activities tend to be group-based and participatory and include role playing, body mapping, and participatory diagramming (Gibbs et al., 2019). A cluster randomised controlled trial of Stepping Stones and Creating Futures in an urban informal settlement in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal found that the intervention reduces men's self-reported perpetration of IPV and strengthens women's

livelihoods. It does not, however, reduce women's experiences of IPV. However, the results of the qualitative component of the research indicate that women and men who had participated in the intervention had improved communication and relationship skills, and improved ability to handle stressful situations. Women who participated in Stepping Stones and Creating Futures reported improved ability to articulate their needs in relationships (Gibbs & Washington, 2018). As discussed above, Willan, et al. (2019, 2020a, 2020b) found that an important challenge for women who participated in the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures programme was imagining and achieving alternative identities in which they had more agency, for example, and were able to disrupt the hegemonic gender order.

Findings from both the initial evaluation of the Stepping Stones programme in the Eastern Cape and the more recent evaluation of the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures intervention in KwaZulu-Natal indicate that “delivering group-based participatory interventions over an extended period allows time for reflection and experiential learning to occur between sessions, and is critical to achieving the impact” (Gibbs & Washington, 2019, np.).

As I discuss in detail in Chapters Four and Five, the study reported in this thesis is an example of a research as intervention approach to working *with* girls and young women with the aim of developing a better understanding of the key challenges affecting their lives from their perspectives and developing context-relevant, realistic, and sustainable strategies to address these challenges. The study aims to use participatory visual methodology (PVM) to assess its potential in achieving these aims. With its principles of long-term engagement, reflexivity, participation, the co-production of knowledge, and speaking back, I adopted PVM because of its promise to enable the genuine participation of girls in not only understanding the dynamics

of gender inequality and EFM in their community, but in identifying or developing strategies for challenging and addressing them.

3.8 Discussion: Understanding Girls' Constructions of Femininities

Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, a number of key findings emerge which relate to how adolescent girls in various contexts, including rural communities, characterised by poverty, GBV and HIV&AIDS construct their girlhoods and femininities and the intersecting factors that influence such constructions. Figure 3.1 presents a summary of the key findings from the literature in this chapter.

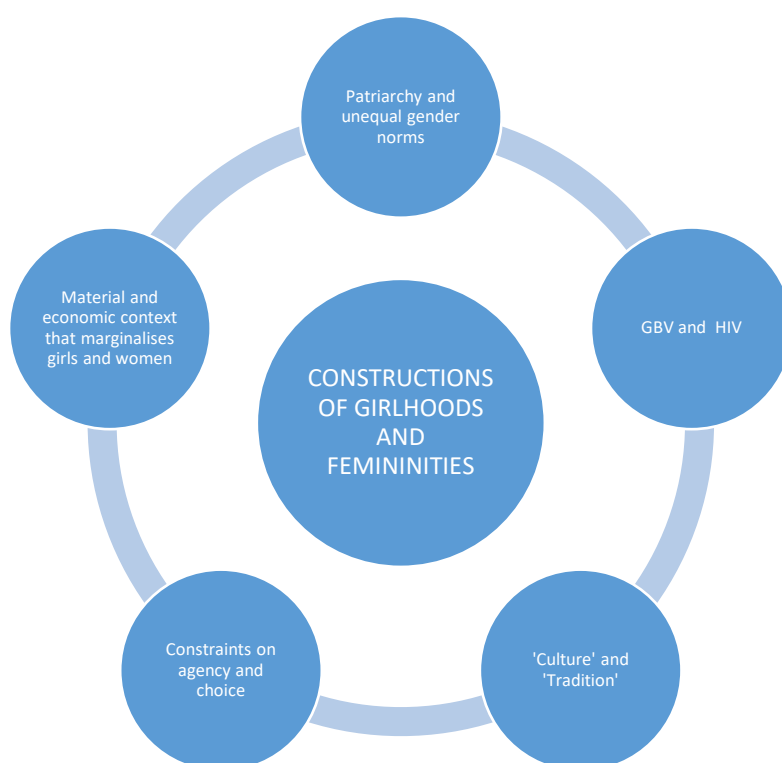


Figure 3.1 Summary of the findings of the literature review

The findings also point to certain features of interventions that can more effectively engage girls and young women in addressing GBV, including EFM.

The literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that the girl-in-crisis/girl-as-saviour is the protagonist in the single story of girls in the global South produced by neoliberal development discourse and practice. The (re)production of the girl-in-crisis/girl-as-saviour relies on persistent colonialist discourses based on gender and cultural essentialism. Although the girl-in-crisis/girl-as-saviour and the narratives of vulnerability/responsibility with which she is associated do not reflect or account for girls' lived realities in context, I have argued that imported development discourse nevertheless influences the way in which girls in the global South perceive themselves and their femininities.

Closely linked to this, understandings of agency and choice that do not take context into account and rely too heavily on the idea of neoliberal postfeminist girl power as representing the global ideal of agency for girls and young women affect the way that girls perceive their own agency and the (lack of) opportunities to exercise it. These perceptions then affect the way that agency is incorporated into their constructions of their femininities. The review of the literature also suggests that this imported discourse, with its narrow understanding of agency, shapes not only interventions designed and implemented by international development actors like Plan International, UN Women, and the Girl Effect, but also some South African interventions designed to assist girls with the challenges they face. Based as they are on limited and limiting conceptualisations of girls and young women and their agency in the global South these interventions have only limited potential for effectively assisting girls and young women. Further, they tend to reinforce and perpetuate harmful gender norms, and place the burden of responsibility for improving their lives (and those of their families and communities) squarely on the shoulders of girls and young women who are among the most marginalised in the global South. Conceptualisations of agency that take into account the social and material contexts and

constraints within which girls live more accurately capture the complexity and nuance of choice and decision-making in girls' lives.

The studies on gender and femininities in South Africa show that femininities are multiple, and relational, influencing and influenced by the social and historical context in which they are constructed and performed. A key finding of this literature review is that ideas about culture and tradition are central to constructions of gender and femininities in the South African context, particularly notions of successful femininity. Importantly, the 'return to culture' and 'going back to our roots' understanding of culture that influences constructions of femininities is based on the belief that 'culture' is intact, uniform, immutable, and also unreservedly 'good' or positive. This kind of restorative nostalgia (Boym, 2001; Moletsane, 2011, 2013), a harking back to an imagined better time, allows for 'culture' to become unassailable. As such, any critique or questioning of 'culture' or the practices associated with it is considered untraditional and is met with suspicion, even hostility. The support for and defence of *ukuthwala* and EFM in some communities draws, at least in part, on restorative nostalgia. *Ukuthwala* and EFM have come to be understood as age-old traditions, integral to the 'culture' of the community. *Ukuhlonipha* and *lobolo* are similarly fundamental to understandings of culture and tradition. The gendered nature of these practices and the values and beliefs that underpin them allows culture to be used to support, sustain, and reinforce the positioning of femininities as subordinate to masculinities. The kind of deference, acquiescence, and obedience (to men and adults) that are required by patriarchal understandings of 'culture' for the construction and performance of 'successful' femininities are encoded in and reinforced by practices like EFM and *ukuthwala ngenkani*. They also contribute to girls' vulnerability to these practices as challenging the authority of elders (particularly male elders) and men are not congruent with the attributes of the ideal respectful, deferent, 'good' girl or woman.

The literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that desirability to men and relationships with men are central to constructions of successful femininity. Ideals about love, romance, and relationships are intertwined with material and economic circumstances (and unequal gender norms) and play an important role in shaping constructions of femininities. While romantic love might be the ideal to which girls and women aspire, circumstances of poverty often require girls and women to include a more pragmatic approach to relationships. For example, poverty has been shown to be a key motivator for women to stay in violent relationships in which they can expect a certain amount of financial support for themselves and/or their children, and to enter into multiple relationships to ensure that if one relationship fails they still have access to support in another. Poverty is a key motivator for EFM for both girls and young women and their families.

To address the above, the findings from the literature suggest that for interventions aimed at addressing GBV and related issues with girls and young women to be effective, they must be context-relevant and based on co-constructed knowledge about the challenge or phenomenon being addressed. To achieve this, interventions should be collaborative and participatory and create safe spaces in which researchers and co-researcher participants can reflect on and critically engage with the challenge or phenomenon being addressed. Building relationships with co-researcher participants and communities is essential to the success of interventions and this requires engagement over a relatively long period of time.

Informed by this understanding, in the study reported in this thesis, I used PVM to engage with girls in exploring how they constructed their femininities, what influenced these constructions, and how the girls position themselves in relation to risk factors to which issues of gender in

context predispose them. My aim was to create a safe space for the SIFs in which they could begin to think critically about, question and challenge the gender order and ideas about culture that constrained their agency and increased their vulnerability to practices that they experienced as violent and harmful. I also wanted to enable them to imagine the possibility of alternative identities and outcomes to work towards and to tell the multiple and complex stories of their girlhoods from their own perspectives. In particular, I wanted the SIFs to create visual products that they could use to understand and tell others (including the research community) how they experienced *ukuthwala*, *lobolo*, and EFM as girls and young women in the community.

3.9 Synthesis

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature relating to girlhoods and femininities with a focus on South Africa. Throughout the chapter I attempted to challenge the single story of the girl-in-crisis produced and reproduced through neoliberal discourses of girl power and development. Drawing on feminist postcolonial critiques of international development discourse and practice, I have argued that the girl-in-crisis co-exists in the figure of the third world girl with the girl-as-saviour and that as the protagonist of the single story about girls in the global South, the girl-in-crisis/girl-as-saviour contributes to shaping the ways in which girls in the global South construct their femininities. I have attempted to show how restorative nostalgia and contested ideas about culture and tradition shape the socio-cultural context of EFM, and are central to girls' constructions of their femininities. Agency and choice appear frequently across the different sections of the chapter – an indicator of the centrality of these concepts to the study with which this thesis is concerned. Finally, drawing on the literature reviewed, I discuss the findings from the literature related to understanding girls' constructions of their femininities, suggesting also that PVM can play a significant role in developing context-relevant, realistic strategies to address EFM informed and led by the girls themselves.

My analysis in this thesis is premised on the understanding that there is no single, definitive story of girls in the global South. It is girls who should have the power to tell their own stories where, when, how and to whom they want. In the chapters that follow, I present and discuss the research design and methodology that shaped the design of the study with which this thesis is concerned.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Sociologist Ann Oakley (1998) asks “What would it really mean to study the world from the standpoint of [adolescent girls] both as knowers and as actors?” (p. 24). Taking this question as my point of departure, and situated as it was within the broader Networks for Change project (see Chapter One), the study presented in this thesis had two aims. The first aim was to work with a group of adolescent girls to explore how they understood and constructed their femininities and, in particular, how their understanding(s) and construction(s) reproduced or contested the dominant girl-in-crisis discourse in the context of rurality, poverty, and the GBV and HIV&AIDS epidemics in their community. The second aim of my study was to investigate how PVM might be used to engage girls and young women in challenging the normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities and make it possible for them, as knowers and actors, to influence social and policy change.

Against the background introduced in Chapter One, guided by the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two, and the review of the literature in Chapter Three, the main research question that this study aimed to answer was: *How might PVM be used to explore the construction and reimagining of femininities among girls and young women in a context of poverty, rurality & GBV?* In order to answer this main research question, I posed three sub-questions:

1. *How do a selected group of girls and young women in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?*

2. *How do the girls and young women position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?*
3. *How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?*

This qualitative study is located within a critical and transformative paradigm. Informed by the principles of feminist and participatory research, I used participatory visual methodology (PVM) as an approach to generating data to answer my research questions, and to stimulate and support social and policy change in the community. The study comprised three phases: negotiating entry into the community and recruiting co-researcher participants, data generation using participatory visual methods workshops and a participatory data analysis workshop, and girl-led community-based policy-making. I used a number of visual methods as tools for data generation, including photovoice, cellphilm, digital story-telling, and policy posters and action briefs.

Along with the theoretical framework, the design and methodological framing of my study form the foundation of how I approached my relationship(s) with the Social Ills Fighters⁶⁴ (SIFs) and their community, the approach I chose for generating and analysing data, and my approach to ethics in the study. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research design and methodology and engage with the principles, assumptions, and values that guided the practical choices and decisions that I made during the study. I begin with an introduction to the research design before moving on to a discussion of the critical and transformative paradigm. After introducing qualitative research, participatory and feminist approaches to research, I move on to a brief discussion of the dynamics of doing participatory research with adolescents

⁶⁴ These were my co-researcher participants in the study.

in South Africa. I then introduce participatory visual methodology and the data generation methods used in the study.

4.2 Research Design

As a systematic plan for determining what data is needed to answer the research questions and how to go about generating and analysing that data, the research design “shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes.” (Crotty, 1998, p. 6). I wanted my research design to reflect my commitment to doing social research that has as its aim more than just the generation of knowledge, but also the harnessing of that knowledge to work towards the improvement in some way of the lives of my participants and, possibly, other marginalised people. It was important to me that my research design take into account my belief in prioritising ethical, collaborative research relationships in which power is more equitably shared between researcher(s) and participant(s). The design of my study also needed to reflect my belief in the value of participants’ knowledge and the potential in using our respective kinds of knowledge and social positionings to analyse social phenomena and stimulate and facilitate social change together. It was also important that my research design take into account the significance of context in the study of social phenomena. My choice of research paradigm, methodology, methods, and approach to ethics were all influenced by these commitments and beliefs.

Further, in the design of the study, my choice of methodology, data generation methods, approach to data analysis, and the write up of the study in this thesis, I was mindful of Mohanty’s (1984) critique of approaches to research, particularly methodologies, that “demonstrate the universal cross-cultural operation of male dominance and female exploitation” (p. 346), and in so doing, reproduce and reinforce colonising power dynamics.

This was particularly important because I am a white, urban-dwelling, English speaking, middle class researcher working with Black African girls and young women in postcolonial and post-apartheid South Africa where unequal power dynamics related to race, language, class, education, and age (among others) must be carefully negotiated. My choices in relation to research design and methodology were key in my attempts to avoid uncritically reproducing and recreating dynamics, knowledge, and narratives about the girl-in-crisis. Rather, I sought to work collaboratively with co-researcher participants and create spaces for the co-construction of situated knowledge. In these efforts, as I discuss in this chapter, reflexivity was an invaluable tool.

4.3 The Critical and Transformative Paradigm

...a paradigm...shapes what we look at and how we look at things, what we label as problems, what problems we consider worth investigating and solving, and what methods are preferred for investigation and action. Likewise, a paradigm influences what we choose not to attend to; what we do not see (Maguire, 1987, p. 11).

I located my study within what Mitchell et al. (2017, p. 21) have called “a critical and transformative paradigm”. Since the boundaries between paradigms can be porous (Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2015), this paradigm can be understood to draw on tenets of both the critical and the transformative paradigms.

Concerned with “Whose interests are not being (and should be) served by particular social policies and practices?”, first, research within the *critical paradigm* “involves identifying and transforming unjust social structures, policies, beliefs and practices.” (Taylor & Medina, 2013, p. 6). The aim of research within the critical paradigm is not only to understand a reality that

is constructed within a socio-historical context mediated by power relations, but also to contribute to the emancipation of oppressed or marginalised people. Within the critical paradigm, emphasis is placed on the importance of the relationship between researcher(s) and participant(s), and on the nature of this relationship being one that works towards being more egalitarian. Further, Taylor (2008) points out that research within the critical paradigm aims to be transformative, to promote social justice. He argues that research within the critical paradigm goes

beyond interpretive understanding [of the phenomenon under study] to redressing social injustices through advocacy and active engagement as cultural workers. Critical researchers employ ideology critique to understand critically key sources of social injustice within the structures of society and the habituated behaviours of enculturated individuals (including themselves via critical reflexivity). (p. 6)

Importantly, critical researchers, according to Taylor (2008), are interested in working *with* communities to develop a more critical understanding of phenomena, problems, or challenges, and to work together to identify skills and assets that can be used to generate support for and acquire the necessary resources to transform their communities and society more broadly.

Second, Biddle and Schaft (2014) suggest that the ontology, epistemology and methodology of the *transformative paradigm* all build on its axiological assumptions. These centre around “the recognition of power differences and the ethical implications that derive from those differences in terms of discrimination, oppression, misrepresentation, and being made to feel and be invisible (marginalized)” (Mertens et al., 2010, p. 195). My study design is characterised by careful attention to ethics and the negotiation of power relations within the research relationship during each stage of the research process.

Taking the tenets of the two paradigms together, the critical and transformative paradigm understands knowledge to be socially constructed within a complex cultural and historical context characterised by patterns and structures of power, which tend to privilege certain kinds of knowledge over others (Mertens, 2009). This view of knowledge as situated, subjective, value-laden, and mediated by power relations allowed the SIFs and I to critique received ideas about power, gender, girlhood, and femininities, and to work to co-produce knowledge that challenged the status quo.

The critical and transformative paradigm places central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalised individuals and communities (Mertens, 2003; 2009). It has a focus on analysing and addressing inequality, injustice, and asymmetrical power relations. The aim of research within this paradigm is to develop “inclusive, democratic and context-based understandings of phenomena” (Egbo, 2005, p. 276) in which the views of those most affected by the phenomenon are valued. However, more than just generating knowledge through the research process, research within this paradigm seeks to translate that knowledge into action towards social change (Cresswell, 2003; Mertens, 2009). A key mechanism through which this is achieved is the collaborative relationships between researcher(s) and participant(s) in which participants are viewed as co-researchers in the process (Anderson & MacLachlan, 2015). Thus, in this paradigm, the relationship between researcher(s) and co-researcher participants(s) is central to the inquiry. In these relationships, researchers must pay close attention to the power differentials that exist in the research relationship and work to minimise these. To realise these tenets of the paradigm in my study, I chose to use a participatory approach, and in particular, participatory visual methodology (PVM) which provides unique opportunities for the

development of critical consciousness through dialogue, and, with their emphasis on social change, for taking action.

A feature of the critical and transformative paradigm which made it particularly appropriate for my study was the fact that, within this paradigm, the inquiry is approached from a strength- or asset-based perspective rather than a deficit perspective (Mertens, 2009). This approach makes it possible to recognise the agency and resources available to co-researcher participants internally and in their communities that can be supported and built upon in work towards social change. Because I wanted to understand if and how, in their constructions of femininities, the SIFs challenged, embodied, or reproduced the girl-in-crisis narrative, taking a strength-based approach to working with the girls allowed me to stay cognisant of not only the struggles and challenges faced by the SIFs, but also their agency and resilience.

Within this paradigm, it is also important to be mindful of the power relations within communities and broader society, and the social, cultural, and economic constraints on research participants (and people in general) in their efforts to bring about social change (Kincheloe & MacLaren, 2011). Paying close attention to the power dynamics and constraints within the community and broader society allowed the SIFs and me to analyse how the social and economic context of their community contributed to shaping their constructions of femininities. Further, particularly because the SIFs chose to focus our work on addressing the traditional practices of forced and early marriage, it meant that in our work together we were careful to try navigate and negotiate these power dynamics and constraints in a way that did not negatively impact on the girls' well-being, respected their desire and right to participate in the project, and advanced our social change agenda. It also meant that the SIFs and I had to manage our expectations of what we could expect our work to achieve.

4.4 Qualitative Research

A qualitative approach to research is “interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). As such, it is well suited to answering research questions that seek to provide a rich understanding and description of the nature of the phenomena in context from the perspective of participants rather than the researcher(s). Linked to the paradigm described above, I adopted a qualitative approach in this study so as to develop nuanced, situated understandings and provide in-depth descriptions of how adolescent girls in a rural context construct their femininities from their perspective.

4.5 Feminist Research

Because in my personal and political beliefs I am a feminist, and with the location of my study within the critical and transformative paradigm, my research design was influenced by the principles of feminist research. Feminist research is concerned with the interests, experiences, problems and perspectives of women and other marginalised groups. This influenced my decision to work with Black African girls in a rural context as arguably one of the most marginalised populations in the country. I grounded my research in a “... set of theoretical traditions that privilege [girls and young] women’s issues, voices, and lived experiences... [and in] feminist research praxis, [which] centralizes the relationship between the researcher and researched to balance differing levels of power and authority” (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 3). The goal in feminist research is to establish relationships that are not only collaborative and non-exploitative, but beneficial to research participants (Creswell, 2007). Fonow and Cook (1991) suggest that the “action orientation of feminist research is also reflected in more systemic ways through a focus on the policy implications of specific research findings” (p. 6),

a focus which aligns with the transformative aims of my study. In order to achieve the goal of collaborative, non-exploitative, beneficial research that focuses on the policy implications of the research findings, I adopted a participatory approach to the inquiry (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2018). The focus in feminist research on challenging injustice and inequality influenced my decision to use participatory visual methods with their built-in research as social change orientation (Schatz & Walker, 1995).

Maguire (1987) draws attention to the similarities between feminist research and participatory research. Although not all participatory research is feminist and not all feminist research is participatory, as will become apparent in the discussion below, the two approaches are complimentary in many ways. Indeed, Darroch and Giles (2014) argue that feminist theories and theorists had (have) an important influence on the development of participatory approaches to research.

4.6 Participatory Research

With its roots in the work of Kurt Lewin (1946) and Paulo Freire (1970/2008), participatory research is an umbrella term for approaches that share a commitment to active and meaningful collaboration between researchers and participants in the research process (Macaulay, 2017; Bradbury, 2015). In these approaches, participants are recognised as experts in their own lives and the phenomenon under study, who hold and are co-producers of invaluable knowledge about the phenomenon. One of the core values of participatory research is an emphasis on a more equitable sharing of power and control in the research process between researcher(s) and co-researcher participant(s) (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) contend that “[b]roadly speaking, participatory research is premised upon the claim that democratic

participation in knowledge production can enable otherwise marginalised people to exercise greater voice and agency, and work to transform social power relations in the process” (p. 468).

In a participatory approach to research, the unique knowledge bases and social locations of researcher(s) and co-researcher(s) are brought together in a collaborative relationship aimed at understanding a problem and working towards addressing it (Greenwood & Levin, 2006). As such, participatory research is characterised by shared meanings and the co-construction of knowledge, and thus the emphasis is on research *with*, as opposed to *on* or *about*, participants (Coyne & Carter, 2018, p. 23). The role of the researcher in participatory research is intended to be that of a facilitator and a co-producer of knowledge (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Rahman, 1993; Water, 2018). I chose to use a participatory approach to the inquiry because I wanted to understand, from the girls’ perspective, how they construct their femininities. The decision to use a participatory approach also reflects my understanding of the girls as experts in their own lives who are therefore best placed to inform others about their experiences, needs and resources.

Influenced by Freire’s (1970) notions of conscientisation and praxis, another characteristic of participatory research is that it has a transformative, social change agenda. Rather than merely recording observable facts, participatory research has the explicit aim of collaboratively investigating reality in order to transform it; it is a systemic approach to personal and social transformation (Maguire, 1987). Within the Networks for Change project, from our very first conversation with the SIFs we stressed the social change orientation of our work together, explaining that we were not just there to get information from them and take it back to the university, but to work with them to understand the challenges faced by girls in their community and work towards addressing those challenges. Mindful of the power relations in

the community, however, we were careful to manage both our own and the SIFs' expectations of what our work might be able to achieve.

As discussed above, a defining characteristic of participatory research is the aim of actively and meaningfully engaging participants in as much of the research process as is possible such that power is more equitably shared between the researcher and the participants who have more control over the research process and outcomes than in other approaches to research. In reality there is much variation in the extent and nature of participation ranging from little more than representation to full participation and collaboration in the entire research process. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) note that control is rarely given entirely over to the community or participants and that the community or participants do not necessarily always want it (see also Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2018). Doing participatory research with young people adds the additional dimension of age disparity to the power dynamics in this approach to research.

4.7 Participatory Visual Research with Adolescents in South Africa

“Children can have powerful voices, but they will remain unheard until spaces for their expression are created and nurtured. It is all too easy to create token spaces for token voices” (Prilleltensky, 2010, p. 247).

In their introduction to their 2018 edited volume *Being Participatory: Researching with Children and Young People*, Coyne and Carter offer an account of the paradigm shift in the sociology of childhood in the 1980s and 1990s (see also James et al., 1998). Previous to this shift, children and young people were generally understood to be uniformly and homogenously vulnerable and passive, unable to understand, describe, or analyse their own lives and experiences. In what has been called the new sociology of childhood (Coyne & Carter, 2018;

Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014), this understanding has shifted towards a view of children and young people as agentic social actors capable of participating in the co-production of knowledge about their lives and perspectives (see James et al., 1998). As a result of this alternative understanding of childhood and children, where previously research was done *on* children and young people or with adults as proxies for children and young people (either via memory work about their own childhoods, or representing the perspectives of children and young people), attempts are more often made to do research *with* children and young people.

This ‘new’ view of children and young people as competent agents created space for approaches to and methods for generating and analysing data with children and young people that take into account and try to mediate the power relations that are inherent in all research relationships but are further complicated by the age disparity between adult researchers and co-researcher participants who are significantly younger. The use of participatory approaches to research with children and young people, particularly creative and arts-based methods, is a strategy that can be and has been used in efforts to work effectively and meaningfully *with* children and young people. This is not because unequal power relations do not exist or are automatically equalised in these research relationships, but, rather, because, among other things, the use of the visual reduces how reliant researchers are on the verbal, and because a focus on negotiating power relations is fundamental to the axiological, epistemological, ontological and methodological principles/assumptions of such approaches and methods.

In research relationships with children and young people in South Africa in general and my study in particular, the power dynamics related to age disparity and its intersection with gender is particularly significant. Traditionally, in isiZulu-speaking families and communities, particularly in conservative, traditional rural communities, respect for adults, particularly male

adults, is considered extremely important. Introduced in Chapter One and discussed in detail in Chapter Three, the idea and practice of respect, or *ukuhlonipha*, as it is taught to and expected of children and young people, especially girls, involves a particular kind of obedience to all adults. Silence is an important feature of this obedience and takes a number of forms, including not questioning, challenging, disagreeing with or ‘talking back’ to adults (or perceived social superiors), not offering opinions, and not resisting the demands or expectations of adults (Ngidi, 2020). Importantly, this respect-as-silence also involves children and young people avoiding talking about or discussing certain topics altogether, notably anything related to sex. Also significant is the more universal gendered norm and expectation that girls and young women be passive and ignorant in relation to sex. These gendered norms and expectations make it particularly difficult for girls and young women to talk, find out, and ask questions about relationships and sex. The nature of child/young person-adult relationships as understood by children and young people from conservative, traditional communities means that it can be and often is difficult to establish a dynamic in which children and young people feel able and comfortable to speak to adults candidly and offer their own opinions, perspectives, and interpretations especially about sensitive topics

In my relationship with the SIFs it was important that I was respectful of the ways that they had been taught to interact with adults while finding ways to encourage the girls to understand that the respect-as-silence ‘rules’ for engaging with adults did not apply to our relationship. By talking about it explicitly and being consistent in how I communicated with the SIFs, I tried to make it clear that I genuinely wanted to hear their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and questions; that I wanted them to disagree with and challenge me. I also told the SIFs that I wanted them to feel comfortable to talk to me or ask questions about anything, and tried to, at all times, act in a way that was consistent with what I said to them. I promised the SIFs that I would be honest with

them, and non-judgemental, and that I would keep their confidences when asked to do so unless I was obliged to report abuse or neglect of any kind. I tried not to rush or force them into a dynamic that they were not comfortable with or did not want. In this way, I tried to create what Bolzan and Gale (2012) refer to as ‘interrupted space’ which challenges and interrupts unequal power relations in a way that facilitates collaboration between researcher(s) and co-researcher participant(s). Over time, as we spent more time together, got to know each other better, and developed trust in one another, we engaged in debates and did not always agree. I was also able to ask for the SIFs’ opinions on and advice about things, and they began to ask me questions and for advice about things going on in their lives, including sex and relationships. I am, of course, aware that these and other strategies that I employed in my efforts to build respectful, trusting, collaborative relationships with the SIFs were not always successful in reducing the power gradient, which remained, at times, steep (Cherrington, 2015).

In this process – attempting to develop collaborative relationships with children and young people which challenge and disrupt unequal power relations – I often reflected on what exercising agency in research relationships can/does look like. In our work together, I understood the SIFs to exercise their agency in a number of ways. For example, in the first PVM workshop, they performed a drama that they had created which drew the attention of the adult members of the research team to an issue that they considered particularly important in their lives as girls and young women in their community. Consistently, throughout the study, the SIFs were clear that the focus of our work would be on addressing the practices of forced and early marriage in their community. Other ways that the SIFs exercised their agency in our relationship and the study was by refusing to participate in an activity, not giving consent to sharing a visual product they had created, not engaging in discussions of a visual product or on a certain topic (Cherrington, 2015; Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2018). In addition to exercising

agency through refusal, the SIFs also exercised agency by directly communicating their dissatisfaction and their wishes. An example of the former was when, after a miscommunication about the change of dates of a workshop, the SIFs sat me down and told me that they were disappointed in me for failing to arrive for the workshop on what had been the agreed upon date, and, later, for failing to effectively communicate the change of the dates of the workshop. I apologised to them and assured them that I would do everything I could to ensure that it never happened again. Discussing the issue further, we also agreed that, in future, the SIFs would inform me of any change in their contact details⁶⁵. An example of the SIFs communicating their wishes with me was when they approached me to discuss the fact that they wanted to present one of their digital stories at a community dialogue at which the *iNkosi* (head of the Traditional Authority) and many other socially powerful adults would be present. It was important to the SIFs that they present their own work to their community. After discussing the pros and cons, we decided to go ahead with their plan, and I helped them to plan their presentation.

Using PVM to work with children and young people also raises ethical considerations unique to this approach to research. These ethical considerations which include issues related to protection from harm, anonymity, ownership, voice, and representation are discussed in detail in Chapter Five. I also reflect further on how the SIFs and I negotiated some of the issues raised in this section below.

⁶⁵ In South Africa, it is not unusual for people to change their cell phone numbers frequently depending on which service provider is offering the best rates for airtime and/or data.

4.8 Participatory Visual Methodology

The cautions and limits of participatory research discussed above notwithstanding, informed by the critical and transformative paradigm and the principles of participatory and feminist research, in this study, I chose to use participatory visual methodology (PVM) for its potential to be transformative and democratise the research process. Through the participatory approach and the use of the visual, PVM offers a number of benefits which I sought to harness in my study.

PVM offers opportunities to actively engage co-researcher participants, particularly marginalised groups, in a collaborative knowledge production process that aims not only to develop nuanced, situated understandings of the phenomenon under study, but also to contribute to transformation in the form of challenge to existing social and material circumstances which may be harmful and/or oppressive. With its research-as-social-change orientation (Schratz & Walker, 1995), the PVM process can lead to the development of context-specific and -relevant strategies for addressing the challenges faced by the participants and communities with whom we work (see, for example, De Lange et al., 2015; De Lange et al., 2007; Mitchell, 2008; Mitchell, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2017; Moletsane 2012). The understanding, in PVM, of participants as knowledge producers and experts in their own lives makes PVM particularly useful for reducing power differentials between the adult researcher(s) and the younger co-researcher participant(s), fore-grounding the voices of co-researcher participants as they allow for the co-construction of knowledge and collaborative meaning-making. Barley and Russel (2019) argue that

[t]he visual, when understood within the context of its own production, is seen as being a multimodal tool to access participants' voices and gauge their realities... When collaboratively produced, visual data can be an important way of empowering

individuals within the research process through having direct control over the artefacts that are used to represent themselves and/or aspects of their culture. (p. 224).

In this way, PVM offers different strategies to address questions of voice and representation.

Through the process and the product created, PVM can stimulate communication and dialogue with and among co-researcher participants because the latter may feel a greater sense of ownership over the data and the process of collaborative meaning-making (Didowsky et al., 2010). As process and product, PVM can also prompt and encourage communication and dialogue with broader audiences like policy-makers, as a first step towards social change. Furthermore, the use of the visual can help to facilitate discussions about sensitive topics, such as sexual violence, which participants might find difficult to talk about using other methods such as interviews and focus group discussions. PVM also offers a way to work around language barriers – not just those created by researcher(s) having a different language to the participants⁶⁶, but also, as already discussed, difficulties with discussing sensitive topics. Importantly, the visual product(s) created by co-researcher participants function as a medium through which they communicate their observations, understandings and analyses of their own lives. The discussions about the visual products among the co-researcher participants and members university-based research team during post-screening discussions and participatory data analysis discussions are another layer of communication.

An important possible benefit of PVM, unlike more traditional research methods like interviews and focus group discussions (see, for example, Blackbeard & Lindeggar, 2015), is

⁶⁶ I discuss language in greater detail in the next chapter.

the potential to provide us with answers to questions that we did not know to ask. As Treffry-Goatley et al. (2018, p. 51) argue:

[i]f we, as researchers, are unaware of a particular dynamic in a community related to the phenomenon under study, we cannot ask our participants questions about it in interviews and focus group discussions. As a result, it may not come up in discussion, or the significance of this dynamic in the lives of our participants may go unrecognized, or be obscured.

An often undervalued benefit of using PVM to work with co-researcher participants, particularly with children and young people, is that fact that visual methods are often fun and engaging. Becoming increasingly popular in research with children and young people (see, for example, Clark & Moss, 2001), Barley and Russel (2019) observe that PVM can “capture meaningful child-centred and child-generated perspectives of their everyday lives in situ.” (p. 223). James et al. (1998) suggest that working with children using participatory methods, including PVM, is a recognition of the paradigm shift in the conceptualisation of children and childhood which recognises that children, as active, knowledgeable social agents, are able to contribute to the co-construction of knowledge facilitated by not having to rely exclusively on the verbal.

While I have noted the opportunities offered by PVM for foregrounding the voices of co-researcher participants in the research process and products, I am mindful of the limits of the approach and cautious of uncritical claims that visual methods can produce “more authentic representations of voice” (Barley & Russell, 2019, p. 225). As Barley and Russell (2019) point out, the use of visual methods to work with children and young people has a number of possible benefits, but it is not unproblematic. They therefore encourage researchers to be reflexive about

their use of these methods to avoid the pitfalls involved in the unquestioning assumption that PVM ‘fixes the problem’ of power differentials, voice, agency and representation.

As an approach then, PVM can be seen as a strategy that can be used in attempts to work with young people in ways that are more collaborative. In the section that follows I introduce and describe the methods used for data generation in the study presented in this thesis.

4.9 Data Generation Methods

As discussed in Chapter One and above, the study discussed in this thesis is located within the larger Networks for Change project. As the Project Co-ordinator and a member of the research team for the larger project, I chose to locate my doctoral study within the activities of the larger project. I was involved in all of the data generation workshops with the SIFs (and other project activities) as either the main (or only) facilitator or as a co-facilitator. For my doctoral research, I used data from five workshops held with the SIFs between February 2017 and August 2018 in which I was the main or only facilitator. In this section of the chapter I introduce and discuss each of the methods used: photovoice, cellphilms, digital story-telling, participatory data analysis, and policy posters and action briefs.

4.9.1 Photovoice

Photovoice is “a community-based participatory research method that combines photography, community awareness building, group discussions, and social action” (D’Amico, et al., 2016). The method was developed by Wang and Burris who describe it as a “process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). Liebenberg (2018) argues that feminist theory, Paulo Freire’s notion of critical pedagogy, and participatory action research (PAR) underpin

and frame photovoice as method. Combining the four essential elements of PAR (participation, action, research, and social change), photovoice involves participants taking photographs in response to a prompt or a theme, and discussing them in a group setting (Gubrium & Harper, 2013). The process can involve exhibitions or dissemination events with leadership structures and in policy spaces. The method is clearly aligned with the theoretical and methodological frameworks of this study. I chose to use photovoice with the SIFs for its ability to 1) enable people to record and reflect community strengths and concerns; 2) promote knowledge and critical dialogue about community issues and their impact on individuals through group discussion of images; and 3) reach and inform policy makers to bring about change. (Wang, 1999, p. 185)

4.9.2 Cellphilms

Pioneered by Dockney and Tomaselli (2009), cellphilms are short films created by co-researcher participants on a cellular telephone or tablet computer in response to a prompt. The story told by each cellphilms can be in a number of genres and is developed, acted out, and filmed by co-researcher participants themselves. In recent years, due to the ubiquity of the cell phone⁶⁷ and, increasingly, the smart phone and tablet computers, the technology used to create cellphilms has become more and more accessible to the communities with whom we work. As a result, participants are highly likely to be familiar with cell phone and smart phone technology. This familiarity contributes to the potential that the use of cell phone (and smart phone) technology has to democratise the research process in participatory visual research (Mitchell et al., 2014; 2016). No longer are researchers required to bring expensive, unfamiliar, and quite possibly intimidating, equipment and technologies (such as video cameras, laptops,

⁶⁷ A contraction of cellular telephone, in South Africa mobile phones are called ‘cell phones’.

and editing software) into communities in order to co-produce films or photographs.⁶⁸ Instead, we are able to make use of technology that is “already in the community” (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 20).

Using technology that is already in the community has obvious benefits for the method in general and its use in my study in particular. While not all of the SIFs had their own cell phones at the time that the workshops took place⁶⁹, all of them had regular access to cell phones and were confident in the use of cell phone and smart phone technology. They required no help from me to use the basic functions of the equipment, including the video function. As a result of this knowledge and confidence, the SIFs, like Schwab-Cartas’ (2016) young participants, were able to create their cellphilms with relative ease. Rather than introducing new technology to the SIFs and having to teach them how to use it, thereby risking reinforcing unequal power relations between us, we were on a more equal footing in terms of knowledge of the technology. In fact, in many cases, their knowledge far surpassed mine.

Another benefit, deriving from the SIFs’ pre-existing familiarity and confidence with the technology, is that, once we had discussed the more technical aspects of filming, they were able to work more independently of me as the researcher in the creation of their cellphilms which resulted in the process being more participant-led than it might otherwise have been. It also gave the SIFs more freedom to innovate and explore what they could do with their cellphilms creatively by, for example, adding layers of meaning with the incorporation of background music into their cellphilms. In this way, as MacEntee et al. (2016, p. 8) argue,

⁶⁸ MacEntee et al. (2016) make a distinction between participatory video and cellphilming as method based on the history of the development of the cellphilms as method in South Africa, and the significance of the different equipment used.

⁶⁹ Despite the lowering costs of cellphones, they still remain unavailable to some of the poorest South Africans.

“cellphilming is a means through which researchers might act as allies and in support of creative production by community members that speak to their own ways of knowing.”

By using entry-level tablet computers, equipment that is very similar if not the same as what is already available in the community and to the SIFs, I did not have to choose to either leave equipment in the community thereby potentially disrupting existing community dynamics (see Mitchell et al., 2015; Schwab-Cartas & Mitchell, 2014), or take the equipment back, thereby leaving participants with new and potentially transformative skills that they cannot use. Rather, once we had worked together using cellphilming, there was the potential for participants to use their own cell phones or smart phones to continue to make cellphilms independent of the research team and after the lifespan of the project.

Cellphilming as method originates from a specific critical and participatory perspective (MacEntee, 2016). Through both the process and the product, cellphilming offers a unique way for co-researcher participants to engage with the issue being explored and providing an opportunity for them to develop critical, complex and multi-layered analyses of circumstances in their own lives. Through cellphilms co-researcher participants can articulate nuanced meanings related to the research issue that might have been difficult to explain in an interview or focus group discussion. The choices made about what story to tell and how the story is told, including what goes unsaid, allows the professional researcher and co-researcher participants to gain unique insight into the, often subtle, dynamics surrounding the phenomenon under study. In this way, cellphilming as method is a tool for both data generation and for developing critical consciousness.

Cellphilms can, however, have limited use as tools for advocacy and stimulating dialogue outside of the university research team and co-researcher participants because it is impossible for the identities of the co-researcher participants to be hidden as they act in the cellphilms. For this reason, the cellphilms in my study were not created for the purpose of dissemination outside of specific contexts, such as screenings for an audience consisting of the SIFs, the university research team, our community partner, and the local ward councillor. Instead, we used cellphilming to explore with the SIFs and deepen our shared understandings of how they constructed their femininities in the context of HIV, gender-based violence, rurality and poverty. When we created digital stories and cellphilms for the international cellphilm festival, we made these with their wider distribution in mind. However, we did make it clear that there was no obligation for the girls to share their cellphilms or digital stories with other co-researcher participants or outside of the group, and that we would not use them as data in the project if they did not want us to.

4.9.3 Digital Story-telling

Digital story-telling involves the creation of a short films using drawings, photographs, voice overs and music (Gubrium & Harper, 2013; Lambert, 2006). One of the reasons that I chose to use digital storytelling with the SIFs was because of its “ability to address the materiality of living gendered lives and for contributing to highlighting identity and personal relationships as multiple, fluid and layered” (Vachelli & Peyrefitte, 2018, p. 2). Similarly, Gubrium and Harper (2013) argue that “digital stories can be used as sites for the production and transformation of identities of the individuals and groups that produce them” (p. 125). In their paper on digital story-telling as a feminist approach to public health research, Gubrium and Difulvio (2011) argue that in the digital stories created by their participants, “[s]ocial identities related to what it means to be a girl are constituted using the narrative resources of participants’ everyday

realities, as well as through dominant cultural discourses” (p. 35). They go on to argue that because the emphasis in digital story-telling is on creating dialogue with co-researcher participants as a way to better understand their experience, in this method participants are actively involved in knowledge production rather than positioned as passive subjects in the research process. Digital storytelling also provides the opportunity to interrogate the contexts in which these identities are constructed, including an analysis of the power relations relating to, for example, race, class, and gender operating in that context (Gubrium & Turner, 2014).

Influenced by Freirian principles, digital story-telling is a method for collaborative research, intervention and community action (Gubrium & Turner, 2014). It has also been suggested that digital story-telling has potential as a decolonising research practice because it involves self-representation on the part of the co-researcher participants, rather than the imposition of a narrative by the researcher(s) (de Jager et al., 2017). In this way, in digital story-telling participants may have more control over who is producing and interpreting reality than in other methods.

Gubrium and Harper (2013) describe a structured process of creating digital stories in three phases which take place during a three-day workshop which is guided by the process developed by Story Centre⁷⁰. This process includes the use of the seven “steps” of digital story-telling as conceptualised by the (then) Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS), including “owning your insights,” “owning your emotions,” “finding the moment,” “seeing your story,” “hearing your story,” “assembling your story,” and “sharing your story” (Lambert, 2010, pp. 9-29). Following

⁷⁰ In 1994 Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert, and Nina Mullen founded the San Francisco Digital Media Centre in California, USA. Exploring how digital media could be used to enable people to tell personal stories as a way to inspire change, Atchley, Lambert, and Mullen refined the process of what is known as digital storytelling. In 1998 the centre moved to Berkley and the name was changed to the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS). The name of the centre changed again in 2015 to Story Centre. See <https://www.storycenter.org/history>

these seven steps results in stories that have a particular narrative structure. Participants either use images that they bring with them or images collected from open-access sources in their stories. The process as described by Gubrium and Harper makes use of programmes and applications like iMovie, MovieMaker, Final Cut Express, and Adobe Premier. Participants each create individual stories.

We adapted this process in a number of ways to better suit our participants, the context (which included no access to computers or accessible and reliable access to electricity and an internet connection), and the research questions. Like the process described by Gubrium and Harper, our digital stories were created over three days. However, we decided to be less prescriptive about the narrative structure of the stories, and did not use the seven steps of digital storytelling. There is a rich history of oral story-telling in South Africa, and we felt it was unnecessary to impose a structure on the girls' stories. We also wanted the girls to be able to produce the stories as independently as possible to minimise our influence on them and foster a greater sense of narrative agency (Gubrium & Harper, 2013), autonomy and ownership. We used entry-level tablets⁷¹ rather than personal computers or laptops, because, as discussed above, the girls were familiar and comfortable with the technology through their exposure to smart phones and tablets where they might have been intimidated by laptops or personal computers as technology with which they are not familiar and with which they have very little, if any, experience. Certainly, it also meant that we did not have to take the time to ensure that all of our participants had a level of computer literacy sufficient to enable them to use them to create digital stories, and this may have been a missed opportunity for them to gain experience with computers. We used WeVideo⁷², a video-editing app that is available in its basic form for

⁷¹ Samsung Galaxy Tab4

⁷² <https://www.wevideo.com/>

free download. The software has all the necessary functionality required to create digital stories and has the added bonus of being free to download from the google play store. This software and the girls' familiarity with the technology also meant that we did not have to be involved in any editing of the digital stories outside of the workshop. The girls did all of the editing themselves using WeVideo and with minimal input from the adult research team. Gubrium and Harper (2013) quote Amy Hill: "If you are doing [digital storytelling] strictly as a way for people to organise their own narratives and take pictures, you're going to have to stand back and refrain from inserting your own suggestions about content, wording, or images." (p. 140).

Rather than creating individual stories, we had the SIFs create their digital stories in groups for a number of reasons. First, it reduced the burden of work on each participant. Second, it created distance from the story for the participants so that the stories told were a patchwork of fiction about a social phenomenon based on reality, rather than one person's personal story. We felt that this strategy might reduce the possibility of traumatising or re-traumatising participants. Further, these fictional stories offered a certain amount of anonymity which increased the potential for the digital stories to be useful as tools for awareness-raising and advocacy. Indeed, at the SIFs request, one of their digital stories has been screened at a community dialogue about forced and early marriage. Rather than bringing images with them or sourcing them from open source image repositories on the internet as described by Gurbrium and Harper (2013), and Lambert (2010), the SIFs created the images used in the digital stories themselves during the workshop either by drawing (which were later photographed and loaded into WeVideo) or taking photographs. We included storyboarding as a way for the SIFs to organise their narrative into frames as this had proved so useful in cellphilming. We also had a story circle during which each group had the opportunity to present their story and get constructive feedback on their stories. Using the same process that we used for cellphilms, after screening the digital

stories, we had focus group-like post-screening discussion of the digital stories during which we probed certain elements of the stories, and explored on the themes identified in each story.

4.9.4 Participatory Data Analysis

Participatory Data Analysis (PDA) is a way to contribute to and learn, from the point of view of co-researcher participants, the meanings and significance of data and findings, and what activities co-researcher participants see as being necessary to address the issues raised in the findings. The aim in doing PDA was to learn from the SIFs 1) What do they see in the data when considered all together?; 2) What can they do to respond to the data and findings?; and 3) What else needs to be done to address the findings and issues raised, and what support is required for this to happen? The process followed during the workshop involved first screening or exhibiting each of the visual products created by the SIFs after which the girls divided themselves into small groups to analyse their work using the SHOWED participatory data analysis guide (Mitchell, 2011; Wang & Burris, 1997). This technique for participatory data analysis derives its name from the set of six questions that are used to guide a discussion of visual data: 1) What do we see here?; 2) What is really happening here?; 3) How does this relate to our lives?; 4) Why does this concern, situation, strength exist?; 5) How can we become empowered through our new understanding?; and 6) What can we do about it? Although, as I will discuss in detail in Chapter Five, our post-viewing or post-screening discussions form part of the first layer of analysis of visual data as it is produced and in an iterative and on-going manner, it was important to me to include a workshop focused on participatory data analysis not only to consolidate themes that had been identified over the three preceding workshops, but also because I wanted to ensure that the SIFs' analyses were accurately captured and reduce the extent to which the data was filtered through an "adult lens" such that the SIFs' stories and experiences were not distorted (Barley & Russell, 2019).

4.9.5 Policy Posters and Action Briefs

Policy posters are designed by co-researcher participants in response to a prompt. They typically include an image, usually drawn or photographed by co-researcher participants, along with a simple, clear message directed towards a particular audience, often policy-makers and/or -implementers. An action brief is, according to Mitchell et al. (2017), “a short, targeted document that maps out a particular social issue and offers recommendations for change” (p. 158). I chose to create policy posters and action briefs with the SIFs for a number of reasons. First, these visual products are created with the explicit purpose of being used as tools for awareness-raising and advocacy towards the goal of social and policy change. Among other benefits, they are easy to consume, easy to distribute, and can stimulate discussion and debate. Second, the process of creating the policy posters and action briefs encouraged the SIFs and I to think more practically about how the problems they identified could be described and explained, who should be involved in addressing these problems, and how we could go about getting support for and facilitating action. Finally, the policy posters and action briefs clearly articulated the nature of the problems experienced by girls and young women from their own perspective. In this way, these visual products demonstrated to stakeholders including parents, the community, and the traditional leadership that the SIFs are more than capable of understanding and analysing their lives and community; that their understanding of certain dynamics, norms and practices cannot be assumed to be the same as that of the adults in their lives; and that they are perfectly capable of speaking in defence of their position on issues like early and forced marriage and the impact that it has on their lives and well-being.

4.10 Synthesis

In this chapter, I have engaged with the principles, assumptions, and values that guided the choices and decisions that I made during the study. I began by introducing the critical and transformative paradigm and the epistemological, ontological, axiological and methodological principles and assumptions of this paradigm. Moving on to a discussion of qualitative, feminist, and participatory research, it is clear how these approaches can be situated within the critical and transformative paradigm, and thus also how these approaches are aligned. I move on to a discussion of using a participatory research approach to work with adolescents in South Africa to add detail to the context in which this study was conducted and the research relationships negotiated. I then describe and discuss participatory visual methodology drawing attention to the reasons that I chose to use PVM in this study. Before concluding the chapter, I offer an introduction to each of the participatory visual methods that were used to generate data to answer my research questions. This chapter frames the chapter that follows in which I introduce the research site and the SIFs, provide a detailed description and discussion of each of the three phases of my study, the approach that I took to data analysis, how I ensured trustworthiness, and the ethical considerations in my study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Exploring constructions of femininities *with* adolescent girls: Research

Process and Community-based Policy-Making

5.1 Introduction

Having examined the principles, assumptions, and values that guided the practical choices and decisions that I made during the study in the previous chapter, in this chapter, I provide a detailed description and discussion of the processes involved in the generation of data and the community-based advocacy and policy-making in chronological order. I then explain the approach that I took to data analysis and the strategies I used to ensure trustworthiness in my study. After discussing the ethical considerations involved in the study, as part of my practice of reflexivity, I offer a brief reflection on the research design and methodology of my study.

5.2 Phase 1: Gaining Access and Recruiting Participants

5.2.1 *Selecting the research site: eMangweni*

The decision to include *eMangweni* as one of the Networks for Change research sites was made after the research team met Xoli Msimanga⁷³ during a community engagement meeting in a near-by research site in July 2016. Xoli is a social worker and is very well known in *eMangweni* through her work at Thembaletu and as a resident. After talking about *eMangweni* and Xoli's work with Thembaletu, we agreed to work together as intervention was required to address high rates of GBV in the area. Xoli became an important member of the Networks for Change research team.

⁷³ Introduced in Chapter One, Xoli was an invaluable member of the research team due to her skills and knowledge as a social worker, her passion for and commitment to her work, Networks for Change and my study, and her knowledge of the area. The value of Xoli's contribution to both Networks for Change and my study cannot be overstated. The Networks for Change project team (me in particular), and the SIFs benefited hugely from the collaborative nature of our partnership.

eMangweni is located in the Okhahlamba Local Municipality⁷⁴ in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains, a world heritage site and a lucrative tourist area boasting a number of large hotels, resorts and other kinds of holiday accommodation. Large-scale commercial farming, predominantly owned by white farmers – a legacy of the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa – also contributes to the wealth in the area. Also due to this history, in contrast to this wealth, large communities of Black South Africans live alongside these enclaves of affluence in challenging circumstances struggling to survive due to poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and poor infrastructure and service delivery. In its 2014/2015 Annual Report⁷⁵, the Municipality draws attention to the “challenge of addressing the extreme poverty, inequality and backlogs in service delivery and the challenge to overcome the enormous racial, gender and geographic disparities that exist in our communities.” (Okhahlamba Local Municipality, 2015, p. 45). The report states that 80 percent of the population in the Okhahlamba Local Municipal area are “mostly without roads or electricity” (p. 52). In the same report, the Municipality notes that there is limited access to schools and clinics in the area and those that are available in towns and settlements are in poor condition and lack potable water.



⁷⁴ <https://okhahlamba.gov.za/>

⁷⁵ This is the most recent annual report available at the time of writing.



eMangweni, falls within the *Amangwe* Traditional Area, home to the *Amangwe* Nation. It is governed by an active and influential traditional leadership including the *iNkosi* (the head of the traditional leadership structure)⁷⁶, and *iziNduna*. Sometimes translated into English as ‘headmen’, *iziNduna* are people, usually men, appointed to oversee particular sections of the traditional area⁷⁷ (Koenane, 2009).

5.2.2 “Just don’t change anything”: Gaining Access to the Community

In August 2016 Xoli introduced us to one of the ward councillors in the area and a member of the Traditional Council. The Ward Councillor was supportive of the study from the beginning and became an ally and champion of the project. With his help, in September 2016, Thembaletu and UKZN were able to arrange and host a community engagement meeting with the traditional leadership, community members, and other stakeholders including teachers and nurses from the local clinic. The purpose of the meeting, which took place in the *Amangwe*

⁷⁶ The word *iNkosi* is often translated into English as ‘Chief’, although with its association with colonial rule and Apartheid in South Africa, this translation is not always acceptable.

⁷⁷ This traditional leadership structure remains intact and very important in many, though not all, rural areas in South Africa although it has largely broken down in urban areas. I provide more information on this structure in the chapters that follow.

Traditional Court⁷⁸ building, was to formally introduce the project to the community and the traditional authority, and request permission to conduct the study in *eMangweni*. During the meeting various members of the community confirmed the need for intervention to address GBV in the area. The traditional leadership granted permission for us to work in the community, the spokesperson telling us “you’re welcome [to work in the community], just don’t change anything” (see Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018).

5.2.3 Recruiting co-researcher participants: Introducing the Social Ills Fighters

Having received permission to work in the community and obtained ethical clearance from the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A), with Xoli’s help, 15 co-researcher participants were recruited in the second half of 2016. A familiar figure in the area, Xoli spends much of her time driving around the area on her way to and from meetings and other work activities. Xoli approached a group of girls from the village of *KwaNdlela*⁷⁹ while they were walking home from school and asked them if they might be interested in participating in the study. They expressed a keen interest, and Xoli then suggested that they ask some of their friends and other learners at their school if they would like to participate in the project. The girls agreed to do so. Through Xoli, we made contact with the principal of the girls’ school to request permission to recruit participants from the school (see Appendix B). We invited interested girls and their parents or guardians to an information meeting about the study which took place in October 2016. During this meeting, the Networks for Change research team introduced the project in detail including what participation would entail and the kind of activities we would be doing. The girls and their parents or guardians

⁷⁸ A Traditional Court forms part of the customary law structure in South Africa. Pre-dating colonialism, traditional courts oversee civil and criminal cases according to customary law. Traditional Courts are presided over by traditional leaders (see, for example, Soyapi, 2014; the Traditional Courts Bill (<https://justice.gov.za/legislation/bills/2017-TraditionalCourtsBill.pdf>)). Traditional courts are often the primary structures that administer justice in rural areas in South Africa.

⁷⁹ *KwaNdlela* is one of a number of villages in *eMangweni*. This is not the real name of the village.

then asked questions about the project after which we went through the assent and consent forms, which had been translated into isiZulu, in detail (see Appendix C). All of the 15 girls present at the meeting assented to participate, and their parents or guardians gave their consent. At the time of recruitment, this group of girls, who named themselves the Social Ills Fighters (SIFs), ranged in age from 15 to 19. The SIFs are all first-language speakers of isiZulu. At the time of recruitment all of the SIFs attended the same high school, and lived in *KwaNdlela*.

	Pseudonym	Age
1	Zeéh	17
2	Veeh	16
3	Mpiloh	17
4	Khanyoh	15
5	Cynthai	15
6	Wendie	16
7	Zesu	16
8	Mpilo 4 Lyf	15
9	Lungoh	15
10	Cnah	15
11	Bonah	16
12	Mpumeh	17
13	Feeh	17
14	Vu	18
15	Hlah	19

Table 5.1 The Social Ills Fighters Pseudonyms and Ages

5.3 Phase 2: PVM Workshops

Between February 2017 and August 2018, the Networks for Change research team held four participatory visual methods (PVM) workshops ranging in length from two days to a week, and one participatory data analysis workshop with the SIFs. The SIFs and I used four methods during the PVM workshops: photovoice, cellphilms, digital story-telling, and policy posters and action briefs. I was a co-facilitator of workshop 1, the main facilitator of workshops 2, 3

and 4, and a co-facilitator of workshop 5. I therefore used data generated during these workshops to address the three sub-questions I posed in this study.

5.3.1 Workshop 1: Photovoice, February 2017

The first PVM workshop with the SIFs took place over a weekend in February 2017 in a classroom at a local primary school that the principal was kind enough to let us use. During the workshop the SIFs were introduced to PVM and we engaged in a photovoice activity. We began by introducing the method. We then gave a brief tutorial on how to use the tablets that we had brought with us⁸⁰. Before introducing the prompt, we had a discussion with the SIFs about visual ethics. We talked about ways to take photographs of people without showing their faces or any other recognisable feature and spoke about how photographs could be a representation or symbol of something or a particular meaning. Since the aim of the photovoice activity was to develop a general understanding of the girls' experiences of safety (or lack thereof) in and around their community, the prompt was: *'Take two photographs: one that represents feeling safe, and one that represents not feeling safe'*. The girls each took two photographs using the tablets that we had brought with us. Once the photographs were printed⁸¹, the girls glued them to pieces of A4 paper and provided captions for their photographs which were then exhibited (We strung a piece of string across the room we were using and used pegs to hang some of the SIFs' photovoice posters. Some of the posters were hung on the wall using Prestik). We all took some time to look at all of the posters before each of the girls had the opportunity to talk to the group about theirs. Thereafter we discussed the posters as a group. The girls' presentations of their posters and the group discussion were

⁸⁰ We used entry-level tablet computers that we brought with use to workshops for a number of reasons. Because the same or very similar equipment and technology was available to the SIFs in their own community, they were able to create cellphlms in our absence using the filming techniques that they learned during the workshops.

⁸¹ The photographs were printed using a Canon Selphy compact photograph printer.

audio-recorded and later transcribed and translated. The girls produced 15 sets of two photovoice posters each.



Image 5.3 Making photovoice posters



Image 5.4 Exhibition of photovoice posters

At the end of this workshop, the SIFs performed a drama for the adult members of the research team that they had developed unprompted. The drama focused on an event that takes place in the community called *ukuphuma Kwezintombi* which roughly translates into English as a “coming out ball for Maidens” (Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018, p. 52). This event has taken place in the community every second year since the early 1980s, and involves unmarried girls and young women from villages in Loskop dressing in their finest clothes and parading around a particular field (*egangeni*) in the community. For this reason, the SIFs often referred to the

event as *eGangeni*. Men who are looking for a wife, sometimes a second or third wife, are able to choose from among these girls and young women. Although the participants in this event are supposed to be over the age of 18, we have heard accounts of girls as young as 12 participating. Prior to this workshop none of the adult members of the research team were aware that early and forced marriage were practiced in Loskop or about *ukuphuma Kwezintombi*.

5.3.2 Workshop 2: Cellphilms, April 2017

Workshop 2 took place at the *KwaNdlela* community hall over three days during the school holidays in April 2017. On the first day of the workshop, the SIFs created four cellphilms in small groups about key issues that they had identified as affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in their community. Once complete, the cellphilms, *Substance Abuse*, *Teenage Pregnant* (sic), *Early Marriage*, and *Forced Marriage*, were screened for the larger group of co-researcher participants as the audience. A crucial step in PVM is the post-screening discussion during which the audience and creators are able to discuss the productions. This discussion is an opportunity to engage with the visual product, and allows participants, including the producers of the product, to more deeply explore the issue(s) represented in the story. The post-screening discussion was audio-recorded and transcribed as data.

On the second day of the workshop, the girls used the cellphilming skills that they had learned the previous day to film the drama that they had developed and performed for the adult members of the research team at the end of our first workshop with them in February 2017.

On the third and final day of the workshop, the girls created a second set of cellphilms through which they had the opportunity to ‘speak back’ to their original cellphilms (Mitchell et al.,

2017). The aim of this speaking back activity was for our co-researcher participants to reflect on the cellphilms that they had created and the discussions we had had about them, and create new cellphilms in order to “...contest or contradict the content or messages of the previous productions, and in relation to questions such as the following: what’s missing? Who’s missing? What stories are not being told? What does our doing do?” (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 49).

Because there were two sets of cellphilms created during this workshop, for the sake of clarity I refer to the first set of cellphilms as the original cellphilms, and the second set as the speaking back cellphilms.

a) Creating the Cellphilms

We began the process of creating the original cellphilms by brainstorming the things that affect the safety and well-being of girls and young women in Loskop. With one of the girls acting as scribe, the SIFs identified the following six issues which were listed on a flipchart: Forced marriage, dropping out of school, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, early marriage, and HIV&AIDS.

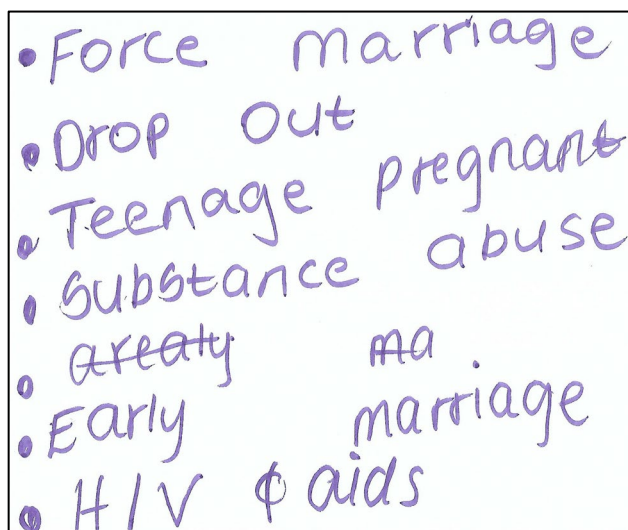


Image 5.5 The list of key issues affecting girls and young women in the community

Following the brainstorming activity, I gave a short introduction to cellphilms, describing them to the girls as short films that they would make using the tablets, and explaining that they could use cellphones to make these if they wanted to. I then explained how they would develop the story, act it out and film it themselves. I then went over the process that we would follow. I explained that in groups they would first develop the story, then map the story onto a storyboard⁸² after which they would practice acting out the story. I would then give them a quick tutorial on how to film using the No-Editing-Required⁸³ (NER) approach, an approach pioneered by Mak and Mitchell in a course they taught at McGill University in Canada (Moletsane et al., 2009; Mitchell & De Lange, 2011). I explained that after the tutorial, each group would film their cellphilms, and each group would then have the opportunity to screen their films for the larger group, so we could all discuss them.

By way of a prompt, I asked the girls to think about the brainstorming discussion we had had, and to develop a story about one or more of the six critical issues they had identified. I stressed to the SIFs that the story did not have to be about them or someone that they know or are close to, but should be about something that could realistically happen in their community. I also reminded the girls that their cellphilm could be in whichever language they were more comfortable with – English or isiZulu. With the girls now excited to begin, they divided themselves into three groups of four and one group of three, and went off to different spaces inside and outside the hall to develop the stories that they wanted to tell through their

⁸² Chan et al. (2016, p. 121) describe storyboarding as “the process of creating a visual outline or script for video productions such as cellphilms.”

⁸³ The NER technique involves pressing the pause button after recording each scene and the stop button only after the last scene has been filmed to create a complete film giving the impression of scenes edited together. This allows for the creation of the entire cellphilm without the use of often complicated editing software.

cellphlms. Once all four groups had developed a story that they wanted to tell, I distributed blank story boards on A4 pieces of paper.

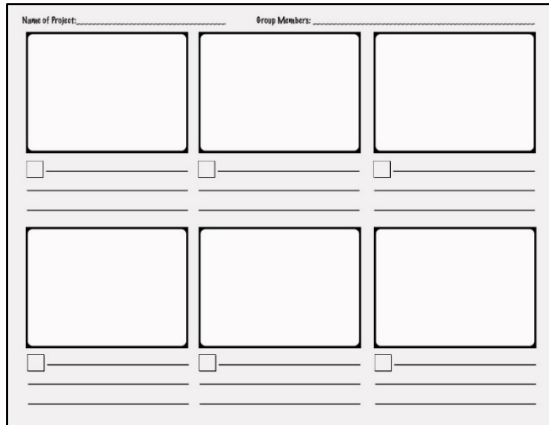


Image 5.6 A storyboard template

I explained to the girls that they needed to divide their story into different scenes similar to the scenes in the drama they had performed for us in the first workshop. I described how they should draw a picture of each scene and underneath it, on the lines provided, write a description of what would happen in the scene.



Image 5.7 One of the groups creating a storyboard

After the storyboards were complete, the girls practiced acting out each scene after which I gave a short tutorial on how to film using the tablets and the NER technique.

The girls spent about 30 minutes filming their cellphilms, creating a number of versions before they were happy with the end result. All four groups decided that they would like to screen their cellphilm for the larger group.

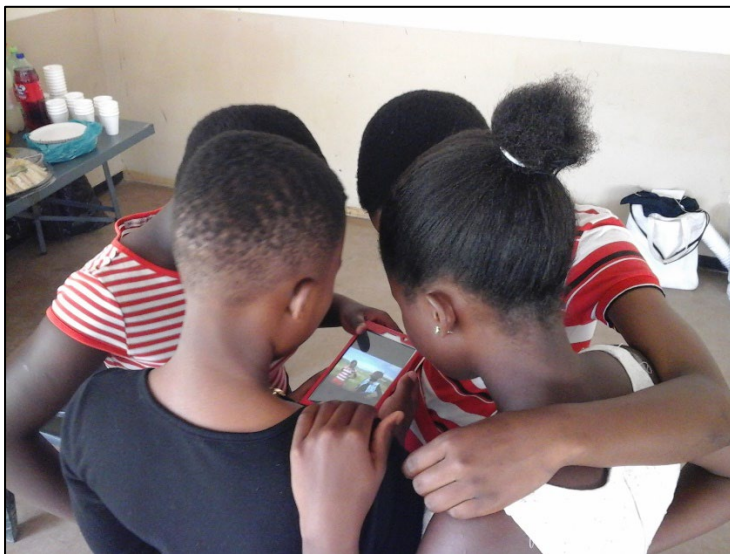


Image 5.8 One of the groups reviewing their cellphilm

I loaded the final versions of the cellphilms onto my laptop and we all gathered our chairs around to watch the cellphilms. We projected the cellphilms onto the wall of the community hall on which we had made a makeshift screen using pieces of flipchart paper. I connected portable speakers to my laptop for better sound. Before we screened each cellphilm, one member of the group stood at the front to introduce the cellphilm. After screening each cellphilm, we discussed it as a group.

b) Creating the speaking back cellphilms

Introduced in Chapters One and Two, the concept of and the ‘doing’ of speaking back were central to my study. We used cellphilms to facilitate the speaking back process, through which the SIFs and I overtly and deliberately critically engaged with the themes, dynamics, norms and assumptions that we identified in the original cellphilms. The process began in earnest with the post-screening discussion of the original cellphilms. Listening to the creators of each cellphilme describe and explain their cellphilme before it was screened and actually *seeing* the issues created the opportunity for us to view those issues from a slightly different perspective. This made it possible for us to single out, in the post-screening discussion, some of the norms and assumptions about gender, age, and tradition, for example, that underlie the issues that the SIFs raised in their original cellphilms. As will become clear in the chapters that follow, doing so allowed us to engage more deeply and more consciously in the process of questioning these norms and assumptions and even to begin to challenge them.

The speaking back cellphilms were created using the same process as the original cellphilms. By way of a prompt, I asked the SIFs to think about how their story could be different, what they could change in their story so that the endings were not so very bad for the girls portrayed in the cellphilms. The girls worked in their original groups to create four speaking back cellphilms with the same titles as the original cellphilms.

All of the cellphilms were produced in isiZulu, and Nkonzo Mkhize, a first-language isiZulu-speaking research assistant in the Networks for Change project later created English sub-titles for them. The audio-recorded post-screening discussions of the cellphilms, which took place in a mixture of isiZulu and English, were also transcribed and translated into English by Nkonzo for later analysis. While Nkonzo is a first language speaker of isiZulu, it is possible

that some meaning could have been lost in translation. I reflect on the issue of language, interpretation and translation later in this chapter.

5.3.3 Workshop 3: Digital Story-telling & Cellphilms, July 2017

The digital storytelling and cellphilm workshop took place during the school holidays in July 2017 at the *KwaNdelela* Community Hall. In this workshop, the SIFs created digital stories and cellphilms. Adapting the digital story-telling process to better suit our co-researcher participants, the context, and the aim of the digital storytelling exercise, the adult members of the Networks for Change research team developed a three-day workshop format for the creation of digital stories with our co-researcher participants which involved the SIFs creating group rather than individual stories. Over the three days, the SIFs created three digital stories: *Drop out of School*, *Poverty Leads to Prostitution*, and *Forced Marriage*.

On the fourth day of the five-day workshop, the SIFs created a set of cellphilms for submission to the 5th International Cellphilm Festival⁸⁴. The entries to the festival had to be on the theme ‘Resisting and Speaking Back’ and, per festival rules, could be no longer than one minute and thirty seconds. In groups, the SIFs created three cellphilms: *Abuses is the Crime* (sic), *No does not Mean Yes*, and *The Rape*. These cellphilms were screened and discussed along with the digital stories on the fifth and final day of the workshop.

Following the same process as in workshop 2, once the digital stories and cellphilms were complete, and with the permission of all co-researcher participants, they were screened for the

⁸⁴ Established in 2013 by the Institute for Human Development and Well-being and the Participatory Cultures Lab at McGill University in Canada, the annual McGill International Cellphilm Festival invites submissions from across the globe on a particular theme. The cellphilms are screened during the festival and judged by a panel. In addition to recognising cellphilm as a valuable method in community-based participatory research and activism, each year the festival includes speakers and panellists who talk about their work as researchers and practioners. <https://internationalcellphilmfestival.com/2020/04/13/5th-international-cellphilm-festival-2017/>

larger group including the research team as the audience. The screening took place on the final day of the workshop. Again, the post-screening discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated into English.

a) Creating Digital Stories⁸⁵

As a research team, we adapted the digital story-telling process to better suit our co-researcher participants and the context. The process that we developed takes place over three days. On the first day of the workshop, we began with an introduction to digital story-telling which included showing some examples of digital stories.



Image 5.9 Introducing the SIFs to digital stories

After this introduction, we brainstormed issues that the SIFs might like to focus on for the digital stories. The SIFs then voted on which of the suggested topics they would focus on. We reminded the girls that they should create their stories in whichever language they felt most comfortable.

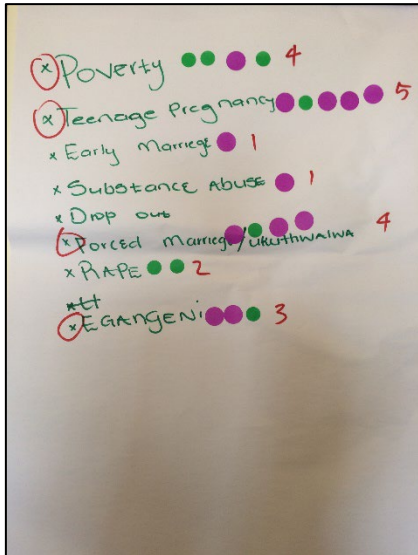


Image 5.10 The results of the brainstorming and voting

The SIFs divided themselves into three groups (two groups of four and one group of five) to develop a story. Each group then wrote down their story and typed it into a tablet.



Image 5.11 Typing up their story

After the stories were typed up, each group shared their story in a story circle during which everybody had the opportunity to offer ideas and suggestions about each story.

The second day of the workshop began with a tutorial on how to create a storyboard for a digital story including planning the drawings and photographs needed to tell the story. Once the girls

had completed their storyboards, they set to work on creating drawings and photographs for the digital story. Drawings were photographed so that they could be input into the video-making software.

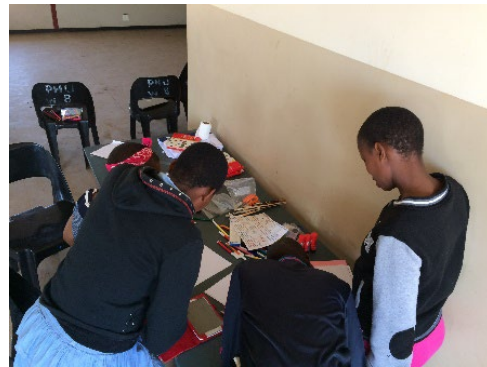


Image 5.12 Taking photographs and creating drawings

After a tutorial on how to use the video-making software, WeVideo, the girls input the drawings and photographs into the programme. The groups then practiced reading the narrative, and ensured that the timing of each frame matched the narrative. Once they were comfortable with reading the narrative and the timing of each frame, each group went into a small quiet room adjoining the community hall to record the narrative.



Image 5.13 Practicing reading the narrative



Image 5.14 The ‘recording studio’ where the SIFs went to record the narratives for their digital stories

On day three of the workshops, the SIFs selected a song to sing or hum as background music to their digital stories which they then recorded and input into WeVideo.

b) Resisting and Speaking Back Cellphilms

These cellphilms were created on the fourth day of the workshop using the same process as described above. As they were already familiar with the idea of speaking back, by way of a prompt, we asked the SIFs to think about what resisting and speaking back to GBV might look like in their community as they developed their stories.

On the fifth and final day of the workshop we screened and discussed the cellphilms and digital stories. We were joined at the screening by the ward councillor. These discussions were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

All of the cellphilms and all except one of the digital stories were produced in isiZulu, and again, Nkonzo translated them into English. Once again, the audio-recorded post-screening

discussions of the cellphilms and digital stories, which took place in a mixture of isiZulu and English, were transcribed and translated into English for later analysis.

5.3.4 Workshop 4: Participatory Data Analysis, February 2018

In February 2018, we held a participatory data analysis workshop with the SIFs to analyse together all of the data generated during 2017. In this workshop, we aimed to address the following questions with the SIFs: 1) What do you see in the data when considered all together?; 2) What can you do to respond to the data and findings?; and 3) What else needs to be done to address issues raised, and what support is required for this to happen? The process followed during the workshop involved first screening or exhibiting each of the sets of visual products created by the SIFs after which the girls divided themselves into small groups to analyse their work using the SHOWED participatory data analysis guide (Wang & Burris, 1997; Mitchell, 2011). Each group audio-recorded their discussions, and these recordings were later transcribed, translated and analysed further. Once each group had finished their separate discussions, we all came together to discuss findings and identify themes. All of the discussions during this workshop took place in a mixture of English and isiZulu.

5.3.5 Workshop 5: Policy Posters and Action Briefs, August 2018

Over two days in August 2018 we held a workshop to develop policy posters and action briefs to be used as tools for advocacy and awareness-raising in the SIFs' community and beyond⁸⁶. In total the SIFs created seven policy posters and seven action briefs based on their cellphilms and digital stories and the numerous discussions that we had had about these visual products.

⁸⁶ I wish to thank Prof Naydene de Lange for leading the workshop and for allowing me to co-facilitate.

We began the workshop by explaining what policy posters and action briefs are and their purpose, and showing the SIFs examples of policy posters and action briefs. We then viewed the cellphilms and digital stories taking note of particular themes. In the discussion that followed, we identified the problems that would be the focus of the policy posters. In groups the SIFs then designed their policy posters including deciding on what image and message would appear on the poster. After creating the image (either a drawing or photograph), the SIFs created drafts of the posters. I used these drafts to create digital versions of the policy posters that we had printed for display around the community.



Image 5.15 The Social Ills Fighters discussing the key issues in their cellphilms and digital stories to decide on a focus for their policy posters and action briefs

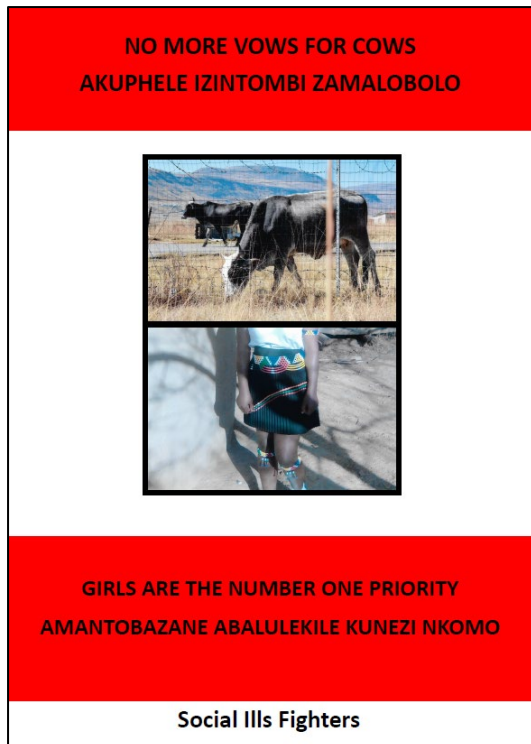


Image 5.16 An example of a policy poster

Once the draft policy posters were complete, we moved on to a discussion of each component of an action brief: the context, problem, solutions, what others can do, and what we can do. Having identified the problems that the action briefs would focus on, with the help of the adult members of research team, the SIFs planned the action briefs first writing the text, and then deciding on the images they wanted and where they wanted them to appear. I used the draft action briefs created by the SIFs to create digital versions of the action briefs that were printed for distribution in the community.



WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE READY BEFORE YOU MARRY SO THAT YOU CAN BE INDEPENDENT The Situation In my community early marriage is seen as a way to relieve poverty in the family. When a girl is failing at school, getting married is seen as the best option for her future. When girls fall in love with older men, they get married before they are ready. Girls' older friends who are married pressure them into getting married. Older men promise that if girls marry them, they will do things for them to improve their life. There is a belief that girls can't be buried at home. If a girl believes that she will only get one chance to get married, she will accept a proposal from an older man. The Problem This is a problem because young girls aren't physically ready to be pregnant and have a baby. Girls who marry early will become dependent on their husband because they won't finish school and reach their goals. This gets them and their children stuck in a cycle of poverty. Young girls aren't ready to take on the responsibilities of being married. When a girl marries young, her husband has more power, so she won't be able to consent to things and might be at risk of HIV.	When a woman's husband goes away to work, he might have sex with other women and get HIV. When he comes home he might give it to his wife, and then blame her when she tells him she is HIV+. Because they weren't able to date before they got married, sometimes young women start to see other people while they are married. What should be done? • Early marriage is not a solution to poverty or to failing at school. • The police need to investigate early marriages that infringe on the rights of the child. Those who marry children must be arrested by the police. • We must have community meetings to educate our community about the importance of education, and about early and forced marriage. • The traditional leader should pass a law against early and forced marriage. • Parents must not allow children to marry while they are still young even if there is no money at home • If there is a child that has married while they are still young, their parents must go and get their child and bring them back to their home, and the child must go back to school.	• Young people need to set goals for themselves for their future. If they do not set goals they will not see a need to be in school, and will see getting married while young as a good option. • Young people must only get married when they are older than 18, and when they feel ready • Young people must learn to say no to peer pressure. • Young people must be taught that if the person who wants to marry you and truly loves you, that person must wait for you to finish school and achieve your dreams before getting married. • Young people need to stay in school no matter how difficult it is. Success comes from perseverance and persistence. Educated people are able to be independent and make their own decisions in life. • Old men should stop marrying young girls. • Teachers should stop dating learners. It is illegal. • Older women should educate young women and girls about the challenges of getting married while you are young and not educated, and about getting married to a person who doesn't work.

Image 5.17 An example of an action brief

The table below summarises the PVM workshops held with the SIFs, and the data generated in each workshop:

Workshop	Methods	Data Generated

Workshop 1: February 2017	Introduction to PVM Photovoice Drama performed by the girls	15 sets of photovoice posters Drama Audio-recorded discussions of photovoice posters
Workshop 2: April 2017	Cellphilm	4 original cellphilms 4 speaking back cellphilms Audio-recorded post-screening discussions of cellphilms
Workshop 3: July 2017	Digital Story-telling & Cellphilm	3 digital stories 3 Resisting and Speaking Back Cellphilms for the 5 th International Cellphilm Festival Audio-recorded post-screening discussions of digital stories and cellphilms
Workshop 4: February 2018	Participatory Data Analysis	Audio-recorded discussions of the visual products created by the SIFs
Workshop 5: August 2018	Policy Posters and Action Briefs	7 policy posters 7 action briefs Audio-recorded discussions during the creation of the policy posters and action briefs

Table 5.2 PVM Workshops and Visual Productions

5.4 Phase 3: Community-based Advocacy and Policy-making, February 2019 – March 2020

During the period between Christmas 2018 and New Year 2019, one of the SIFs, Veeh, was abducted by a man who attempted to force her into marriage. Abductions of this nature and the marriages that sometimes result from them are often justified by the perpetrator(s) as instances of the traditional practice of *ukuthwala*⁸⁷. Fortunately, through the intervention of the SIFs, Xoli, Veeh's sister and mother, and the South African Police Service (SAPS), Veeh returned home traumatised, but physically unharmed. In response to this event, we decided to adjust the plans we had made for engaging the community in 2019. We had planned to take a slow approach in which the girls themselves visibly led the awareness-raising and advocacy efforts in their community starting from their school and working their way towards engaging the traditional leadership. Instead, we decided to engage with the traditional leadership and other stakeholders including SAPS, traditional healers and parents immediately.

We began the process of community-based advocacy and policy-making with a community meeting in February 2019 co-hosted by UKZN and Themba lethu, and held at the traditional court building in Loskop. The purpose of the meeting given in the invitations issued to the traditional leadership and other stakeholders was to give feedback to the community on the findings of the Networks for Change study. Over a series of five community meetings and one community dialogue which took place between February and November 2019, the traditional leadership and community came to acknowledge that EFM was practiced in *eMangweni*, and to request assistance from UKZN and Themba lethu with the development of a protocol to address these practices. Together with the research team from UKZN, they were engaged in

⁸⁷ As discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, *ukuthwala* is a contested term and practice. Historically *ukuthwala* involved the staged abduction of a woman by her partner as a way to initiate the processes involved in concluding a customary marriage. Unfortunately, abduction and sexual assault perpetrated under the guise of the traditional practice of *ukuthwala* is a threat to the safety and well-being of girls and young women in South Africa.

co-developing what became a reporting and response protocol to address EFM in the community. The protocol was finalised and then signed by the *iNkosi* on behalf of the *Amangwe* Nation in March 2020 shortly before South Africa went into national lockdown in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The meetings were attended and chaired by the *iNkosi* or, if he was not available, his chief advisor. Also in attendance were a number of *iziNduna*⁸⁸, traditional healers, representatives from the South Africa Police Service, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the Office of the Premiere of KwaZulu-Natal, Legal Aid, teachers and the principal of the SIFs' school, the ward councillor and other members of the community. Having discussed it at length, in spite of our desire for the SIFs to take an obvious lead in the process, for a number of reasons, the adult research team and the SIFs came to a mutual agreement that the SIFs should not be present at the meetings with the traditional authority. Women and children, especially girls, are not encouraged to attend or participate in proceedings of the Traditional Authority. It would, therefore, have been inappropriate, even disrespectful, for the SIFs to attend the meetings and certainly unacceptable for them to speak during them. This being the case, we were concerned for the well-being of the SIFs who might face censure or worse in the community for disrespecting tradition. As the adult research team we did not want to disrespect the traditions of the community, and, perhaps a more selfish reason, we did not want to cause any offence that might derail this sensitive and delicate process towards social and policy change. The SIFs may not have been physically present, but to a certain extent, through their visual products and the explanations that they provided about them, their voices were.

⁸⁸ Part of the traditional leadership structure in South Africa, as defined by the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (No. 41 of 2003), *iziNduna* are headmen/women who, under the authority of the *iNkosi*, exercise authority over a particular area within a traditional community in accordance with customary law.

However, we decided that the SIFs would be at the community dialogue which is a less formal space where more and different people are given a platform to speak and engage. The dialogue, which took place after our second meeting with the community and the Traditional Authority, was attended by the *iNkosi*, and many of the same people who attended the meetings, along with other members of the community. The SIFs approached me to talk about presenting their own work at the dialogue. I was anxious about their well-being, not wanting them to become targets of ostracization or harassment, but they were determined. We worked on what they would say and decided which of their visual products they would present (their digital story, *Forced Marriage*). The SIFs presented confidently. They had the attention of the audience throughout their presentation and received applause when they finished. Their school principal also congratulated them for their hard work and dedication.



Image 5.18 The SIFs presenting their digital story and being congratulated by the Principal

Also during the community dialogue, two of the SIFs' mothers who had themselves experienced EFM gave testimonials about their experiences and the negative consequences of these practices in their lives. I discuss this phase of the study further in Chapter Eight of this thesis.



Image 5.19 One of the SIFs' mothers giving a testimonial about her experience (left), and the *iNkosi* addressing the community (right)

The figure below is a timeline of the research and community-based advocacy and policy-making activities:

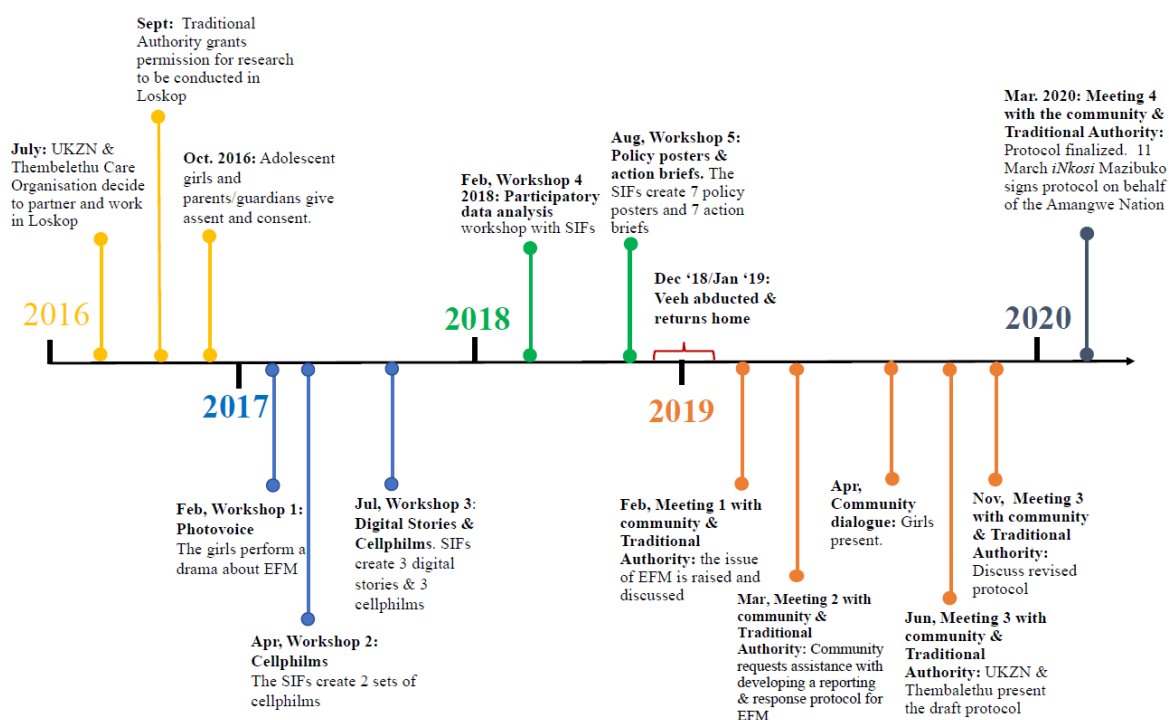


Figure 5.1 Study Timeline

5.5 Data Analysis

In addition to the participatory data analysis that forms part of the PVM process during workshops, and the participatory data analysis workshop held in February 2018, I engaged in a process of analysing all of the visual and audio-recorded and transcribed data following a more traditional approach to qualitative data analysis. I describe this process in detail in this section of the chapter.

Cultural studies theorist John Fiske (1987; 1989) distinguishes between three layers of textuality: primary texts, producer texts and audience texts. He argues that these three layers “leak into each other” and that “meaning is somewhere in the middle of these three layers of textuality.” (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 9). As illustrated in the figure below taken from Gubrium and Harper’s 2013 book, *Participatory Visual and Digital Methods*, each type or layer of text can be analysed to provide answers to particular types of questions.

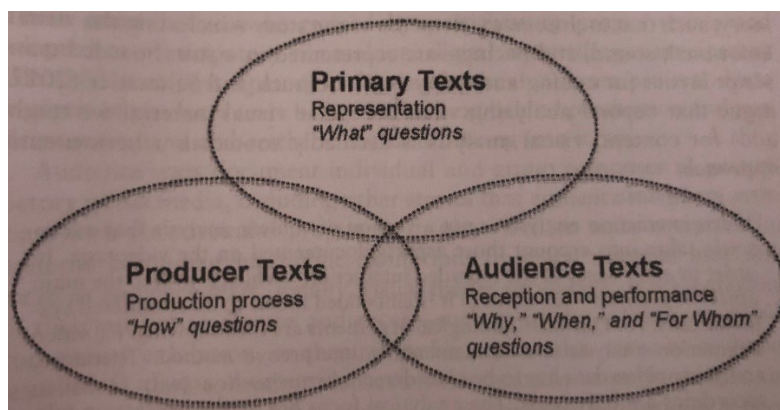


Figure 5.2 Types of data in participatory visual research (Gubrium & Harper, 2013, p. 185)

The primary text is the visual product, in this case photovoice posters, cellphilms, digital stories, policy posters and action briefs, produced by co-researcher participants. According to Gubrium and Harper (2013, p. 186), the primary text is “a key site for analysing representation” and is “ripe for the “what?” questions of thematic and content analysis such as “what issues do

research participants define as problems?” and “what aspects of culture do participants especially value?”, as well as more interpretive questions such as “what symbols does the producer associate with this topic?””.

Producer texts document the process involved in the production of the visual products, “treating the process itself as a site of inquiry” (Gubrium & Harper, 2013, p. 186). Researchers’ field notes documenting the process before, during and after the production of the visual product are considered producer texts, as are transcriptions of what participants say about their own visual product and the process involved in producing it (Gubrium & Harper, 2013). In this study, the production texts include both field notes, transcriptions of the producers of the visual products discussing their productions before screening and during the post-screening discussions, and transcriptions of our discussions during the participatory data analysis workshop.

Audience texts document individual and group responses of different audiences to the visual products produced by co-researcher participants. In this study, the audience texts include the responses of other co-researcher participants, the adult members of the research team, and community members as captured in field notes and the audio-recorded and transcribed post-screening discussions of the visual products. Analysis of audience texts provides answers to “why,” “when,” and “for whom” questions (Gubrium & Harper, 2013, p. 187).

I analysed these three types of texts using inductive thematic analysis which involves identifying, reporting and interpreting themes in the data (Boyatzis, 1998). Inductive thematic analysis involves identifying themes from the “bottom up” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In effect, the themes emerge from and are closely linked to the data (Patton, 2001). I chose to use

inductive thematic analysis as it tends to provide a rich description of the overall data set rather than a few aspects of it.

Boyatzis (1998) identifies two levels at which themes can be identified: a semantic level or a latent level. At a semantic level, themes are identified at the surface meanings of the data and the researcher does not look for any meaning beyond what is said by the participant(s). At a latent level, the researcher analyses the data “beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). In this study, I developed my themes and analysed my data at a latent level. This allowed me to focus not only on what was said in the data and by whom, but also on what was not said, or the silences in the data.

Data analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). According to these authors, while the phases are sequential and each phase builds upon the previous one, thematic analysis is an iterative and recursive process. This means that not only is there overlap between the different phases, during the process of data analysis it is often necessary to move back and forth between different phases. Throughout the six phases of data analysis described below, I discussed my analysis of the data with the Networks for Change research team as a form of peer debriefing (Nowell et al., 2017). I also discussed the themes that I identified with the SIFs as a form of member checking.

In *phase 1* (familiarisation with the data) of data analysis, I spent time immersing myself in the data by watching and re-watching the cellphilms and digital stories, re-viewing the photovoice posters, policy posters, and action briefs. I also did deep readings of the transcripts of post-

screening discussions, making notes about initial codes or ideas that I identified in the data. I made hand-written notes about the visual products, and electronic notes in comment boxes directly into the transcription documents. Although Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) argue that transcribing data "...can be an excellent way to start familiarising yourself with the data", I was not able to transcribe my own data as much of it was in isiZulu. Accordingly, as discussed above, Nkonzo transcribed the cellfilms and digital stories as well as all of the audio-recorded discussions and translated them into English for me.

Phase 2 (coding) involved developing codes that I used to identify important segments of the data that might be relevant to answering my research questions. I coded my data manually based on the notes that I had taken while familiarising myself with the data. I reduced the number of codes by identifying overlaps and repetitions. I organised all of the data into coded segments using colour-coded highlights in word documents. Importantly, I also coded for silences in the data, i.e. what was not said.

During *phase 3* (generating initial themes), I examined the coded data to identify broad patterns of meaning. This entailed grouping the various codes into potential themes and sub-themes. I did this by creating a thematic map of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 4 (reviewing themes) required me to return to the data to check that the initial themes that I had identified accurately reflected the meaning of the data, and could answer my research questions. I also needed to ensure that the themes were specific enough to exclude irrelevant data and be distinct from other themes, and broad enough to fully capture the ideas contained in the segments of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). In this phase, I discarded themes that were repetitive, did not accurately enough reflect the meaning of the data, or were

too vague. I also discussed the initial themes that I had developed with the Networks for Change research team during a project data analysis workshop. Importantly, I discussed these initial themes with the SIFs in an attempt to ensure that the themes accurately and authentically reflected their meaning and/or intentions.

During the *fifth phase* of data analysis (defining and naming themes), I named and defined each theme which, according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 92), involves “identifying the ‘story’ that each theme tells”. I present and discuss the themes and subthemes in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight.

The *sixth and final phase* of data analysis is the writing up phase and involves presenting the analysis in a coherent and cohesive narrative contextualised in relation to the theoretical framework and existing literature. In the writing of this thesis, as in the process of data generation and analysis, I have tried my best to pay careful attention to voice, representation, tokenism, and ethics.

The participatory data analysis processes involved in the PVM workshops and the participatory data analysis workshop combined with the data analysis process described in this section, enabled me to work with the data in a way that took into account the socially constructed and polysemic nature of the data generated through visual methods, and importance of the context of production in the interpretation of the data (Barley & Russel, 2019).

5.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research can be established via a number of different strategies. I used prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer reviewing or debriefing, reflexivity, member

checking, an audit trail, and rich, thick description to establish trustworthiness in my study (Cresswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In terms of prolonged engagement, the activities related to my study as part of the Networks for Change project took place over three years and five months (from October 2016 when we had our introduction meeting with the SIFs to March 2020 when the protocol was finalised and signed by the *iNkosi*). During this time, we had five multiple-day workshops with the SIFs, five meetings with the community and Traditional Authority, and one community dialogue. As described above, I was fortunate to be able to debrief with my Networks for Change colleagues regularly both informally and formally in data analysis workshops. Gubrium and Harper (2013, p. 187-188) suggest that primary, producer and audience text data can be triangulated to increase the trustworthiness of the findings. They further argue that comparing the responses of the producers of the primary text and the various audiences to whom they may be exhibited or screened functions as a form of member checks that “can reveal factual discrepancies and conflicting interpretations” (Gubrium & Harper, 2013, p. 188). Thus, our post-screening discussions of the cellphilms and digital stories served as a form of member checking. We also held a participatory data analysis workshop with the SIFs where we discussed the major themes identified in the data by both the adult members of the research team and the SIFs themselves. Another form of member checking that I engaged in in this study was to discuss with the SIFs during our workshops the themes that I was identifying in the data. Being reflexive about positionality and power relations in feminist and participatory research is important for the trustworthiness of qualitative research, and in order for us to do ethical participatory research (Hesse-Biber, 2004; Leavy & Harris, 2019; Sultana, 2007). The way that I was reflexive in this study included having formal and informal reflexive discussions about my study with my colleagues, and writing reflexive field notes. I have provided an audit trail for the inquiry in

this chapter by describing in detail the methods, procedures and decision points in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this thesis, I have attempted to provide a rich, thick description by describing my co-researcher participants, the research context, and fieldwork experiences in detail (Cresswell, 2007).

5.7 Research Ethics

Ethics are a central concern in both feminist and participatory research in which they are understood to be not an abstract concept or a set of universal principles and criteria that can be applied regardless of context, but rather a situated and relational practice that views all research as value-laden. Further, as Moletsane et al. (2008) observe, ethical considerations take on heightened importance in contexts of vulnerability and marginality: “the nature of this research context and the unequal power relations inherent in it require that we prioritize ethical approaches to conducting such studies” (p. 30). Bearing these things in mind, the approach that I took in this study required a careful balance between protection and participation (Coyne & Carter, 2018). To achieve this balance, I paid close attention to both procedural and situational ethics (see Tracy, 2010) in my study, making use of various strategies, including reflexivity to ensure that the safety and well-being of the SIFs was not compromised while acknowledging and respecting their autonomy.

As indicated above, ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee at UKZN (see Appendix A).

5.7.1 Informed Consent and Assent, and Release

The National Health Act (no. 61 of 2003) stipulates that active, written consent is required from the parent or legal guardian of persons below the age of 18 for participation in research (see

Zuch et al., 2012). As described above, the co-researcher participants and their parents or legal guardians were invited to a meeting during which they were informed about the project and what participation would entail, and invited to participate. In this meeting, we stressed that participation was voluntary and that, if they decided to participate, the girls could withdraw from the study at any time. Informed consent and assent forms (attached as Appendix C) were translated into isiZulu, and we provided both English and isiZulu versions to participants and their parents or legal guardians. We also went through the forms, paragraph by paragraph, in isiZulu in an attempt to ensure that participants and their parents or legal guardians fully understood the contents. To contextualise this process, we situated this discussion of consent within a broader conversation about consent in research and other circumstances. We stressed to participants and their parents/legal guardians that without the girls' assent, even if their parents or legal guardians gave consent, the girls would not be expected to participate. In our discussion of the potential risks involved in participation, we talked with participants about the reporting and referral procedures that we had put in place in the event that they disclosed any form of abuse, neglect or other form of immediate danger; and/or felt disturbed, upset or triggered at any time. Written consent was given by all parents/legal guardians for the SIFs participation in the study. All of the SIFs provided written assent to participate in the study.

In addition, similar to Leavy and Harris' (2019) explanation of process consent, I regularly and frequently discussed assent, consent and participation with my participants, reminding them throughout our time together that they were under no obligation to participate and that there would be no consequences for them should they choose to withdraw from the study. These conversations often took place during the check-ins that I facilitated at the beginning and end of each day of the workshops. We made the decision not to audio-record these check-ins as their purpose was not to generate data, but to build open and trusting relationships.

Konza (2005) argues that data generation and analysis in qualitative research are emergent, dynamic processes occurring over time which have “an unpredictable, unfolding quality” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 148 in Konza, 2005, p. 24), and as such, it does not make sense for assent or consent to be negotiated only once at the beginning of the research process. This is particularly true of research using PVM. Part of our on-going process of assent and consent with the SIFs was making sure that once they had completed their cellphilms and digital stories, they were comfortable to share them with the research team and the other co-researcher participants. This we did verbally, again stressing that they were under no obligation to share their work. Because the girls had not yet seen their visual products when they provided assent and consent, once they had completed and viewed their digital stories and cellphilms as a group, we went through a release process which involved requesting permission to archive, curate, and disseminate their visual products in specific spaces (see Appendix D). Much like we did with the informed consent and asset process, we discussed the implications of giving permission to share their visual products with the SIFs.

5.7.2 Ethical relationships

Feminist researchers take a relational approach to ethics that emphasizes the importance of building trust and rapport with research participants (Leavy & Harris, 2019). Ellis (2007, p. 4) defines relational ethics as an ethics that “... recognises and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between the researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work.” Important in a relational approach to ethics are issues of inclusivity, language, reflexivity, and active listening. A relational ethic calls on researchers to be mindful of their positionality and the role that they play in researcher-participant relationships. This reflexive approach to ethics stresses the importance of viewing

participants as whole and complex subjects rather than objects to be studied and from whom to extract data (Tracy, 2010). Once I had identified which workshops I would facilitate and from which I would generate data for the study reported in this thesis, I invested in building trusting and respectful relationships with the SIFs by engaging with them in ways that reflected the fact that I valued and respected them as people and as co-researchers. I did this by, for example, spending time with them outside of our research activities, seeking their input and advice, encouraging them to express themselves, actively listening, and practicing reflexivity as described above.

5.7.3 Ethics in participatory visual research

As I noted above, PVM has the potential to be useful in the exploration of sensitive topics particularly with marginalised groups. However, the use of PVM can also give rise to unique ethical issues and challenges, particularly in research focused on sensitive, even taboo, topics, like sexual violence (see Treffry-Goatley et al., 2017). Participant anonymity, a requirement of research ethics committees, can be challenging in participatory visual research. For example, how do we ensure the participation of co-researchers in community exhibitions or screenings of their visual products that attempt to stimulate dialogue and social change? To try to balance the need for anonymity and respecting the autonomy of the SIFs and their right to participation in the research process, I used different methods for different purposes. The cellphilms, in which it is impossible to keep anonymity as the participants are pictured in them, were used to develop deeper understandings of how the SIFs conceptualised and performed their femininities in their context, and were screened only to the other SIFs, the university research team, and our community partners (Xoli and the ward councillor). Although they also contributed to developing an understanding of the SIFs' femininities, the digital stories, which can be more easily anonymised, were created with advocacy in mind to be used as tools to

stimulate dialogue and social change. The digital stories were screened for an audience of community members and the Tribal Authority at community dialogues. This strategy did not fully address the issue of anonymity, as the SIFs engaged in community activities and presented their own work at the community dialogues. It would be unrealistic to think that the community was unaware of who the SIFs are and their participation in the study. However, we were able to work with the SIFs to ensure that they did not unintentionally disclose personal and/or identifying information to the community at large. One of the strategies that I used was to have the SIFs work in groups rather than individually so that the narratives they developed would be a collage of input from all group members. Another strategy was to stress to the SIFs that the stories that they told through their cellphilms and digital stories did not need to be their story or that of someone that they know, but that they should be about something that could realistically happen in their community.

5.7.4 Reporting and Referral

In terms of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (No. 32 of 2007), all citizens of South Africa who are aware of the sexual exploitation of children are compelled to report such exploitation (see Hendricks, 2014). But what of other forms of abuse and neglect? Researchers are not specifically named as mandatory reporters in the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005)⁸⁹, but there is an ethical obligation to report abuse, neglect and potential danger. Further, there is an ethical obligation for researchers to provide support to research participants who may have been triggered or upset as a result of participation in the study.

⁸⁹ Researchers are not named in the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005) as mandatory reporters. The Act gives ordinary citizens (i.e. those in professions not listed in the Act itself) the discretion to report abuse. However, according to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (No. 32 of 2007) any person is legally obliged to report sexual offences committed against children.

Given that the focus of the Networks for Change project was on sexual violence in the rural communities in which our co-researcher participants live, and the focus of my study was on potentially sensitive issues related to the construction of femininities (including taboos around sex, unequal gender norms, and traditional beliefs and practices), I carefully considered my responsibilities in relation to reporting and referral which were particularly important given that I was not always present in the community. Reporting and referral are challenging in rural contexts as there are very few, if any, services available in these communities. Fortunately, one of the ways that we were able to ensure that the SIFs would have support even in our absence was through our partnership with Thembaletu and Xoli who is a social worker. I also made myself available to the girls via phone and WhatsApp. Importantly, we made it clear to the girls that should they disclose to us any abuse, neglect, or threat of danger, we would support them in reporting it, and accessing the support they required. Later on in the study, I was fortunate to be able to refer the girls to Dr Sadiyya Haffejee, a counselling psychologist, when she joined the Networks for Change team as a postdoctoral research fellow.

5.7.5 Choice of Method and Technology

We consider the choice of method and technology to be, in part, an ethical decision. It was important to use methods that, in addition to generating data, had transformative potential for the SIFs, and could contribute to social change in some way by addressing the challenges identified by the SIFs. We chose to use technology and equipment including entry-level tablets and open-source software that was more likely to be accessible to the SIFs outside of the confines of the study so that we did not leave them with potentially transformative skills, but unable to use them. Finally, we chose to use the NER technique for the cellphilms and software like WeVideo so that the girls could create and edit their visual products relatively independently of the research team so as to reduce our involvement as adults in framing the

narratives, thereby minimising the risk of us imposing our values and assumptions on the girls' efforts to represent their lived experiences.

5.7.6 Power, Agency, Voice and Representation

Introduced and discussed at length in Chapters One and Two, for me, particularly as an older, English-speaking white person from an urban area doing feminist participatory visual research with a so-called marginalised group of young people in a postcolonial and post-apartheid context, power, agency, voice and representation are ethical issues. Important concepts in postcolonial feminist and participatory research, especially with young people, using participatory visual methodology was one of the strategies I used to try to democratise the research process, reduce the power gradient, encourage and support the SIFs' agency in the process, and more faithfully represent their voices. Reflexivity was a critical (in both senses of the word) tool in my attempts to negotiate power, agency, voice and representation in my relationship(s) with the SIFs. Having the support of a multi-disciplinary, multi-racial, and multi-lingual research team was invaluable. I must acknowledge, however, that as well-meaning as my attempts at achieving these goals of feminist participatory research, they are imperfect and fall short of the ideals of feminist participatory research. Obvious instances of this are the fact that I am the sole author of this thesis and that, in spite of my best intentions, the first time the SIFs actual words will appear in this thesis is in Chapter Six.

5.8 Reflecting on the Study Design and Methodology

I was committed to involving the SIFs meaningfully in as much of the research process as possible within certain constraints related to procedural and situational ethics, including the SIFs' own willingness and/or desire to engage in the various research processes. Consequently, the SIFs were more involved in some aspects of the research process than others. Mindful of Jordan's (2008) caution that "...power relations between professional researchers and

participants are not necessarily equalized or erased through the mere act of participation” (p. 603), I made an effort to be attentive at all times to the power relations inherent in my relationship with the SIFs, and to employ strategies to try to lower the power gradient between us, and support their active participation in the study as co-researchers. As Sultana (2007) has argued, power relations must be constantly negotiated and renegotiated within the constraints of the research relationship. The use of PVM was one of the strategies I employed in my efforts to democratise the research process, and negotiate power relations and participation with my co-researcher participants. These negotiations often took place during frank discussions of how the SIFs were feeling and experiencing the work we were doing together during the check-ins that we had at the beginning and end of each day of the workshops.

Water (2018, p. 39) suggests that “one of the first questions for researchers using participatory research is ‘who sets the research agenda?’”. Obviously, the broader research agenda for the Networks for Change had been set at the time of writing the research proposal. However, I wanted the process of setting the specific research agenda for my study (and thus the Networks for Change work with the SIFs) to be collaborative. As described below, we began our engagement with the SIFs by asking them more generally about the issues that affect girls’ safety and well-being in their community instead of insisting from the beginning that we focus on sexual violence (and a particular form of sexual violence at that). In so doing, we were able to identify and focus our research and policy change work on the issues most relevant to the SIFs in my study and the broader Networks for Change project. In this collaborative process, we deferred to the SIFs as experts on their own lives and community in influencing much of the research agenda.

Having started off in this way, I employed a number of other strategies throughout the research process to encourage a collaborative relationship with the SIFs. These strategies included engaging in discussions about the research process, the goals and expectations of the study, working together and what it might mean to be co-researchers. I also encouraged the SIFs to take ownership of the project by, for example, supporting them in establishing a group identity (solidified by, among other things, their naming of the group, and the designing of their own t-shirts). For me, an important part of establishing a collaborative relationship and minimising the power differential between ourselves and the SIFs involved supporting them in making decisions and plans in the project and assisting them in executing them. For example, when the SIFs suggested that we have a march and community dialogue to raise awareness about gender-based violence and the practice of forced and early marriage in their community, I assisted by ensuring that we got permission from the traditional authority, the police and the local municipality for the march to take place safely and legally. Another example of this is when the SIFs wanted to present their work at a community dialogue on forced and early marriage. Having discussed the pros and cons of the idea with the SIFs, I ensured that they had the equipment necessary to screen the digital story that they chose, and discussed with them what they would say and how they would say it. The SIFs were also involved in the data analysis process. As discussed below, the post-screening dialogues during which I engaged with the SIFs about the process of creating their cellphilms and digital stories as well as the content and themes of their visual products served not only to generate data, but also as the first layer of analysis of the visual data. In addition to this, we held a participatory data analysis workshop with the SIFs.

However, there were times when and processes in which, constrained by the limits of practicality, social and traditional norms and expectations, and their own level of interest, the

SIFs were less involved. For example, in our meetings with the traditional authority and other adult members of the community, the girls were not present. We made this decision for a number of reasons among which was the fact that in terms of traditional norms and practices, it would have been inappropriate for young people, particularly girls, to be present at such a meeting. Our concern was not only that this might derail our efforts to get the buy-in of the tribal authority and other adult members of the community for addressing GBV including forced and early marriage in the community, but that there might be negative consequences for the SIFs if they were seen to be disrespectful of traditional practices and custom. In this instance the balance between the SIFs' right to participation and their right to protection (Coyne & Carter, 2018) shifted to protection. Another process in which the SIFs' participation was limited was in the dissemination of the products and findings of the research. Due to time and funding constraints as well as the challenges involved in travelling with minors, and the norms and expectations of the academy, while the SIFs have presented their own work at community dialogues and Networks for Change events, they have not yet been involved in presentations at academic meetings and conferences outside of the Networks for Change project itself, and have not been involved in the writing of this thesis or any of the academic publications from the project.

As discussed above and in the preceding chapters, voice, too, is an important concept in both feminist and participatory research (Cornwall, 2000). To say that we 'give voice' to our co-researcher participants is a misrepresentation of them, our role as researchers in the research relationship, and the goal(s) of participatory research. Understanding our co-researcher participants as agents rather than objects (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995), we recognise that they have voice and that it is our role as researchers holding a particular kind of power in certain contexts to create spaces in which they feel comfortable and supported enough to express that

voice, and to try to create spaces in which their voices can be heard in the pursuit of social change. An important part of this role, then, is listening when our co-researcher participants speak through talking and through visual text, not only to what they say, but also to what they do not say. This is well illustrated by how clear and focused the SIFs were in setting our research agenda. Using PVM was a strategy aimed at creating spaces in which the SIFs felt comfortable to speak and be heard on potentially sensitive topics, and through which they could to some extent speak for themselves. That said, I acknowledge the critiques of how voice as a concept has been deployed uncritically in qualitative research caught up as it is with issues of authenticity and representation (see, for example, Mazzei & Jackson, 2009), and, thus, the limits of voice. Balancing the need to create spaces in which girls and young women in a rural community feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves with the recognition of the limits of voice was a particularly delicate process during the third phase of the study which involved community-based advocacy and policy-making.

5.8.1 Language, Interpretation, and Translation

Reflections on language, interpretation and translation in my study must be situated within the context of what has often been referred to as ‘the language issue’ in South Africa. Language, Parmegiani (2012) reminds us, “is not a politically neutral medium of communication, but a social practice that determines power relations and shapes subjectivity” (p. 74). Similarly, de Kadt (1991) observes that language “is never neutral, it empowers and disempowers; and any talk of a ‘better society,’ any hope for emancipation, requires as a precondition informed knowledge about the mutual dependency of language and power” (p. 1). The power of language and the language of power, sociologists and sociolinguists have long argued, is both pragmatic and symbolic. Language does not simply describe power relations, it encodes them. As Temple (2002) states: “language constructs the social world at the same time as it describes it” (p. 844).

In South Africa, language is implicated in colonial and apartheid systems of power. In post-apartheid South Africa, the complicated relationship between language, class, race, and power continues to impact the daily lives of South Africans who do not have access to English (Alexander, 2005). English, has, as a result of the complex and nuanced relations of power, identity, and politics during apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa and despite being the language of the coloniser, been considered a language of prestige, even liberation (de Kadt, 1991; Silva, 1997). Benefiting from a comparison with Afrikaans, the power of English in South Africa is both pragmatic and symbolic. South Africans and people residing in South Africa still need to have access to English to access the services and structures that are their right, including health care, education, commerce, and the justice system. English has retained its association with prestige among many South Africans. There is a rich body of literature on this issue in South Africa and around the globe⁹⁰, a detailed discussion of which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Norman Fairclough's classic text *Language and Power* (2015), now in its third edition, and Pierre Bourdieu's seminal text, *Language and Symbolic Power*, originally published in 1982 and now in its seventh edition. See also the following works of South African linguist Neville Alexander:

- 2002. Linguistic rights, language planning and democracy in postapartheid South Africa. In Baker, S. (ed.), *Language Policy: Lessons from Global Models*. Monterey, CA.: Monterey Institute of International Studies.
- 2005. The impact of the hegemony of English on access to and quality of education with special reference to South Africa. (Lecture delivered at the Language and Poverty Conference, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. 14 October 2005).
- 2012. The centrality of the language question in the social sciences and humanities in post-apartheid South Africa: Revisiting a perennial issue. *South African Journal of Science*, 109(9/10). <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajs.v108i9/10.1443>

Other useful texts include

- Bamgbose, A. 2000. *Language and Exclusion*. Hamburg: LIT-Verlag.
- Ntombela, B. X. S. (2016). "The burden of diversity": The sociolinguistic problems of English in South Africa. *English Language Teaching*, 9(5), 77–84.
- McKinney, C. (2007). "If I speak English, does it make me less black anyway?": Race and English in South African desegregated schools. *English Academic Review*, 24(2), 6–24.
- McKinney, C. (2013). Orientations to English in post-apartheid schooling. *English Today*, 29(1), 22–27.
- Parmegiani, A. (2012). Language, power and transformation in South Africa: A critique of language rights discourse. *Transformation*, 78, 74–97.
- Silva, P. "South African English: Oppressor or Liberator?" *The major varieties of English: papers from MAVEN 97, Växjö 20-22 November 1997*. https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/dsae/documents/articles/Silva_article.pdf

In research, whether it is acknowledged or not (see Temple & Edwards, 2002), the language issue is implicated in power relations, voice, representation, and trustworthiness. This centrality of language issues in research is particularly true in feminist and participatory research; and particularly salient in contexts like South Africa with its history of colonialism and apartheid. In South Africa, linguistic imperialism⁹¹ and its immediate and long-term effects remain a concern and it is important to make every effort to avoid knowingly or unknowingly reproducing the unequal power relations encoded in language in relationships with co-researcher participants and communities.

a) The Language Issue in My Study

My grasp of isiZulu is shamefully poor. This is indefensible especially because I have a Masters in linguistics with a focus on sociolinguistics, I have lived in KwaZulu-Natal for most of my life, and I work in predominantly isiZulu-speaking communities. Although spending a lot of time in Loskop with the SIFs over the last few years has resulted in a significant improvement in my competence in isiZulu, as is often the case with people who have learned an additional language as an adult, I am able to understand far, far more of the language than I am able to speak. I also tend to freeze when required to speak isiZulu. This also happens when I am required to speak my second language, German, to anyone outside of my family. The reason for this is not something that I have yet spent a great deal of time reflecting on – probably because it makes me feel uncomfortable.

⁹¹ Rose and Conama (2018) have defined linguistic imperialism as “a term used to describe the exploitation of the ideological, cultural and elitist power of English for the economic and political advantage by dominant English-speaking cultures.” (p. 386). Another definition of linguistic imperialism, offered by Galloway and Rose (2015), is a form of discrimination” based on language that unfairly treats certain linguistic communities, or unfairly advantages some languages over others” (p. 255).

In South Africa, because English is the language of learning and teaching from grade four onwards, the majority of South African children have at least some exposure to and therefore at least some level of proficiency in English. However, in terms of language acquisition and learning, the levels and contexts of exposure are often less than ideal. Learners in public schools in rural areas, in particular, tend to have limited exposure to first-language speakers of English and limited opportunities to practice the language outside of school. Further, it is common for teaching and learning in such schools to rely heavily on code-switching (from English to IsiZulu to English and so on) to explain concepts and contexts to learners who struggle with English as an additional language. The situation with the SIFs in Loskop seems to be no exception. When we first started working together, some of the SIFs were confident speakers of English with a relatively high level of proficiency. Others, however, battled with the language, although their proficiency improved during the time that we worked together.

With my limited proficiency and lack of confidence in isiZulu, and the SIFs being all first language speakers of isiZulu with varying levels of proficiency in English, I sometimes needed assistance with interpretation during workshops or meetings, and always with the translation of audio-recorded data. With the discussion above as a kind of background, it is easy to see how interpretation and translation in research involving a first language English speaker working with first language speakers of isiZulu is not only an intellectual or methodological endeavour, but a political one.

b) Interpretation and Translation

Temple and Young (2004) argue that “centring translation and how it is dealt with raises issues of representation that should be of concern to all researchers” because of the “hierarchies of language power, situated language epistemologies of researchers, and issues around naming

and speaking for people seen as ‘other’” (p. 162). Interpretation and translation are not neutral and value-free processes undertaken by disinterested and objective individuals (whether the researcher(s) themselves or someone specifically tasked with interpretation and/or translation) who simply produce in one language a word-for-word version of something someone has said in another which automatically contains all of the nuance and meaning of the original utterance. Rather, as Temple (2002) observes, “[t]ranslators [and interpreters] are active producers in research rather than neutral conveyors of messages.” (p. 846). Goitom (2020) contends that

Translation is not a neutral activity; it is fraught with nuanced issues of language and identity. This is a sensitive issue because the construction of meaning is fundamentally about being able to decipher ways in which particular words or phrases are used to describe particular life experiences, and these decisions are critical. Participants are embedded in their own contexts as they narrate their life stories, and ‘the politics of representation’ need to be taken into consideration during the process of making decisions about how the data will be represented. (p. 554)

While I recognise that translation and interpretation are different processes in a number of important ways, I nevertheless extend this argument of Goitom’s about translation to interpretation.

It is important, then, to acknowledge not only the language ability of the interpreter and/or translator, but also their position in relation to the research. In the act of interpreting or translating during data generation, transcription, and analysis, it is important to situate the data in the social context in which it was generated, the methods used to generate the data, and the ways in which this context influences the way that the data are analysed and represented (Goitom, 2020).

Because, as Nikander (2008) argues, interpreting and translating as activities or processes are both practical and ideological, it does matter that translation and/or interpretation during the research and analysis processes are identified. For this reason, and because “[s]peaking for others, in any language, is always a political issue that involves the use of language to construct self and other” (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 167), it also, then, matters who does the translating or interpreting. If attention must be paid to the positionality(ies) of the researcher and the co-researcher participant and the role that they play in the construction of knowledge and meaning in the research process, then attention must also be paid to that of the interpreter and/or translator.

c) Language, Interpretation and Translation in my Study

With restricted access to isiZulu and as a speaker of English, the language of power in South Africa, I spent a great deal of time thinking about the language issue and how it affected my relationship(s) with and the power dynamics between me and the SIFs, how it affected data generation, and authenticity in translations, interpretations and representations. My colleagues and I regularly returned to the topic during our debriefing and reflection discussions.

Workshops and meetings with the SIFs and the community were conducted in ‘Zunglish,’ a mixture of isiZulu and English (see Wiebesiek & Treffry-Goatley, forthcoming). Code-switching is a fairly common practice in South Africa, including, as discussed above, in educational settings. The SIFs were thus very familiar and comfortable with this strategy. I was very careful to remind the SIFs regularly during each workshop or meeting that they could speak and create their visual products in whichever language they chose. I tried to make it clear to them that if I did not understand something in isiZulu, the onus was on me to remedy that situation. When necessary, Professor Moletsane (the South African PI of the Networks for

Change project), Nkonzo or Xoli would interpret for the SIFs, members of the Traditional Authority, me or all of us. Having these colleagues interpret for me and the SIFs did not disrupt the dynamic or rapport that had been established between me and the SIFs because, as part of the Networks for Change research team, they spent almost as much time with the SIFs as I did and had also developed strong relationships with them.

Often, however, as we got to know each other better and became more comfortable with each other, the SIFs and I got on with the job of communicating across, between, and around the two languages together. In addition to some of the SIFs interpreting for me and each other, we would often stop each other when we did not understand something, ask each other questions, teach each other new words, phrases, and meanings, and sometimes discuss the challenges with interpretation and translation. Although I did not ask them about this directly, I do wonder if having linguistic knowledge and skills that were so obviously valued by me contributed to lowering the power gradient between me and the SIFs. At the risk of being reductive, as a white, English-speaking, older and a researcher, it seems, in many ways, obvious that I would hold more power in most of our interactions, certainly more of a certain type of power. However, I often had to appeal to the SIFs, not only for assistance with isiZulu, but also for advice, information about, or help understanding something about the traditions practiced in Loskop, traditional belief systems, or the way that the Traditional Authority structure works in Loskop. Asking these questions of the SIFs was not a strategy that I employed to help them to see themselves as experts and collaborators, and me as not uniformly 'more powerful', but as a collaborator with a certain, limited kind of knowledge and power. I was genuinely asking and genuinely listening to and learning from their responses. This too may have contributed to relationship-building between me and the SIFs. If I had used calculated and/or insincere tactics to try to gain their trust I strongly believe that the SIFs would have noticed immediately.

Further, my botched attempts at speaking isiZulu were endlessly amusing to the SIFs, which also served as a wonderful reminder not to take myself too seriously.

Interestingly, the SIFs looked on our interactions in English as useful and valuable opportunities for them to practice their English outside of the classroom. Reflecting on the language issue in the project, the SIFs explained during one of the workshops in 2017 that they would prefer to speak English with me and the rest of the research team because they wanted to have the opportunity to practice the language with people who are either first language speakers or second language speakers with native-like fluency. As I have argued elsewhere with my colleague Astrid Treffry-Goatley, while the SIFs benefited from being able to speak English with first language speakers, and valued this opportunity, our continued use of and reliance on English did nothing to disrupt the hegemony of English in South Africa, and in a way contributed to its perpetuation (Wiebesiek & Treffry-Goatley, forthcoming).

Introduced in Chapter One, much of the mammoth task of transcribing and translating the data generated for my study was done by Nkonzo. Having joined the Networks for Change as a research assistant, Nkonzo was involved in some way in almost all of the data generation activities for my study. This is important because in order to translate effectively, the translator needs to be aware of and familiar with the linguistic and social context within which the data are generated having been at and participated in most of the workshops and meetings, Nkonzo was as familiar with the context, the SIFs, and the data generated as I was.

The long-term engagement with the SIFs and our frequent and regular visits to Loskop meant that as Nkonzo was transcribing and translating the data, as we were discussing the transcribed and translated data, and as I was analysing the data and discussing it with Nkonzo and the rest

of the Networks for Change team, I was able to regularly check both the translation and the themes being developed during my analysis with the SIFs for accuracy and authenticity. In this way, some of the impact of the interpretation and translation was mediated. Over time, Nkonzo and I in particular also came to know the context rather well which helped with the translation. In spite of my lack of proficiency in isiZulu, my race, and very different circumstances of my upbringing in an urban area in South Africa with parents who were born in Europe, I spent so much time in Loskop and got to know the SIFs, the community, and the area so well that there were even times when Nkonzo asked for my input in the translation of a certain segment of data. Other strategies that I used to enhance the trustworthiness of the translated data and my analysis thereof was to check them against my fieldnotes, and to listen again to the relevant audio-recordings.

Certainly, interpretation and translation in research are problematic and can serve to exacerbate issues with power, voice, and representation in research relationships and in the research process. However, there are strategies available, imperfect though they may be, to address the challenges inherent in interpretation and translation. The use of participatory visual research with its focus on the relationship between researcher(s) and co-researcher participant(s), the co-construction of knowledge, and long-term engagement can be seen as one such strategy.

5.9 Limitations of the Study

It is not uncommon to see included in the limitations sections of qualitative study reports, articles, and theses, the fact that, due to the small number of participants, the findings are not generalisable. I am not including this as a limitation of my study. It was not designed to be representative and generalisable. However, there were several limitations of the study.

First, language was an issue in my study. We used a number of strategies to try to reduce the impact of the language difference on our relationships with the SIFs and on the research process: my colleagues were on hand most of the time to interpret when the SIFs and/or I needed assistance, the SIFs and I both made an effort to speak each other's languages and help one another improve our language skills, we made the best use possible of 'Zunglish,' and the SIFs' visual products were excellent vehicles for communication and conveying meaning. The SIFs also wanted to practice speaking English. Nevertheless, the way that the language issue was resolved in the study remains unsatisfactory and, following the completion of my doctoral studies, I fully intend to turn a large portion of my attention to improving my proficiency in isiZulu.

Second, in retrospect, I could have been more strategic about when to include the ward councillor and even Xoli in our PVM workshops. Their opinions being so influential with the SIFs, and the relationship dynamics between them and SIFs more influenced by age-hierarchies, at times silenced the SIFs in discussions about their own work, and even reinforced negative and potentially damaging stereotypes, values, and beliefs.

Third, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the final stages of the study. The *Reporting and Response Protocol to Address EFM in eMangweni* was signed by the *iNkosi* on 11 March 2020 shortly after which South Africa went into an almost complete lockdown from which, at the time of writing, we have yet to emerge. We were thus unable to hold any community engagement meetings to plan the dissemination and implementation of the protocol or monitor the community response to it.

5.10 Synthesis

Guiding the design and methodology of my study was my commitment to finding the most ethical and appropriate way to work *with* a group of girls to better understand, from their perspectives, how they construct their femininities within a context of poverty, GBV, and HIV&AIDS. My aim was also for us to use the knowledge that we co-constructed to work together towards social change. The choices I made in my research design, focusing as they did on the importance of my relationship with the SIFs, efforts to lower the power gradient between me and them, creating spaces where they could feel able and comfortable to express themselves, and finding ways to have their voices heard, reflect this commitment and aim. In this chapter I provided a rich and detailed account of the study as it unfolded chronologically. I introduced the context of the study and the Social Ills Fighters, described in detail the methods and processes involved in generating data, and the approach I took to data analysis. I then discussed how I ensured trustworthiness in my study, and the ethical considerations involved. As part of my practice of reflexivity, I concluded the chapter with a brief reflection on the research design and methodology.

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the SIFs' cellphilms and digital stories.

CHAPTER SIX

Girls Telling Their Own Stories: Narratives of Girlhood in Rural

KwaZulu-Natal

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the design of the study being reported in this thesis. Rather than using a specific method to generate data to address each of the three sub-questions I asked in the study, each sub-set of data, and the data set as a whole, contributes to the response to all of the sub-questions. The data set includes the visual products created by the SIFs, transcripts of post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions and my fieldnotes. In this chapter, I present and briefly discuss the four sub-sets of visual data generated during two workshops with the SIFs in the chronological order in which it was generated: original cellphilms, speaking back cellphilms, digital stories, and resisting and speaking back cellphilms. I do this for a number of reasons. First, so that, in the chapter that follows, I am able to refer to each visual product, sub-set of data, and the data set as a whole as I present the thematic analysis and the findings in response to the first two sub-questions I posed in this study⁹² in a clear and coherent manner. Second, in keeping with the principles of participatory research, feminist theory and research practice, and feminist postcolonial theory, I recognise the SIFs as experts in their own lives, producers of knowledge, and astute analysts of their own context. It is, therefore, important to try to create space in this thesis for the girls to tell their own stories from their own perspectives and for researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers to listen to and learn from those stories. Third and finally, presenting each of the visual artefacts produced by the SIFs demonstrates how the SIFs were able to communicate complex, nuanced, and subtle

⁹² 1) *How do a selected group of girls and young women in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?* and 2) *How do the girls and young women position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?*

dynamics, meanings and information through their cellphilms and digital stories. In other words, in addition to the transcripts of the post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions, the SIFs communicate their opinions, observations, and analyses through their visual products. The visual products presented in this chapter are the SIFs telling their own stories.

As discussed in Chapter Five, Fiske (1987; 1989) distinguishes between three layers of textuality: the primary, production and audience text, arguing that three layers “leak into each other” and that “meaning is somewhere in the middle of these three layers of textuality” (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 9). In this chapter as I discuss each cellphilm and digital story, I engage primarily with this first layer of textuality – the primary text.

For each visual product created by the SIFs, I provide a copy of the storyboard, a brief summary of the narrative, and a short discussion of the cellphilm or digital story.

6.2 Cellphilm Workshop, April 2017

As discussed in Chapter Five, during a three-day workshop held at the community hall in *KwaNdllela* in April 2017, in four groups, the SIFs produced two sets of cellphilms: four original cellphilms and four speaking back cellphilms.⁹³ In this section of the chapter, for each of the cellphilms, I provide a copy of the storyboard, a brief summary of the narrative, and a short discussion of the cellphilm. All of the quotes in the summaries of the narratives are from the cellphilms themselves, translated into English.

⁹³ This was the second workshop that we had held with the SIFs. As discussed in Chapter Five, the first workshop was held in February 2017.

6.2.1 The Challenges Faced by Girls in eMangweni: Original Cellphilms

The SIFs created the original cellphilms on the first day of the three-day workshop. By way of a prompt, I asked them to identify the things that they felt were affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in their community. The group produced a list of six issues: force marriage (sic), drop out [of school], teenage pregnant (sic), substance abuse, early marriage, and HIV&AIDS. As discussed in Chapter Five, I discussed with the SIFs the fact that their cellphilms did not have to be about their own experiences or someone they know or are close to, but should be about something that could realistically happen in their community. I also reminded them that they could produce their cellphilms in whichever language they preferred. Following the process described in detail in Chapter Five, the SIFs created four original cellphilms: *Substance Abuse 1*, *Teenage Pregnant 1* (sic), *Early Marriage 1*, and *Force Marriage 1* (sic).⁹⁴

6.2.1.1 Early Marriage 1 (05:19)



Image 6.1 The Storyboard for Early Marriage 1

⁹⁴ I have included the number one in the titles of the cellphilms here to assist with distinguishing the original cellphilms from the speaking back cellphilms which have the same names.

The cellphilm opens with two girls talking. One of the girls tells her friend that her boyfriend, Themba, has promised that he will take her as his wife, which she says will be easy because she already loves him. The girl's friend encourages her to marry Themba who then arrives. The girl briefly pretends that she needs to think about whether or not to marry him, then agrees. Themba asks the girl if she would like to go home first or go straight to his house. She decides that she would prefer not to go home as her mother would just "be a pest about everything, discouraging me from marrying you."

In the next scene Themba tells his mother that he is going to get married. She responds: "Are you telling me that we now have a wife in my house?" She says she is glad that there is a wife in the house because she is tired of washing and cooking for her son especially as he is no longer a child. Themba assures his mother that she will no longer need to do any of the household chores because his new wife knows how to do everything because she is from the same rural area. His mother tells Themba: "I want grandchildren here" and "I do not want a wife who is not able to have children". Themba tells his mother that he must call his uncles. In the next scene, Themba's mother approaches his new wife who is bent over in the traditional posture that new brides assume out of respect (*ukuhlonipha*) for their mothers-in-law. Calling her '*makoti*' (young bride), the girl's mother-in-law tells her that she is happy that the family is growing. She goes on to detail how a *makoti* is expected to behave – she must wake up early, and do all of the chores. She says that a wife "must be clean, as white as snow in the mountains." The girl says that she will do as her mother-in-law instructs. In the next scene, the tired-looking girl who is fanning herself with her doek (the head wrap that *makoti* traditionally wear) and Themba meet. He asks the girl why she has taken off her doek. Angry, the girl confronts her husband about being unemployed. Standing facing Themba, pointing her finger at him, she tells him: "Themba, you will not play with me. You took me from my home telling me that

you are working and that you will build me a house.” The girl also tells Themba: “I will not be fooled by you. Also, speak to your mother about her being a pest and worrying me about having children because I am not able to have children.” Themba says that she never told him that she cannot bear children. Still angry, the girl asks “Was there a reason for me to tell you that?” Themba tells her that he does not accept it to which she replies “I don’t care. That’s on you.”

In the next scene, Themba tells his mother that his wife is unable to bear children. His mother is furious, exclaiming “A person that is barren⁹⁵ that cannot have children!” She tells him “It is this thing of yours of wanting to marry young girls.” Themba tells his mother that he doesn’t “know what to do” with the girl. She responds “This means that she must leave this house... the reason she came here was to have children.” Themba disagrees with his mother saying that he does not think that it is right to make the girl leave. His mother persists, angrily asking “So what will she do here? What will she do if she can’t have children?... I want grandchildren to look after the chickens for me, and to herd the goats in the mountains.” Themba’s mother tells him that he “will have to find a new one [wife]” before walking off to see the girl muttering “Let me go and see this barren wife. Why can’t she have children? It is this thing of marrying when a person is too young. When her mother-in-law approaches, the girl is once again bent over in a posture of respect. Her mother-in-law asks why the girl can’t have children. When she says that she thinks it is because she is too young, her mother-in-law asks the girl why she got engaged to be married while she is still too young. Her mother-in-law tells the girl, “You must leave. What you are here to do is to get married and have children.” The girl looks shocked. When she asks what she must tell the people at home, the girl’s mother-in-law tells her that she must tell them that she was chased away because she is “barren and cannot not have children.” She goes on to tell the girl in a harsh tone “Your family must decide what to

⁹⁵ This is a translation of the isiZulu word used in the cellphilm.

do with you, but I do not want you here. You must leave. With her mother-in-law pushing her and telling her to “Go! Go!” the girl, now bent double with grief, sobs as she walks away.

Through this cellphilm, the creators have communicated with remarkable nuance several complex dynamics involved in gender relations, the practice of early marriage in *eMangweni*, and beliefs and understandings about marriage in this community. For the girl protagonist, love appears to be an important factor in her decision to marry. This is contrasted with the instrumentalised understanding of marriage and the role of the *makoti* (young or new bride) that the girl’s mother-in-law, who stresses the importance of hard work and childbearing, holds. The influential role of the mother-in-law in her son’s marriage is made very clear through this cellphilm, as is the understanding of marriage as a relationship between two families rather than two individuals (Hunter, 2010) as discussed in Chapter Three. The mother-in-law talks about having a “new wife in my house” and “our bride.”

The importance of fertility and child-bearing in marriage comes through strongly in the cellphilm from the mother-in-law’s emphasis on it when Themba first tells her that he is engaged, to Themba’s reaction when the girl tells him she cannot have children, and the mother-in-law’s eventual eviction of the girl on the grounds that she is ‘barren.’ This emphasis on child-bearing underscores the fact that the girl’s value is determined in large part by her reproductive potential or lack thereof. It is worth noting that both the girl and her mother-in-law attribute the girl’s inability to have children to her young age, echoing a popular argument against both early marriage and sexual debut at a young age that we heard frequently from the SIFs and our community partner.

The creators of the cellphilm also allude to the processes involved in *lobolo*⁹⁶ negotiations when Themba tells his mother that he must call his uncles. The audience knows that Themba needs to contact his uncles because it is the senior male members of the groom's family who go to the bride's family to initiate *lobolo* negotiations. The creators of Early Marriage 1 also show that *ukuhlonipha*⁹⁷ is still practiced in *eMangweni*. This is demonstrated through the stooped posture of the girl when she is interacting with her mother-in-law, the fact that she does not make eye contact with her mother-in-law, unquestioningly agrees to do as her mother-in-law instructs, and does not challenge her mother-in-law when she is being chased out of the house. Another reference to *ukuhlonipha* in the cellphilm is Themba's displeasure when he finds the girl not wearing her doek.

While the girl does not at any point challenge her mother-in-law, she does actively challenge Themba. This demonstration of resistance is promising because it suggests that girls and young women are not always only acquiescent, obedient, and subservient to their male partners.

The cellphilm also suggests that early marriage is not supported by everyone in *eMangweni* as the girl tells Themba that her mother would be an impediment to the marriage. In this cellphilm the girl protagonist has clearly chosen to marry early in spite of what we assume are her mother's wishes. The cellphilm ends with a sense of helplessness and desperation. Her mother-in-law has told the girl "your family will decide what to do with you, but I do not want you here." All the girl can do is cry as she does as she is told.

⁹⁶ *Lobolo*, sometimes translated into English as bride price, is a practice which involves the family of the groom giving the family of the bride an agreed upon amount of wealth in the form of cattle and/or cash prior to the customary marriage being concluded.

⁹⁷ Generally practiced by women and children, *ukuhlonipha* is a set of physical and linguistic behaviours that signal respect of social superiors.

6.2.1.2 Force Marriage 1 (04:43)



Image 6.2 The Storyboard for Force Marriage 1

In this cellphim, a girl, Mbali, and her friend, Zama, go to fetch water. At the river they meet a man, TK, who asks to speak to Mbali in private. Zama leaves Mbali and TK to talk. TK tells Mbali that he wishes that she would marry him. Mbali responds: "...the issue of marriage, I would like to kindly decline." When TK asks why she has declined his proposal, Mbali says that she would like to finish school first. TK tells her that school is just holding her back. Mbali disagrees, but TK tells her that he loves her even if she is not educated. Mbali insists that she wants to be educated.

In the next scene Mbali's mother asks her why she is home so late from fetching water. Mbali explains that she was delayed by a man who says he loves her and wants to marry her. Her mother is shocked when Mbali tells her that she does not want to get married because she is too young. Her mother says that Mbali is old enough now to manage her own home and stand on her own. In the next scene, Mbali confides in her friend, Zama, who says that, if it were her, she'd be happy. Zama sees the proposal as an opportunity, and says: "You know friend, you

will live a comfortable life and forget about this miserable life that you are living now.” Zama encourages Mbali to “take this opportunity” and to “stop playing with such a good opportunity.” Mbali returns home but sneaks out to see TK.

In the next scene, TK calls Zama and tells her that he “finally got the girl. We are married now.” Zama tells TK that she is happy for him. Zama delivers the news about Mbali’s marriage to her mother who is overjoyed. She ululates⁹⁸ and exclaims: “We will now receive *lobolo*!”. In the next scene, TK tells Mbali that she will stay at home while he goes to Johannesburg⁹⁹ to look for work. In the final scene of the cellphilm, Mbali speaks directly to the camera saying “if only I knew I wouldn’t have come here.” Crying, she says that her husband has left her with two children in poverty and misery.

In *Force Marriage 1*, the film-makers draw attention to the social and economic significance of marriage. The cellphilm does not tell a story of *ukuthwala ngenkani* or a marriage concluded as a result of physical force, but rather about the coercion and pressure to marry that girls and young women experience from their parents, their peers, and the men who intend to be their husbands. Mbali marries TK with the appearance of willingness after her mother, her friend, and TK have all dismissed her protestations and clearly expressed wishes and pressured her into the marriage. In spite of Mbali’s protestations that she is too young to get married and wants to finish school, her mother insists that Mbali is “old enough to now to take care of a house and stand on her own.” The cellphilm also clearly communicates the role played by the context of poverty in this kind of marriage. Through Mbali’s mother’s obvious joy at the prospect of receiving *lobolo*, the creators of this cellphilm comment on their analysis of the

⁹⁸ Ululation is a sound made to cheer or celebrate, or to mourn. In this case, it is an expression of joy and celebration.

⁹⁹ Johannesburg is the largest and most populous city in South Africa and the economic and financial hub of the country.

problematic nature of this practice. Mbali's friend, Zama, frames the potential marriage as advantageous, an "opportunity" to escape poverty. In a context where unemployment is extremely high and few people have the opportunity to enter tertiary education, marriage to someone with relative wealth is seen by many as a reasonable way to secure a better future.

That TK leaves to go to Johannesburg to look for a job does not strike the audience as odd. This form of migrant labour has persisted in South Africa decades after the end of colonial rule and apartheid.¹⁰⁰ High rates of unemployment in rural areas, and the inability of families to survive on subsistence farming alone drives many people to urban centres in search of paid employment. In *eMangweni*, situations like TK and Mbali's, where the husband works away from home and the wife stays at home to look after the children and family, are common.

The consequences for Mbali of her marriage to TK are serious, and she bears them alone. She is left to raise and provide for her two children. Like *Early Marriage 1*, *Force Marriage 1* ends with a sense of hopelessness and desperation. Without a husband or an education, Mbali's prospects for a future in which she and her children can escape poverty are poor. Through this cellphilm the film-makers challenge the belief that marriage is a solution to poverty or a way to secure a better future.

¹⁰⁰ During the colonial period in South Africa and apartheid, the migrant labour system was set up to ensure that there was enough labour to work on the mines and other industries in the cities while ensuring that Black South Africans did not permanently migrate from their rural homes into areas intended only for white inhabitants (Vosloo, 2020).

6.2.1.3 Substance Abuse 1 (02:13)

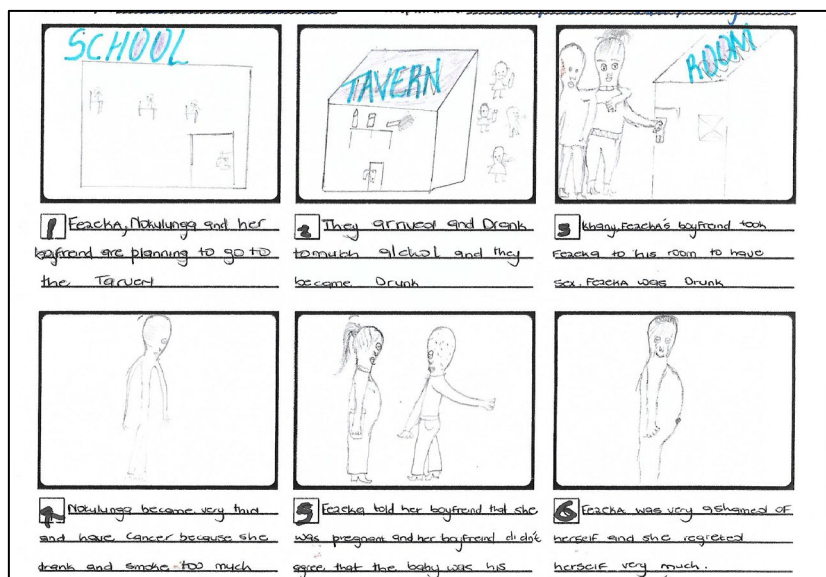


Image 6.3 The Storyboard for Substance Abuse 1

In *Substance Abuse 1*, a girl tells her friend that her boyfriend is taking her out that evening after school and she would like her friend to join them. The three go to a tavern where they dance and drink alcohol. Drunk, the girl and her boyfriend stumble to his home. In the next scene the girl and her boyfriend emerge from behind a door adjusting their clothes. The audience assumes that they have had sex. The next scene takes place some time later when the girl and her friend meet up. The girl's friend tells her that she has been sick since that night, and the girl informs her friend that she is pregnant and does not know how she will tell the father of her child. In the next scene, the girl goes to her boyfriend's house. She tells him that she is pregnant and that it is his child. He vehemently denies it. The girl insists that she has only had sex with him, but he continues to deny paternity and pushes her away telling her to "Leave! Leave!" She walks away covering her eyes and sobbing.

On one level, *Substance Abuse 1* illustrates the role played by substance use in girls' lives and their well-being as understood by the creators of this cellphilm; on another, it comments on the

nature of relationships between girls/young women and boys/men. The two girls in the story are both still in school and so are likely (although not necessarily) under the legal drinking age in South Africa which is 18. The consequences of the choices made by the three characters are gendered. While both the girls – the main character and her friend – and the main character’s boyfriend choose to go out drinking, and both the main character and her boyfriend are involved in the sex that results in her pregnancy, it is only the two girls who appear to suffer the consequences of their decision to drink alcohol. The main character’s boyfriend walks away from his pregnant girlfriend presumably to continue his life unencumbered by unplanned pregnancy and a child. There is sense in the cellphilm that the girls are being punished with illness, unplanned pregnancy and abandonment for their ‘bad behaviour’ of going out and getting drunk.

Like *Early Marriage 1* and *Force Marriage 1*, this cellphilm ends with a sense of hopelessness and desperation as the main character walks away from her boyfriend sobbing.

6.2.1.4 Teenage Pregnant 1 (01:53)

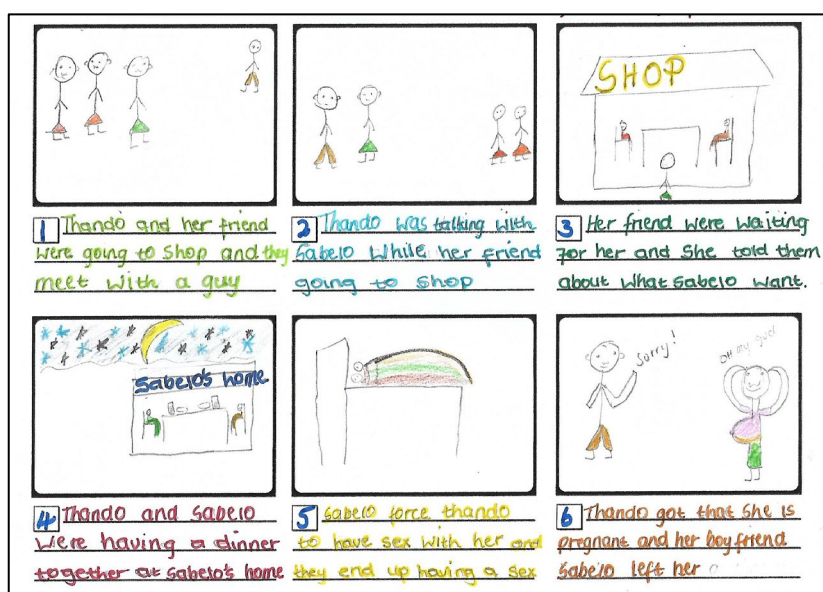


Image 6.4 The Storyboard for Teenage Pregnant 1

In *Teenage Pregnant 1*, a boy, Sabelo, asks if he may speak to one of the girls, Slindile, in private. Sabelo tells Slindile that she looks beautiful and asks her to visit him at his home in the afternoon. Slindile agrees. In the next scene Slindile returns to her friends and tells them that Sabelo has asked her to visit him. One of her friends is supportive of her plans to visit the boy at his home saying that she must go because it is a “good thing”, that the boy might be “the one”, “Mr Right”, and might “marry you”. Slindile’s other friend tries to dissuade her from going, warning her that the boy “will rape, force you to have sex with him without your consent”. In the next scene Slindile arrives at Sabelo’s home. He tells her “I was not expecting you to show up. You did the right thing. I want to show you how much I love you.” When Slindile asks Sabelo how he intends to do that he replies “by sleeping with you.” Slindile tells Sabelo that she does not think that it is a good idea to which he forcefully responds “Why?!” Slindile once again says no, to which Sabelo responds: “You think if you can be cheeky with your friends you can be cheeky with me as well.” Slindile tells Sabelo “You said you love me.” Scornful, he replies “Oh come on! Those are only just words. I am pleading with you.” When Slindile does not respond, Sabelo grabs her hand and leads her away. In the next scene Sabelo and Slindile are seen adjusting their clothing. Sabelo thanks Slindile who then leaves. In the next scene, a visibly pregnant Slindile runs into Sabelo. Sabelo tries to ignore her, but Slindile blocks his way and tells him that she is pregnant and that it is his child. He denies that he is the father of the child and tells Slindile that she must ask other people. Even though she insists that she only slept with him, Sabelo walks away from Slindile. In the final scene of the cellphilm, Slindile falls to her knees crying and calling out Sabelo’s name.

Through this cellphilm, the film-makers communicate about and comment on two parallel discourses about love, sex, and relationships that often co-exist. One revolves around romantic

notions of marriage, the other around the constant threat of violence.¹⁰¹ Girls, it seems, must navigate this treacherous fine line in order to stay safe, preserve their reputations, and achieve happiness. In *Teenage Pregnant 1*, the film-makers also reveal some of the dynamics involved in sexual coercion.

Like *Substance Abuse 1*, there is a sense that the girl protagonist is being punished in some way for having sex before marriage. There appear to be no consequences for Sabelo either. Slindile is cruelly rejected by Sabelo and left to shoulder the responsibility of the unplanned pregnancy alone. In his denial of paternity, Sabelo implies that Slindile has been ‘promiscuous,’¹⁰² and is therefore to blame for her circumstances. The final scene in which Slindile, cruelly rejected by Sabelo, falls to her knees calling out his name in anguish is heart-breaking. *Teenage Pregnant 1*, like the other three original cellphilms, ends with the girl protagonist crying and a sense of hopelessness and desperation.

6.2.1.5 Discussion of the Original Cellphilms

The list of topics that emerged during the brainstorming for these cellphilms suggest that the SIFs are well aware of some of the major challenges, or as they refer to them, “social ills” faced by girls and young women in their community and in South Africa more broadly. That they chose to focus on the four issues that they did suggests that they consider these four social ills to be the most urgent issues affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in *eMangweni*. However, it is also important to note that issues like teenage pregnancy, HIV&AIDS, and dropping out of school are also often mentioned by schools, parents, the media, government campaigns, and development organisations as major challenges facing girls

¹⁰¹ These parallel discourses converge when violence and abuse are explained as demonstrations and expressions of passionate love.

¹⁰² I enclose this word in inverted commas because the very concept of promiscuity is a gendered social construct that is used to police girls’ and women’s sexuality.

and young women in South Africa. It is not unlikely that the SIFs have been influenced to some extent by these external messages.

As discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, discourses around the challenges that girls and young women face tend to place a huge amount of responsibility on girls as individuals to make ‘good’ decisions or choices and protect themselves from these threats to their virtue and well-being. This is in spite of the circumstances that limit their power and shape or constrain the choices available to them. Failure to make the ‘right’ choices or decisions and protect themselves is often framed as a personal failure on the part of the girl, rather than as a result of social and structural systems including gender inequality. Failing to acknowledge that girls’ ability to exercise agency in personal and other relationships is often limited due to gendered expectations about girls’ acquiescence, and that their choices are constrained by poverty and ideas about culture and tradition, results in an overemphasis on girls’ agency and responsibility. Programmes and solutions based on this idea of girls’ agency and are often ineffective because they do not address the structural issues with which girls must contend.

There is a sense in each of the cellphilms that the consequences that the girls face are almost a punishment for their failure to make ‘good’ choices, including staying in school; resisting the pressure of friends, family, and suitors to get married; and avoiding substance use. Something that is striking about the cellphilms is that while two of the four protagonists end up pregnant, presumably due to sex without a condom or any other means of contraception, there is no mention in any of the cellphilms about HIV, a real concern in South Africa, particularly among girls and young women aged between 15 and 24. In this sub-set of data at least, HIV does not appear to form part of the ‘punishment’ for the girls’ bad choices.

The overwhelming sense of hopelessness and helplessness in the bleak endings of all of the original cellphilms reveals just how powerless the SIFs feel that they and other girls and young women are against the contextual factors that make them vulnerable and put them at risk. Considered on its own, this sub-set of data seems to reflect many parts of the girl-in-crisis narrative including the girl protagonist's inescapable vulnerability and inability to do anything about it, and their need for rescue not just from poverty, but also from their culture and the men who prey on them. There are, however, small but important glimpses of challenge and resistance. In *Early Marriage 1*, for example, the girl protagonist challenges Themba. In *Teenage Pregnant 1*, although ultimately unsuccessful, Slindile expresses her wishes and attempts to argue with Sabelo when he is coercing her to have sex with him.

6.2.2 Challenging the Status Quo? Speaking Back Cellphilms

On the third day of the workshop, the SIFs created a second set of cellphilms to 'speak back' to their original cellphilms. As discussed in Chapter Five, the aim of the speaking back cellphilms was for the SIFs to reflect on the cellphilms that they had created and the discussions we had had about them, and create new cellphilms that "...contest or contradict the content or messages of the previous productions, and in relation to questions such as the following: what's missing? Who's missing? What stories are not being told? What does our doing do?" (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 49). We began the cellphilm activity by reflecting again on the original cellphilms, discussing various things that we had found particularly striking in the original cellphilms. Two things in particular were identified as significant during the discussion: the fact that all of the cellphilms ended with the girl crying and appearing helpless and hopeless, and the fact that there did not seem to be any consequences for the boys. I also mentioned that it seemed to me that even though the girl protagonists had tried to make the best decision in the circumstances (*Force Marriage 1*), had not done anything so very terrible (*Early Marriage 1*,

Substance Abuse 1), or were put in situations in which they had few choices available to them (*Teenage Pregnant 1*), the consequences for them were dire. We then talked about speaking back and what it meant. I asked the girls to get back into the same groups they had worked in for the original cellphilms and think about their original cellphilms and what could be changed or different in or about their stories so that the endings were not so very dreadful for the girls. The SIFs created four speaking back cellphilms with the same names as the original cellphilms.¹⁰³

Once again in the sections that follow, for each cellphilim, I present the storyboard, a brief summary of the narrative, and a short discussion. All of the quotes that appear in the summaries are quotes from the cellphilms translated into English.

6.2.2.1 Early Marriage 2 (04:06)



Image 6.5 The Storyboard for Early Marriage 2

¹⁰³ As noted above, I have included the number two in the title of the cellphilms to help to distinguish between the original and the speaking back cellphilms.

Beginning from where the Early Marriage 1 ended, the girl is seen crying as she walks with a bag, saying: “What am I going to become? Oh my!”. As she approaches her home, the girl’s mother comes out and says: “It’s you, Satan. What are you doing here?”. The girl explains that she was chased away by her mother-in-law. Her mother responds: “What are you doing here? So, you saw it fit to come here?”. The girl explains that she has nowhere else to go. When her mother asks her why she was thrown out the girl explains that it was because they said that she is not able to bear children. Her mother says to her: “You did that to yourself! Go back there!”. The girl continues to cry as she walks away. In the next scene, the girl is seen next to a tree preparing a noose. She says: “I have taken the decision to kill myself. I am tired of the life I am living with my in-laws. Everyone does not want me. I can’t bear children. It’s best just to kill myself”. A friend of the girl’s is walking past and intervenes. In the next scene, the girl’s friend takes the sobbing girl to her home and tells her mother that she was about to commit suicide. The girl’s mother thanks her friend, embraces the girl, and says that she will contact the in-laws. In the next scene, the girl’s mother addresses a family meeting which includes the in-laws. She informs the group that her daughter’s husband, Themba, chased her away from his home. He denies this saying that he was not at home when she left and was told that his wife had packed her belongings and left. The girl’s mother admonishes both Themba and his mother, saying: “Didn’t you take my child and say that you will treat her well? What happened to those promises?”. The girl’s mother-in-law confesses that it was she who chased the girl away. She says: “I should not have chased her away, because she did not make herself unable to bear children”. The girl’s mother-in-law says that they accept the bride, and that she apologises for what she did. The girl’s mother makes the in-laws promise not to hurt her daughter again. In the next scene the girl’s mother-in-law says to her son: “I am happy that our bride has returned” and apologises to him. Themba forgives his mother and says that he has found a job. His mother expresses her joy and says that they will now live comfortably. Themba

says that he has bought his bride “all of the necessary things” and is thinking of buying her a ring. The man and his mother call the girl. She arrives bent over in respect. Her mother-in-law apologises to the girl saying that Themba has found a job and they will now live comfortably. The cellphilm ends with the three of them embracing.

In *Early Marriage 2*, that the girl protagonist, cruelly rejected by both her husband’s family and her own, decides to commit suicide demonstrates just how trapped and hopeless she felt in that moment. The way that the problem in the girl’s relationship with Themba and her mother-in-law is resolved between the two families once again demonstrates that a marriage is not understood to be between two individuals, but between two families (Hunter, 2010). In contrast to the highly emotionally charged issue of suicide, the reconciliation, a result of the girl’s mother’s intervention, seems fairly easily achieved. All of the problems (including Themba’s joblessness, the girl’s inability to have children, and her mother-in-law’s negative response to this) seem to resolve and the girl, still bent over out of respect for her mother-in-law, is welcomed back by Themba and her mother-in-law. The marriage is saved and, in a nod to romance, Themba even says that he is thinking of buying the girl a ring.

This speaking back cellphilm does not really resolve or challenge the practice of and social norms around early marriage itself. Instead of re-telling the story in such a way that the girl and Themba do not get married, or that Themba and his mother do not reject the girl for being unable to bear children, the creators of this cellphilm solve the ‘problem’ by making the mother-in-law more forgiving and by making Themba regret what happened and find a job.

6.2.2.2 Force Marriage 2 (03:51)



Image 6.6 The Storyboard for Force Marriage 2

Starting from where *Force Marriage 1* ended, *Force Marriage 2* opens with Mbali's mother wondering how her daughter is doing in her marriage. In the next scene Mbali is seen walking, downcast, towards her home. Mbali's mother is shocked to see her. When her mother asks her how she is and how her marriage is, Mbali tells her mother that her husband, TK, no longer returns from Johannesburg and has left her in poverty with two children. Mbali's mother holds her hand as she says that she is sorry. Mbali says that she doesn't know what to do. Mbali's friend Zama comes to visit and asks why Mbali is at her mother's house. Mbali's mother explains that she is having marital problems. Zama apologises to Mbali "for all I have done." Her mother says that they would like Mbali to forgive them as well. Mbali forgives her friend and her mother. Mbali tells her mother and Zama that she plans to go back to school; they agree that it is a good idea. Mbali's mother says: "Her future is still going to be bright."

In the next scene, TK is seen approaching Mbali's mother's house, unsure. He eventually knocks on the door. Shielding her, Mbali's mother asks him what he's doing there. Furious,

Mbali and her mother chase him away shouting “Get out of here, you Satan!” In the next scene, Zama and Mbali celebrate that they have passed matric. TK comes to the house as they are celebrating. Mbali’s mother allows him into the house. He explains that he is there to apologise to Mbali who responds: “You know what, TK? I forgive you on the basis that I do not need you in my life.” TK also asks for Mbali’s mother’s forgiveness which she reluctantly grants. They wish TK farewell and he leaves.

By having Mbali’s mother and her friend Zama apologise to her, in *Force Marriage 2*, the film-makers emphasise the important role these two people played in convincing Mbali to enter into what was a disastrous marriage, and therefore their partial responsibility for the consequences of that marriage for Mbali. Challenging the hopelessness at the end of *Force Marriage 1*, in this speaking back cellphilm the creators give Mbali a second chance to achieve a good life. Mbali returns to school and passes matric (Grade 12). In this way education is presented as the pathway to a bright future.

Like *Early Marriage 2*, in this cellphilm the husband of the girl protagonist comes to regret treating her poorly. However, in *Force Marriage 2*, the film-makers challenge the idea that marriage must be preserved at all costs, and that a woman’s greatest accomplishment is marriage and motherhood and these are the only things to which she should aspire.

The film-makers chose not to re-tell the story such that Mbali was able to resist the pressure from her mother, her friend, and TK and the temptation of an escape from poverty and continue to refuse to get married thereby avoiding the dire circumstances she faced at the end of *Force Marriage 1*. However, the sense of Mbali’s growing agency and hope for her future at the end of *Force Marriage 2* suggests a shift in the attitudes of the creators of this cellphilm towards

seeking alternatives to marriage and imagining new possibilities for their lives like going to university. The cellphilm also communicates an important hopeful message about second chances.

6.2.2.3 Substance Abuse 2 (02:23)



Image 6.7 The Storyboard for Substance Abuse 2

This group decided to retell the story from *Substance Abuse 1* from the beginning, but change the ending. In the first scene, a girl tells her friend that her boyfriend is taking her out that evening and she would like her friend to join them. The three go to a tavern where they dance and drink alcohol. Music plays in the background. Drunk, the girl and her boyfriend go to his home where the audience assumes they have sex as they emerge from the room adjusting their clothing. The next scene takes place some time later when the girl and her friend meet up. The girl's friend is crying and tells her that she is sick, and the girl informs her friend that she is pregnant and does not know how she will tell the father of her child. In the next scene, the girl goes to her boyfriend's house. She tells him that she is pregnant and that it is his child. He vehemently denies it. The girl insists that she has only had sex with him, but he continues to

deny paternity and tells her she is lying. In the next scene, the visibly pregnant girl goes to visit her Aunt, and tells her that the father of her baby is denying that it is his. Her Aunt says: “Oh, my child! Don’t cry, my child! At this point there is nothing that you can do, but this is not the end of your life. You will go back to school and study, and everything will be ok, do you hear me?”. The girl thanks her aunt for her support and the two embrace. In the next scene, the two friends meet up once again. The girl who was sick is better, and the girl who is pregnant is about to return to school. In the final scene of the cellphilm, the girl’s ex-boyfriend is seen walking, downcast, regretting his decision to abandon the mother of his child and the baby while a sad song plays in the background.

The creators of *Substance Abuse 2* do not further interrogate substance abuse as an issue itself in this speaking back cellphilm, nor do they explore alternatives to the girls choosing to go out drinking, the protagonist and her boyfriend having sex without a condom, or the protagonist’s boyfriend denying paternity. As was the case with *Early Marriage 2* and *Force Marriage 2*, the film-makers chose not to change the story told in their original story such that the negative things did not happen to the girl protagonist (and her friend). Rather, they chose to resolve the problem after it arose. The main character seeks and finds love and support from a trusted adult. In this cellphilm, education is once again framed as providing the best pathway to success. Fortunately, the main character’s friend recovers from her mysterious illness. Once again, the boyfriend comes to regret his decision to reject his girlfriend and child, and thus experiences the consequences of his actions.

6.2.2.4 Teenage Pregnant 2 (03:13)

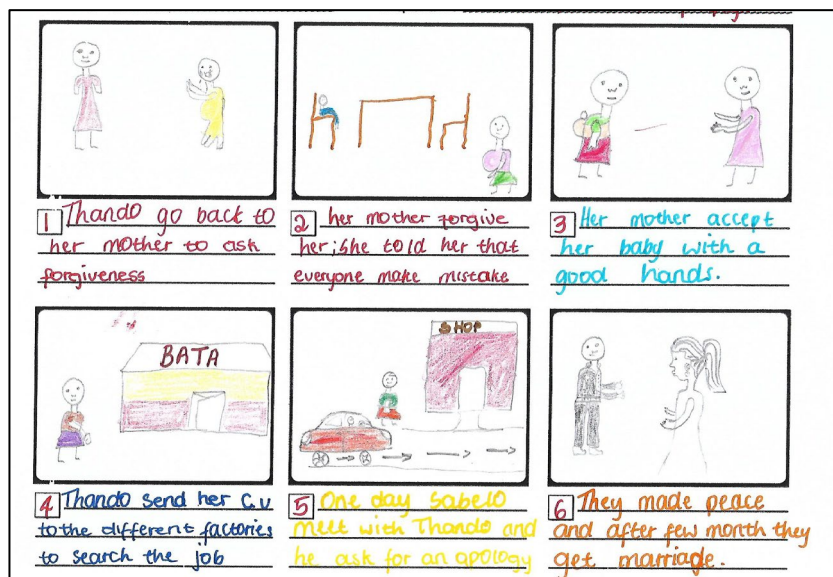


Image 6.8 The Storyboard for Teenage Pregnant 2

Beginning after the end of *Teenage Pregnant 1*, a visibly pregnant Slindile goes to her mother's house to ask forgiveness for becoming pregnant. Her mother refuses to forgive her, telling Slindile: "Did I not chase you away from this house? Why have you come here? Why have you come?". Slindile gets on her knees and begs her mother's forgiveness, but her mother tells her to get out. Once she has left, Slindile's mother says: "The child does not respect me. She returns asking for forgiveness, but she shamed me in the community and still has the guts to return and ask for forgiveness. This child is making me sick, really sick! She's after things that are not of her age."

In the next scene, Slindile returns to once again ask for forgiveness on her knees. Her mother finally forgives her and says that she has been worried about her. They embrace. Some time later, Slindile carries her baby to meet her mother who holds the child and exclaims that she is beautiful. In the next scene, Slindile is seen handing in her C.V. to apply for a job at the Bata

shoe factory¹⁰⁴. Later, she receives a call to say that she got the job. In the next scene, Slindile is walking along the road when she is stopped by Sabelo who begs for her forgiveness saying: “no wait, it was a mistake...mistakes happen. Please forgive me. A mistake that anyone could have made.” After she refuses to forgive him and tries to push him away, Sabelo falls to his knees as he continues to beg for her forgiveness. Slindile forgives Sabelo and they embrace. In the final scene Sabelo and Slindile lead a group of people dancing, ululating and singing joyously: “Wedding day! It’s a wedding day!”

The creators of this cellphilm make clear reference to the fact that, for many people in *eMangweni*, getting pregnant out of wedlock is considered shameful. Through Slindile’s mother saying “She’s after things that are not of her age,” the film-makers also communicate the message that children should not get involved in sex ‘before their time’ or the consequences will be dire.

Like *Early Marriage 2*, *Force Marriage 2*, and *Substance Abuse 2*, the creators of *Teenage Pregnant 2* chose to start their speaking back cellphilm from where *Teenage Pregnant 1* ended. The story tellers could have chosen to tell a new story about Slindile in which she did not suffer. For example, they do not present alternative narratives in which she is able to resist Sabelo’s coercion (and, hopefully violence), or Sabelo respects her when she says no, or even in which Slindile consents to sex and they use a condom. Instead, in this speaking back cellphilm, the girl protagonist is able to overcome her difficult circumstances and work towards a better future. There is a message of hope in this cellphilm – that second chances are possible.

¹⁰⁴ This is a factory near *eMangweni* at which a number of people in the community were employed.

As was the case in *Early Marriage 2*, *Force Marriage 2*, and *Substance Abuse 2*, in this speaking back cellphilm, the girl's partner eventually comes to regret what he did. Echoing Slindile falling to her knees when she is rejected by Sabelo at the end of *Teenage Pregnant 1*, Sabelo falls to his knees to beg for her forgiveness in the speaking back cellphilm. The creators of *Teenage Pregnant 1* resolve the 'problem' of the unwed mother by having Sabelo apologise, Slindile accept his apology, and the two get married. The marriage ultimately legitimises the relationship and the child born from it. The story ends 'happily ever after' and the sexual coercion is neither challenged nor changed, nor is the rejection of Slindile by her mother. Rather, it is the girl/victim, who has to draw on internal strength and forgive those who have wronged her so that all can be well again.

6.2.2.5 Discussion of the Speaking Back Cellphilms

The SIFs' speaking back cellphilms reveal much about how they understand themselves (and girls in the community more generally) in relation to risk and vulnerability. The cellphilms they created indicate that they did not imagine a story in which the violence or abuse did not take place. Instead, their protagonists demonstrated remarkable strength and internal resourcefulness as they came to accept something that could not change (or that they could not imagine changing). That none of the groups chose to tell stories in their speaking back cellphilms in which their girl protagonists did not suffer is significant and points to a belief (conscious or not) that for girls (and women), suffering is inevitable.

Just one of the speaking back cellphilms, *Force Marriage 2*, challenges the hegemonic gender norms that seem to be the root of the problem on which the film-makers focus, that increase girls' risk and vulnerability. In this cellphilm, Mbali's mother and her friend Zama acknowledge that they should not have convinced Mbali to marry TK. The creators of *Force*

Marriage 1 and *2* identify coerced marriage as a kind of forced marriage through naming the cellphilms what they did. This is a direct challenge to the notion that coerced marriages are harmless and in the best interests of the girl or young woman and the community.

The speaking back cellphilms offer insight into the way in which the SIFs understand their own agency and that of other girls and young women in their community, and how they can (or cannot, as the case may be) exercise it in the context of their community and relationships. The resolution of the problems on which the cellphilms focus relies heavily (although not exclusively) on the internal strengths and resources of the girl protagonists, who must accept what has happened to them and persevere in spite of the harsh and disabling circumstances in which they find themselves. Not only do the girls in the cellphilms have to come to terms with their experience of GBV and abuse, but also the blame and rejection of their families, friends and community while the only consequence for the perpetrator seems to be their own remorse. It is by persevering and forgiving those who wronged them that the girl protagonists are able to move forward with their lives.

This overemphasis on girls' personal agency in spite of the heavy constraints of the environment reflects the 'believe in yourself and you will overcome' message of campaigns like *ZAZI* and *She Conquers* (discussed in Chapter Three) which position girls as responsible for their own thriving regardless of the contextual factors that make this so difficult including poverty, gender inequality, and poor education. It suggests that the SIFs have little faith that there are reliable resources in their environment on which girls and young women can draw to assist them to avoid or address difficult circumstances. They therefore have no option but to rely on themselves to find and be the solution to their problems.

That said, the cellphilms do draw attention to resources that the SIFs identify in the community as having the potential to aid them in the resolution of issues in the form of supportive adults who are willing to assist them in their time of need. In *Early Marriage 2*, for example, the girl's mother who eventually comes to support her is able to intervene and call on the girl's husband and mother-in-law to honour the promises that they made to treat the girl well. In *Substance Abuse 2*, the girl receives help and support from an aunt, and in *Teenage Pregnant 2*, Slindile's mother forgives and supports her.

6.3 Digital Storytelling and Cellphilm Workshop, July 2017

In July 2017, during a five-day workshop held at the *eMangweni* community hall, the SIFs created three digital stories. As discussed in Chapter Five, the SIFs brainstormed and voted on the issues they wanted to make digital stories about. Teenage pregnancy, poverty, and forced marriage/*ukuthwala* were the issues that received the most votes. In groups of four and five, the SIFs created three digital stories: *Poverty Leads to Prostitution*, *Forced Marriage*, and *Drop out of School*.

6.3.1 Femininities in Context: Digital Stories

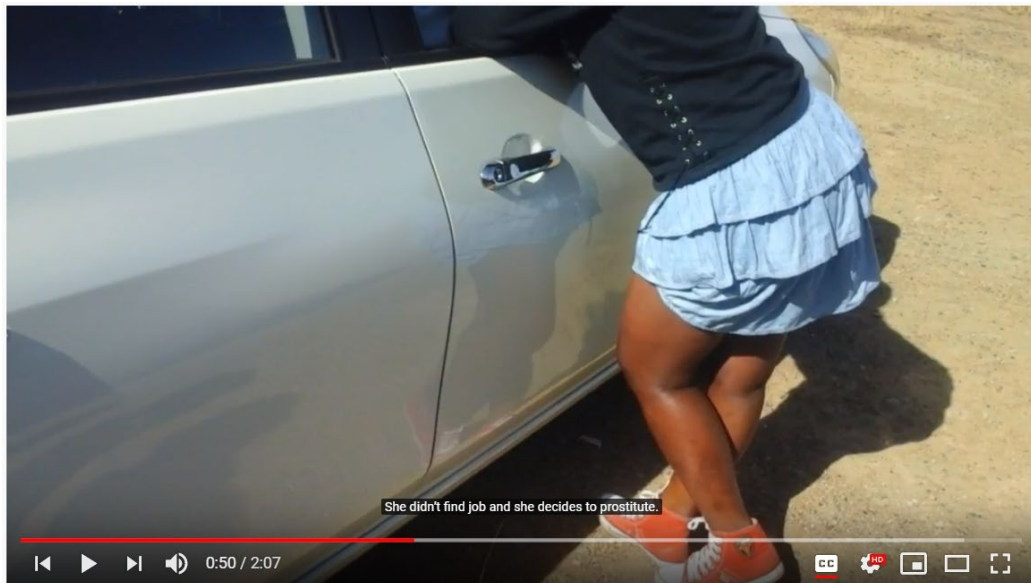
In the sections that follow, for each digital story, I provide a copy of the storyboard, a synopsis including some still images from the digital story, and a brief discussion of the story. All of the quotes that appear in the summaries are quotes from the digital stories that have been translated into English.

6.3.1.1 Poverty Leads to Prostitution (02:07)



Image 6.9 The Storyboard for Poverty Leads to Prostitution

Nosipho's father leaves his family when his children are very young ostensibly to find a job to provide for his family. Nosipho and her brother are brought up in poverty by their unemployed single mother. When she is older, Nosipho decides to go to Johannesburg to find a job so that she can provide for her family. Because Nosipho could not find a job she "decided to prostitute."



Poverty Leads to Prostitution

Image 6.10 A Still Image from Poverty Leads to Prostitution, caption: She didn't find a job and she decides to prostitute

Every month, Nosipho sent money home where everyone was happy because they were no longer living in poverty. Without either of them realising it, Nosipho's father becomes one of her customers. When Nosipho discovers that she has contracted HIV, she goes back home to confess to her mother what she has been doing in Johannesburg and disclose that she is HIV positive.

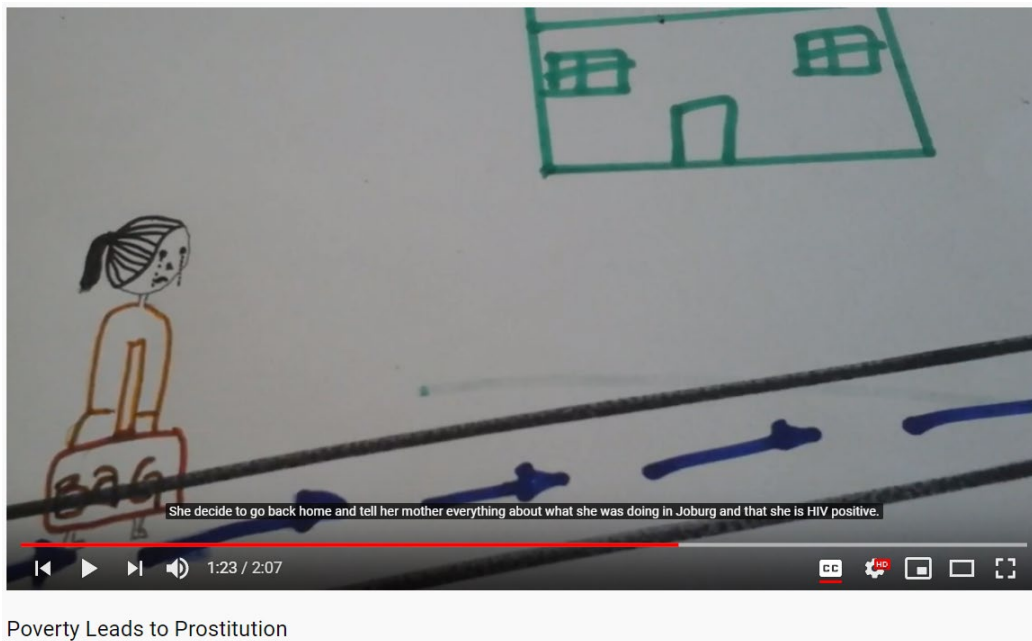


Image 6.11 A Still Image from *Poverty Leads to Prostitution*, caption: She decide to go back home and tell her mother everything about what she was doing in Joburg and that she HIV positive

While Nosipho is confessing to her mother there is a knock at the door. It is Nosipho's father. When she realises that her father was one of her customers, Nosipho cries and tells her mother what had happened after which she commits suicide. Nosipho's mother collapses with shock. When Nosipho's brother returns home and hears from his father what has happened, he wants to kill his father because "he blames him for everything".

The story told in *Poverty Leads to Prostitution* is relentlessly bleak. Poverty motivates the characters' decisions, both Nosipho's and her father's. It is interesting that it is Nosipho who feels compelled to go to Joburg to look for work to "provide for her family" – the same phrase used to describe the reason her father goes to Joburg. It is Nosipho and not her brother, Mazwi, who takes full responsibility for her family's circumstances. There is a sense of shame associated with "prostitution" even though it was something that Nosipho resorted to when she

had no other option, and made what is framed in the story as a choice as a selfless act in the best interests of her family. In the digital story there is a sense that Nosipho acquiring HIV is not just a consequence of her ‘decision,’ but also a kind of punishment.¹⁰⁵ Even though her motives were good, Nosipho ends up committing suicide from the shame of having unknowingly had sex with her father.

Watching this digital story for the first time, I was shocked not by the fact that Nosipho was forced to do sex work to support her family, but by the plot twist involving her father becoming one of her customers unbeknownst to either of them. I wrote in my field notes that evening:

It [Nosipho unknowingly having sex with her father] seemed so extreme to have that happen. Whether this sort of thing could realistically happen or not, I suppose the point is more about what the girls were trying to communicate through this story. Also, it is still unclear to me, though, who or what the girls hold responsible for all of this – is it the girl? Her father? The circumstances of poverty? All of them? (Fieldnotes, 21 July 2017)

¹⁰⁵ It is also a reflection of the sad reality that sex workers are disproportionately vulnerable to HIV.

6.3.1.2 Forced Marriage (02:13)



Image 6.12 The storyboard for Forced Marriage

A girl, Smangele, has been courted by a boy for years, but has always refused him because her parents “were very strict and had high hopes for her.”¹⁰⁶ “The boy who courted Smangele thought of a plan to get her.” The boy decided to have his friends abduct Smangele when she went to fetch water and force her to marry him. The boys “carried her and forcefully put her in a car.”

¹⁰⁶ The translation could also read: “were very strict and regarded her as their family’s hope.”



Forced Marriage

Image 6.13 A Still Image from Forced Marriage, caption: The young men agreed to do as asked. The boys went to where Smangele fetched water, they got there and it was full of other girls from the community but the boys did not ask anyone, and went straight for Smangele and forcefully put her in a car.

Smangele's parents were informed of the abduction by other girls who had witnessed it. Smangele's parents chased after the car, but could not find her at the place that she had been taken as she had been hidden away. The next day her parents went to the same place again and found Smangele. When they asked her to come home she refused and said that she loved the boy. Her parents were shocked as previously Smangele had not wanted to get married. Nevertheless, Smangele's parents decided not to oppose her decision, and arrangements for marriage were made. After some years her husband started to abuse Smangele. As a result, Smangele left him and attempted to return to her parents' home where she was chased away.

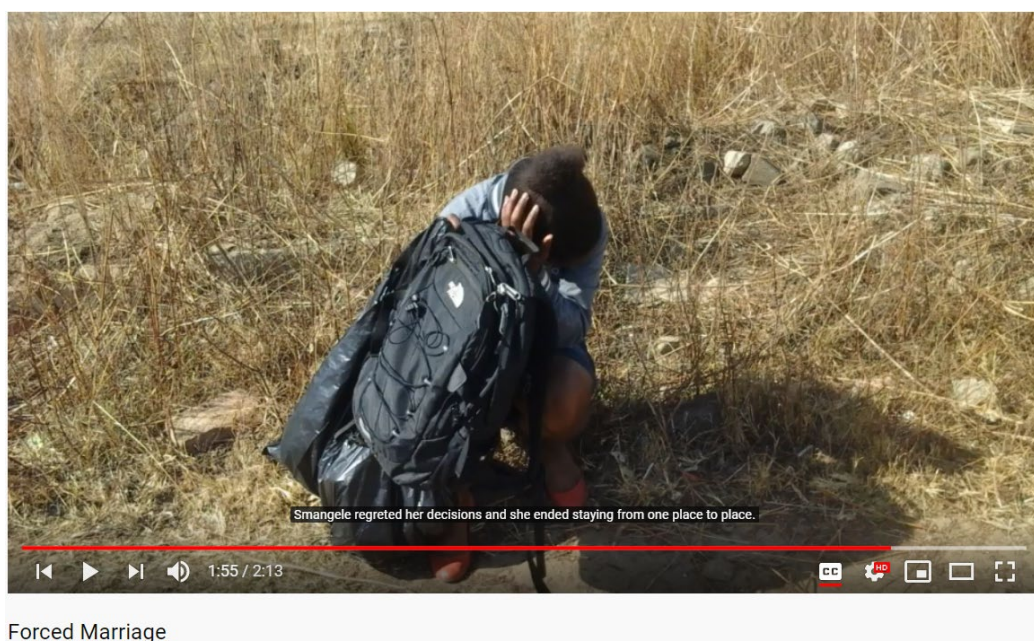


Image 6.14 A Still Image from Forced Marriage, caption: Smangele regretted her decision and she ended up staying from one place to place

Smangele had nowhere to go. In the end it was revealed that Smangele's husband had burned what the SIFs refer to as *impepho*¹⁰⁷ during the process of *ukuthwala* (abduction for marriage) to induce her to refuse to return with her parents when they came to collect her.

This digital story is about *ukuthwala ngenkani* (Nkosi & Wasserman, 2014), a kind of forced marriage (the cellphlms *Force Marriage 1* and 2 described above, focused on coercion). The story tellers establish early on that Smangele does not want to get married and has communicated this to the boy or man who intends to marry her. By telling the audience that Smangele refused the advances of her would-be suitor for years because her parents were very strict and trusted her, it is implied that Smangele is a 'good' girl who does not want to get

¹⁰⁷ I use the word *impepho* here because this is the word that the SIFs used in their digital story. Although traditionally *impepho* is understood to be a herb that is used to facilitate communication or connection with the ancestors, that this is the word that the SIFs use to name a substance used to manipulate Smangele's state of mind is noteworthy at the very least. It would be interesting and possibly useful to further investigate this use of the word in this context although it is beyond the scope of the study being reported in this thesis.

married (yet). Ignoring Smangele's refusal of consent, the man who wants to marry her arranges to have her abducted. The creators of this digital story introduce an interesting element with the use of *imphepho*¹⁰⁸ to make Smangele think and tell her parents that she loves her abductor and wants to stay with him. Beliefs about the use of indigenous herbs in this way circulate in both rural and urban areas. The abducted girl refusing help when her parents and/or the police come to fetch her from her abductor's home is something that adult members of the community insist happens more often than not, and justifies their lack of intervention when a girl or young woman is abducted. Although she was abducted and drugged, it is Smangele who suffers – she is abused by her husband, rejected by her once loving and supportive parents, and, at the end of the story she is left homeless and alone.

The abduction and drugging of Smangele is also interesting because it reveals her suitor's complete disregard for her wishes. He wants Smangele, is tired of waiting for her to accept him and so he takes her. It appears that Smangele's abductor feels that he has a right to get what he wants and does not consider Smangele's rights or wishes important or at all. Although, like Slindile in *Teenage Pregnant 1* and *2*, Smangele expresses her wishes and in this way is not silent, she is silenced by her abductor ignoring those wishes.

¹⁰⁸ Please see previous footnote for an explanation of my use of the word *imphepho* to mean some kind of substance used to manipulate Smangele's state of mind.

6.3.1.3 Drop out of School (01:25)



Image 6.15 The Storyboard for Drop out of School

Sixteen-year-old Nombuso was living in Loskop with her family, including her five-year-old sister. When Nombuso's parents and grandmother passed away in a car accident she decided to go to Durban to find a job to help to support herself and her sister. Unable to find a job, Nombuso "decided to be a prostitute." When Nombuso falls sick she goes to the clinic where she is told that she is HIV positive.



Drop out of School

Image 6.16 Still from *Drop out of School*, caption: Nombuso felt sick and went to the clinic and she was told that she was HIV positive

Nombuso returns home and dies soon after her diagnosis, leaving her younger sister alone. Nombuso's younger sister gets help from social workers and manages to graduate from medical school to become a successful doctor. She gets married and lives happily with her family.

In *Drop out of School*, the story tellers set up an interesting contrast between Nombuso and her younger sister. Although she is in a very difficult situation having been orphaned and urgently needing to provide for her younger sister, Nombuso's 'decision' to "prostitute" is compared to her sister's decision to seek help from social workers. Nombuso's decision is framed in the digital story as the wrong decision (although not without compassion), and her sister's as the right decision. This interpretation was confirmed by one of the creators of *Drop out of School* who said in the post-screening discussion:

Nombuso decides to go to find some work, even she didn't find it. I think the decision she took was difficult, maybe she did not want other people to help her. Because some people do not want to help, but want to laugh at you and your troubles. That is how it is. I can say that the decision she took was a terrible one, it would have been better maybe if she also would have gone to find help from the social workers, like how her sister did, so that she could live a better life. But it is also a lesson that we must learn that we must be patient no matter what, no matter what happens, not to neglect school, because education is the key in life.

In this comment, the co-researcher participant once again makes reference to education as the ticket out of poverty. Understood in this way, Nombuso's error was that she was not patient, she did not ask for help, and she was too hasty and eager to earn money so she dropped out of school thereby ruining her chances at a good (in both the moral sense and wealth sense) life. Because of her poor decision-making, Nombuso faces the terrible consequences of HIV and, ultimately, death¹⁰⁹. In contrast, having made what is framed as the right choice to ask for help, Nombuso's sister is rewarded with success – she becomes a doctor and gets married and has a family.

6.3.1.4 Discussion of the Digital Stories

Created three months after the original and speaking back cellphilms, in their digital stories, the SIFs once again portray girls as vulnerable and almost powerless in the face of the overwhelming challenges they encounter. We did not ask them, as part of the

¹⁰⁹ This despite how very effective anti-retroviral treatment (ART) is at delaying the onset of AIDS and prolonging the lives of HIV positive people, and the fact that it is fairly widely and reliably available even in rural areas in South Africa (although it is sometimes difficult to access due to long distances to clinics, the expense of transport, and difficulties getting time off work). As a result, deaths due to AIDS in South Africa have declined steadily since ART started to become available in the public health care system in 2004.

prompt/brainstorming discussion, to consider imagining stories about girls in their community that demonstrated agency, hope, and resistance. However, even the small ways that the SIFs imagined a better outcome for their girl protagonists in their speaking back cellphilms did not feature in the digital stories. Like the original cellphilms, the digital stories created by the SIFs have tragic endings for their protagonists who end up dead or homeless. As in both the original and speaking back cellphilms there seems to be an uncomfortable vacillation between framing what the girls did or were involved in as choices and decisions, and a recognition of the economic and gendered constraints on girls and their lack of power in many circumstances.

Considering the original and speaking back cellphilms and the digital stories together, something that is particularly striking is the negative way in which boys and men are portrayed almost without exception.¹¹⁰

6.3.2 Imagining Alternative Narratives: Resisting and Speaking Back Cellphilms

The three Resisting and Speaking Back cellphilms were made on the fourth day of the five-day workshop for submission to the 5th International Cellphilm Festival¹¹¹.

¹¹⁰ They are somewhat redeemed in the speaking back cellphilms when they express regret for their behaviour towards the girl protagonists and in some cases even apologise

¹¹¹ As discussed in Chapter Five, the Annual International Cellphilm Festival is modelled on film festivals like the Cannes Film Festival. Every year submissions are invited on a particular theme. For the Cellphilm Festival in 2017, the theme was Resisting and Speaking Back.

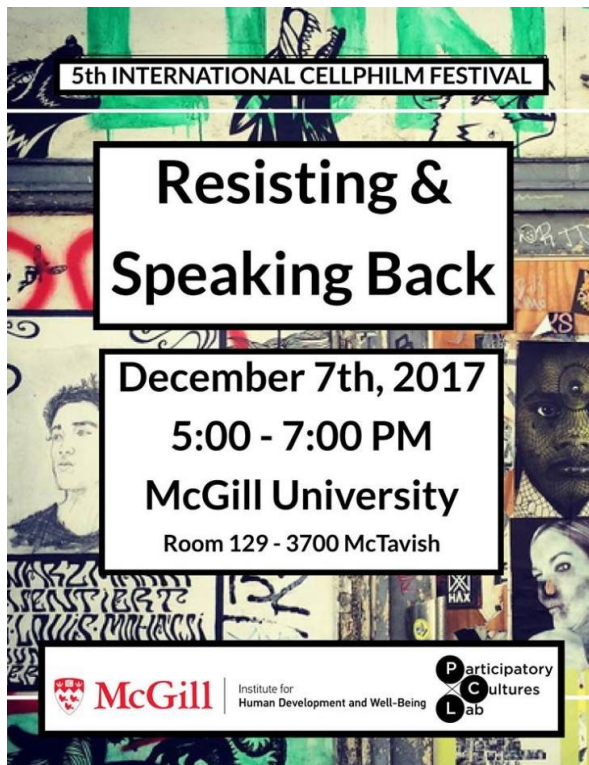


Image 6.17 The Poster for the 5th International Cellphilm Festival

To prepare them for responding to the International Cellphilm Festival call for submissions (see Image 6.17), instead of a prompt, we discussed the concepts of resisting and speaking back with the SIFs referring back to the speaking back cellphilms that they had made in our previous workshop in April. In response to the theme of the festival, resisting and speaking back, in groups, the SIFs created three cellphilms: *The Rape*, *Abuses is the Crime* (sic), and *No does not Mean Yes*.

6.3.2.1 The Rape (01:32)

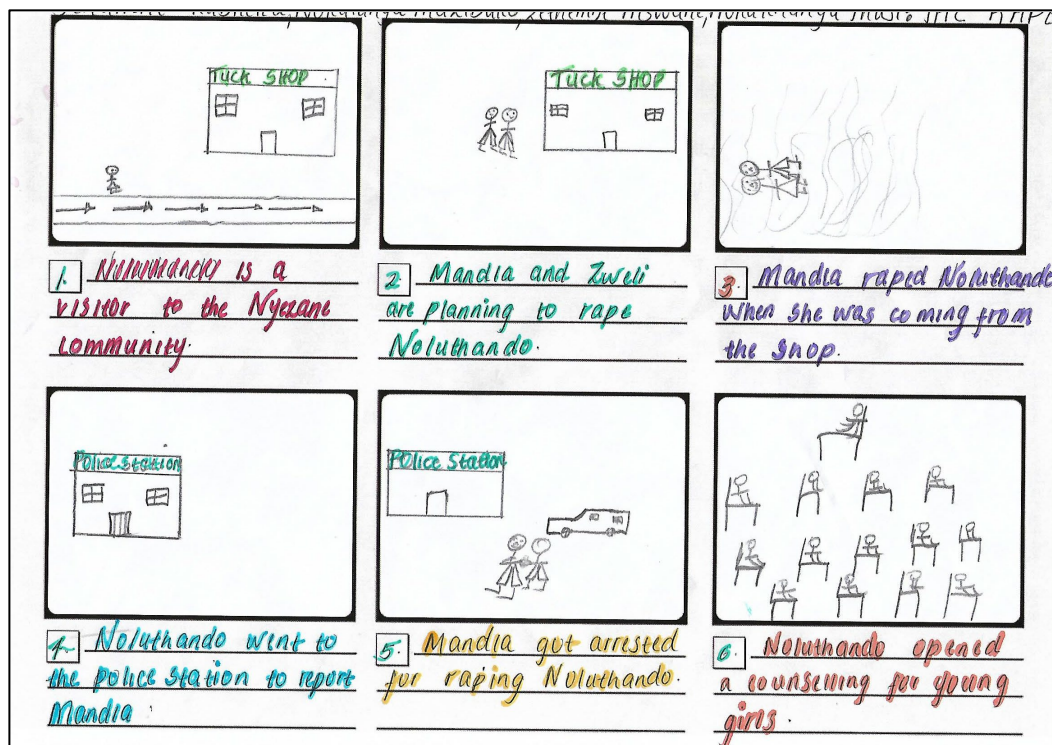


Image 6.18 The storyboard for The Rape

In the cellphilm, *The Rape*, a young woman is walking while talking on her cell phone. She is harassed by two men who cat call her and try to touch her bottom. The boys are clearly enjoying themselves. In the next scene, the two men discuss the girl with one encouraging the other to “show this girl what you are made of”. The other man replies “My friend, I love this girl. I just want to get her now.” In the next scene, one of the men, now alone, grabs the girl and says he just wants to talk to her. The girl calls out in distress asking what the man wants. The next scene shows the girl on the ground and the man getting up and zipping up his jeans. The girl is then shown on her haunches crying. She gets up, still crying, and rights her clothes. The crying girl arrives at the police station in the next scene where a concerned police officer asks “What’s wrong, my girl? What happened?” The girl responds “I was raped.” The police officer asks who the perpetrator is and the girl informs them that it was a group of boys. The girl agrees to

show the police officer where the boys are. The girl identifies her rapist who is arrested and taken away with his hands cuffed behind his back, a sad song playing in the background. In the final scene the protagonist greets a group of girls and says “I would like to join the Social Ills Fighters so that we are able to stop the abuse inflicted on girls here in our community.” The girl tells the group that she wants to talk about the social ills in the community because she herself was raped.

In this cellphilm, when the perpetrator tells his friend “...I love this girl, I just want to get her now,” it is another example of the same belief portrayed in the digital story, *Forced Marriage*. The perpetrator feels entitled to the girl simply because he wants her and does not spare a thought for whether or not she wants him, her consent, or her rights. These things are so insignificant as to not matter at all.

In the cellphilm the girl who was raped goes to report the crime to the police. The police officer she speaks to is compassionate, supportive, believes her, and immediately takes action. Although this is precisely what should happen in an ideal world, it is well known that rape and other forms of sexual violence are grossly underreported for a number of reasons one of which is the way that victims/survivors are treated by police personnel when they go to report. Further, arrest rates for rapists are low in South Africa, and conviction rates even lower. The fact that the SIFs include this ‘ideal world’ scenario could be read as naïve, as wishful thinking. It could, however, also be read as the film-makers pointing out that it is absolutely the responsibility of the police to act as they were shown to act in the cellphilm, and that failure to do so compounds the problem of sexual violence.

The creators of this cellphilm recognise their group, the Social Ills Fighters, as an important part of the solution. This is significant because it indicates that for the film-makers, being part of the SIFs gives them a sense of confidence and agency, a sense that that they can do something to address what they refer to as the social ills in their community. The film-makers do not just rely on the police to address the problem, but include girls and young women as having a role to play in the solution.

The use of the word 'rape' rather than a euphemism, and the fact that the protagonist tells the group of girls at the end of the cellphilm that she was raped is also significant. It suggests that the creators of *The Rape* have come to understand that talking about it is an important strategy to combat the shame associated with rape. This is a promising display of resistance to the silence that often surrounds rape and other forms of sexual violence.

6.3.2.2 Abuses is the Crime (01:30)

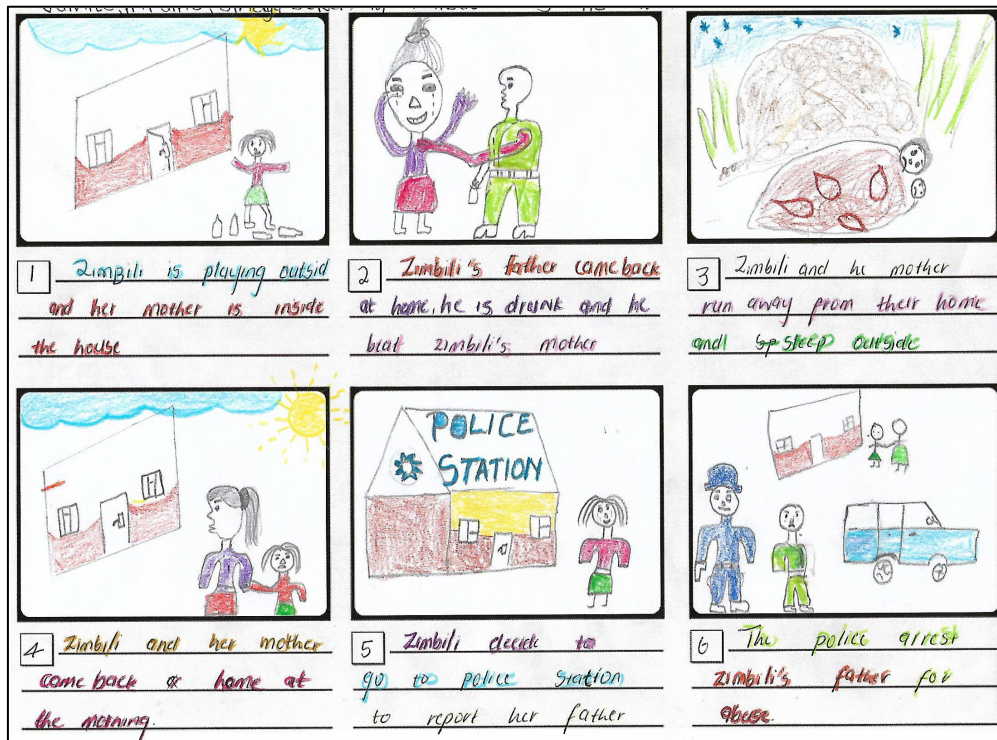


Image 6.19 The Storyboard for Abuses is the Crime

In *Abuses is the Crime* (sic), a girl is playing outside with some toys. In the next scene the girl's mother sits and wonders "what state" her husband will be in when he comes home "because this is the time he returns from work. I am in deep trouble." The father, holding a bottle, returns home drunk and complains about the girl's toys on the floor. The girl runs away as he walks into the frame. In the next scene, the drunk man approaches his wife. Leaning over her, the man starts to shout at his wife asking "Why are you staring at me with those big eyes of yours? What's that on the floor?". The man begins to try to hit his wife, but she fights back and pushes him away saying "You are drinking now. You are drinking."

In the next scene the girl and her mother are sitting in the grass talking. The girl says to her mother "Ma, what my father is doing, I don't like it. He hits you." Pointing at a bruise on her

mother's cheek, the girl says "Look what he has done. I am thinking about having him arrested.". The mother's responds: "My child, do not have your father arrested, because I will no longer be married." She says that he does what he does because of the work that he does. The girl responds: "But, Ma, he hits you and he hurts you." Her mother tells the girl not to pay attention to that, she will get better soon and says that they should go home. The girl and her mother return home. The girl's mother greets her husband respectfully. He responds by shouting at her, asking her where she slept the night before. She tells him that she slept at the neighbour's house and the man begins to push and hit her. While assaulting her, the man says to his wife "Yesterday you lied! And today...You are lying dammit!". In the next scene the girl, upset, says that her father always gets away with things but that she will have him arrested. She says "He cannot hit my mother in this manner." The girl goes to the police station where a police officer asks how they can help. The girl explains to the police officer "I have a problem at home... My father hits my mother ...and it's affecting my school work." The police officer responds "Let's go and arrest him right now." In the final scene of the cellphilm, the police officer and the girl arrive at the girl's home. Approaching the girl's father, the police officer says "You're under arrest. Stand up. You're under arrest for abusing your wife." The girl's father resists the police officer, who walks him away in handcuffs while the girl waves and says good bye. As he is escorted away, the girl's father turns back and warns that he will be back.

In this cellphilm, the creators tell a story about intimate partner violence. The father's violence is explained by the mother as resulting from alcohol and the work that he does. Similar to Shai's (2018) participants discussed in Chapter Three, the importance of preserving the marriage at any cost is communicated in the cellphilm when the girl's mother says that the girl must not get her father arrested because then she will no longer be married. As was the case in *The Rape*,

the protagonist goes to the police for assistance and justice. When she is reporting the matter to the police, the girl feels the need to explain that the domestic violence in her home is affecting her school work, possibly suggesting that the abuse itself is not sufficient reason to report the matter, or that the consequences of domestic violence extend beyond those directly involved. Like *The Rape*, in this cellphilm, the police officer to whom the girl reports the abuse is sympathetic and supportive and immediately takes action. The girl's father is arrested, but the joy of this triumph is somewhat diminished when he threatens his wife and daughter as he is being led away by the police.

Like *The Rape*, the intervention of the police as it is portrayed in this cellphilm could be read as unrealistic and naïve. However, it could also be interpreted as the film-makers showing what is supposed to and should happen in cases like this, suggesting that if the police acted like this, there would be a satisfactory solution to the problem. It is also noteworthy that it is a child who has taken action against her abusive father which disrupts the age and gender power dynamics which require children, particularly girls, to be obedient and respectful of their elders, particularly men.

6.3.2.3 No Does Not Mean Yes (01:21)

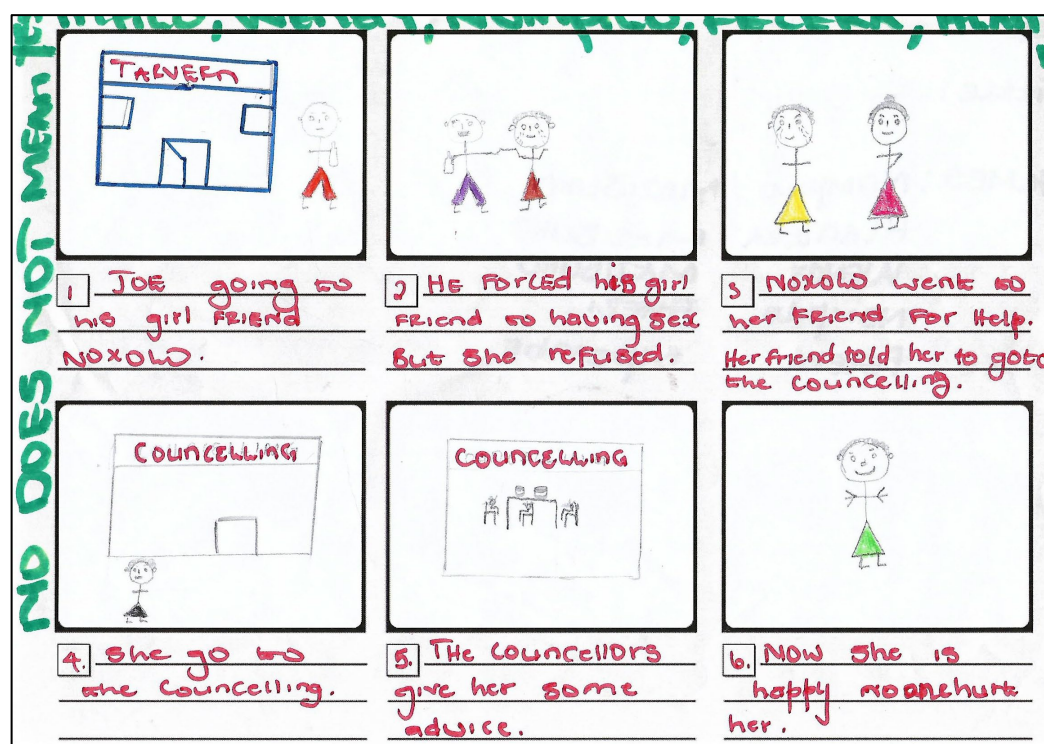


Image 6.20 The Storyboard for No Does Not Mean Yes

In the opening scene of *No Does Not Mean Yes*, a girl is being harassed by a man, Joe, who appears to be drunk. He asks her why she won't sleep with him and she tells him she doesn't want to. Joe again asks why and the girl responds that she is a virgin. Joe tries to grab at her again, but the girl pushes him away and tells him to leave her alone. Joe looks at the girl as she walks away and says "you must just give me what I want." In the next scene the girl tells her friend that Joe is being abusive towards her. When her friend asks what Joe is doing, the girl responds that he "wants to sleep with me without my consent. Even worse is that he hits me." The girl's friend asks why she doesn't report him. The girl says she cannot do that because she loves him. Her friend advises the girl that another option is to go for counselling. The girl agrees that this might be the best option and the two friends embrace. In the next scene the girl is seated with a counsellor and explains that she is there to report her boyfriend. When asks

why she is reporting him, the girl tells that counsellor “He abuses me. He wants me to sleep with him even though I don’t want to.” The counsellor advises the girl to have her boyfriend arrested. Again, the girl is reluctant, saying “Have him arrested? But I love him!”. The counsellor tells the girl that her boyfriend doesn’t love her and that he is abusing her “even now”. She goes on to say “If they loved you, they would listen to what you have to say.” The counsellor again encourages the girl to go to the police station to open a case against her boyfriend, saying that “you will not just be helping yourself, but also others.” The girl is unsure and asks the counsellor if her boyfriend will hit her when he comes back, to which the counsellor responds “no.” In the next scene Joe is being arrested by a police officer. When he asks the police officer why, he is told that he is being arrested because he abuses his girlfriend. Joe is led away in handcuffs while a sad song plays in the background.

Like the men in *The Rape* and the digital story *Forced Marriage*, Joe seems to feel entitled to take what he wants, in this case, sex from his girlfriend. Again, the girl is not portrayed as silent. She clearly and emphatically says no to Joe. She is, however, silenced by his complete disregard for her clearly expressed wishes.

It is promising that the creators of this cellphilm recognise coercion as abuse. Coercion is not always understood in this way. Coercive behaviour is sometimes framed as part of the rituals around sex and dating in which boys are expected to be the sexual aggressor, persistent in their efforts to get sex and girls must pretend to resist in order to avoid seeming too eager and therefore loose, thereby preserving their reputations. This framing is shaped by beliefs around men’s inability to control their own powerful sexual urges and women’s obligation to resist the advances of men and protect their virtue often, as in *No Does Not Mean Yes*, symbolised by

virginity. It is thus women's responsibility to keep themselves safe rather than men's responsibility to control their sexual urges.¹¹²

The girl protagonist in this cellphilm is reluctant to have her boyfriend arrested because she loves him even though she appears to be well aware that what he is doing is not right. The complex and uneasy relationship between love and violence is called into question by the film-makers through the counsellor who insists that Joe does not love the girl and if he did he would listen to her. The idea that violence and extreme jealousy are evidence of passionate love is a persistent one and one that the creators of *No Does Not Mean Yes* challenge in this cellphilm.

Although the protagonist is aided by her friend and the counsellor, who support her and encourage her to report, once again in this cellphilm the film-makers present the police as the ultimate solution to the problem. The police are portrayed in this cellphilm, like the other two resisting and speaking back cellphilms, as sympathetic and willing to take action. This portrayal is less a representation of reality, and more a demonstration of what should not be considered an unrealistic ideal, but rather the ways things should be.

6.3.2.4 Discussion of Resisting and Speaking Back Cellphilms

The resisting and speaking back cellphilms indicate development in the SIFs' thinking around girlhood, vulnerability, risk and agency. There is an observable growing sense of justice and of girls' right to access it. Although the girls in the resisting and speaking back cellphilms suffer, the stories are not hopeless; they can and do recognise the injustice they experience and exercise agency in seeking help and solutions.

¹¹² See Wiebesiek (2015)

At the end of *The Rape*, the girl bravely wants to help others and use her experience to fight social ills in her community. Disclosing that she had been raped, and wanting to do something positive and help others even after her trauma disrupts two damaging ideas about or behaviours around rape. The first is the silence that surrounds rape and other forms of sexual violence which are still associated with shame for the victim. The second is the idea that rape and other forms of sexual violence ruin the lives of the victims/survivors. I am not suggesting here that experiencing these forms of violence is anything other than horrific and traumatising and extremely difficult to recover and heal from. What I am suggesting is that talking about a victim/survivor's life being ruined by their experience of violence implies that they are now irreparably broken and neither themselves nor their lives will ever recover. The idea that one can recover from the trauma and go on to do something positive to help others is a hopeful one. There is, however, a need to be careful that messages about victims/survivors using their experiences to help others, or encouraging them to lead by example in disclosing, reporting, and/or becoming activists do not (inadvertently) reinforce the imperative that girls and women be boundlessly selfless. In *No Does Not Mean Yes*, in an effort to encourage the girl to report her abusive boyfriend, she is told by the counsellor that she will be helping others. While this is surely true and admirable, it should not be the victim/survivors' responsibility to do so unless they want to.

While the increased sense of agency among the SIFs that can be discerned in their resisting and speaking back cellphilms should be celebrated, it is worth noting that the cellphilms still focus more on addressing the effects of violence than on preventing it from happening at all by addressing the underlying causes of the violence. In *Abuses is the Crime* and *No Does Not Mean Yes*, the perpetrator is arrested and justice is thus served. Other than an assumption that perpetrators being arrested might be a deterrent to would-be abusers, there is no mention in

either cellphilm of any other prevention strategy. In *The Rape* the perpetrator is also arrested, and while the protagonist goes on to join the social ills fighters, how the group might prevent future violence remains unclear.

Although the resisting and speaking back cellphilms show that the SIFs have begun to see that they could be a meaningful part of a solution to the challenges that girls in their community face, there remains an awareness in all three cellphilms of the limits of the SIFs' potential impact. These limits, as the SIFs seem to be aware, are a result of gendered cultural power hierarchies in which, due to their age and sex, girls are located at the bottom. Structural and other issues over which they have little to no control also serve as constraints on girls' agency and their ability to effect change in their communities.

6.4 Synthesis

In this chapter I presented and discussed the visual data created by the SIFs during two PVM workshops in 2017: four original cellphilms, four speaking back cellphilms, three digital stories, and three resisting and speaking back cellphilms. In doing so, I engaged with the first of three layers of textuality identified by Fiske (1987; 1989). I have made a concerted effort to faithfully and accurately present in writing the visual products created by the SIFs and what they communicated through them.

This chapter has demonstrated the layered and nuanced nature of the visual artefacts created by the SIFs. Through the visual, the SIFs were able to effectively communicate complex ideas, opinions, and messages about their own lives, about their community and about the broader social and economic context from their own perspectives. Heavy with meaning, the SIFs' cellphilms and digital stories are rich sources of data which provide insight into how the SIFs

themselves understand their femininities in their context. Examining this data in the chronological order in which it was generated provided the opportunity to observe any subtle shifts in these perceptions and understandings.

The narratives in the cellphilms and digital stories comprising the data set presented and discussed in this chapter reveal how girls and young women in *eMangweni* are vulnerable and at risk. The stories communicate with the audience the sense of powerlessness that the SIFs feel in the face of their circumstances and the strict constraints on their agency stemming from poverty, gender inequality, and ideas about culture. In this way the SIFs seem to be reproducing parts of the girl-in-crisis narrative. There is no doubt that girls and young women in *eMangweni* (and many girls and young women across South Africa) contend with enormous challenges. However, when considered as a whole, the data set reveals important moments of challenge and resistance, and an evolving sense of agency among the SIFs. The speaking back and resisting and speaking back cellphilms in particular do not follow the girl-in-crisis narrative. Perhaps most importantly, the stories presented and discussed in this chapter, unlike those told by national campaigns and international development organisations, are written, performed, and told by girls themselves.

Presenting and discussing the visual data as I have done in this chapter allows me to present the thematic analysis and findings in the next chapter in a clear and coherent way to respond to the first two sub-questions that I posed in the study being presented in this thesis. In the next chapter, I build and draw on the discussion of the primary texts offered in this chapter as I engage with the production and audience texts in the form of transcripts of post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions as well as my field notes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Constructions of Femininities among Adolescent Girls in Rural KwaZulu-Natal

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented four sub-sets of visual data generated during two workshops with the SIFs in the chronological order in which they were generated. Presenting the visual data in this way provides a clear context for the thematic analysis and findings I offer in this chapter. My analysis draws on the visual data as well as transcripts from post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions and my fieldnotes to respond to the first two sub-questions I asked in the study being reported in this thesis: 1) *How do a selected group of girls and young women in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?* and 2) *How do the girls and young women position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?* The visual data and the transcripts were all generated during workshops with the SIFs as described in Chapters Four and Five. The post-screening discussion, in which all of the SIFs and the university-based research team participated, were unstructured and response to the visual product that had just been viewed and discussions were group. The participatory data analysis discussions were loosely structured around the six questions that form part of the SHOWED method as described in Chapter Four.

Framed by feminist postcolonial theory, social constructionist theories of gender, and guided by the participatory approach I took in my study, the analysis presented in this chapter focuses on my participants' (the Social Ills Fighters or SIFs) understandings of their femininities, girlhood and gender in the context of their community. My analysis generated nine themes: 1)

Girls' Constructions of Girlhood in Rural KwaZulu-Natal; 2) Girls in Crisis? The Precarity of Girlhood in Rural KwaZulu-Natal; 3) Femininity, Marriage, and Fertility; 4) Girlhood at the Intersection of Poverty and 'Culture'; 5) Girlhood at the Intersection of Love and Violence; 6) Girlhood, Sexuality, and Power; 7) Girls' Portrayals of Boys and Men; 8) Girlhood, Agency, Choice, and Responsibility; and 9) Rescuing the Girl-in-Crisis? I developed these themes by following the process of inductive thematic analysis (described in detail in Chapter Five of this thesis) (Boyatzis 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2001). I start the chapter by describing and discussing the two femininities that can be identified in the data, an ideal *traditional* 'good girl' femininity, and a *transitional* 'good girl' in process femininity. Following this discussion, I use the other themes to elaborate on the features or characteristics of these two femininities and how the SIFs' context and socialisation influence the construction of these femininities.

7.2 Girls' Constructions of Girlhood in Rural KwaZulu-Natal

Two femininities can be identified in the data: an ideal *traditional* 'good girl' femininity, and a *transitional* 'good girl' in process femininity that are constructed in terms of three key dimensions. As Budgeon observes,

...the production of gendered selves, the cultural expectations regarding the performance of 'proper' gender identities which shape everyday interactions, and the structure of institutional domains that form the backdrop for changes to gender identities and norms (Budgeon, 2014, p. 319).

7.2.1 Idealised Femininity in eMangweni: The 'Good Girl'

As discussed in Chapter Two, idealised gender constructions are comprised of the qualities and characteristics of masculinities and femininities that men and women are expected to possess, and play an essential role in sustaining hegemonic gender relationality. The idealised

construction of young femininity in *eMangweni* plays an essential role in sustaining hegemonic gender relations in which men and boys are dominant and women and girls are expected to be compliant. This traditional femininity, which closely resembles Connell's emphasised femininity in that it is defined by acquiescence and subordination to men (Connell, 1987), is embodied in the figure of the fictional 'good girl.' She is fictional in that few (if any) girls embody this form of femininity, but it is nevertheless the form of femininity to which girls are expected to aspire, and against which girls are expected to measure themselves and be measured. The figure of the fictional 'good girl' can be constructed like a composite drawing based on representations of girls and women in the SIFs' visual products and how they spoke about girls and women in our discussions.

The 'good girl' is passive, patient, and silent. She is acquiescent and has conservative morals. She values culture and tradition linked to which she aspires to marriage and children. She must obey first her parents and then her husband (and his family). She is reliable and respectable and does not challenge authority or hegemonic gender relations, but co-operates with them. In this way, the traditional 'good girl' femininity is also very similar to Jewkes and Morrell's (2012) conservative femininity which is characterised by acquiescence, the acceptance of patriarchy and unequal gender relations, and support for traditional practices like *ukuthwala*. Like Jewkes and Morrell's (2012) conservative femininity, traditional 'good girl' femininity is supported by both men and women across generations.

Traditional 'good girl' femininity also shares similarities with Shai's (2018) 'Good Woman.' This femininity is characterised by notions of "dignity, perseverance, respectfulness, being constructive, and sexual passivity" (Shai, 2018, p. 121). In Shai's (2018) study this femininity could only be accessed through marriage which was considered an essential marker of

successful femininity. This femininity was associated with respect for and adherence to custom and tradition, and placed a high value on practices like *lobolo* (bride price) and *ukuhlonipha* (respect). Perseverance was also highly valued. Traditional ‘good girl’ femininity shares these characteristics with Shai’s (2018) ‘Good Woman.’ Traditional ‘good girl’ femininity is also aligned with Hunter’s (2010) ‘Good Woman’ who is described as conservative in dress, chaste, traditional, and respectful, particularly of men. Important for the ‘Good Woman’ was the practice of *ukuhlonipha*.

In her study of girls’ understandings of sexuality and sexual risk, and the role that gender plays in these understandings, Shabane (2011), found that the girls in her study negotiated the meanings of their sexuality and femininities at the intersection of complex factors including poverty, gender inequality, culture, HIV, and discourses about women’s rights. In particular, for some of Shabane’s (2011) participants, culture and tradition were central to the ways in which they understood the unequal gendered power relations that are so central to the ways in which they construct meaning about their sexuality and femininities. Drawing on discourses of culture and tradition, some of Shabane’s (2011) participants argued that it is “nature” for a woman to “obey her man’s rules” (p. 60), expressed pride in their culture, and used conservative notions of ‘culture’ to frame their investment in ideas of sexual purity that were central to their femininities. Like Shabane’s (2011) young participants, the traditional ‘good girl’ femininity also draws on discourses of culture and tradition to explain and justify girls and women’s obedience to men, and involves expressing pride in conservative notions of culture and sexuality.

7.2.2 The Social Ills Fighters: The Good Girl in Process

As argued in Chapter Two, the SIFs do not construct their gender identities only in relation to masculinities, but in relation to other femininities, particularly the idealised construction of femininity discussed above. The SIFs challenge the compulsory passivity and acquiescence of traditional ‘good girl’ femininity, and the uncritical commitment to tradition and culture that characterises it. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) observed that it was the young women who invested in conservative femininity who were the most vulnerable among their participants. Like some of Shabane’s participants, who took a more critical view of culture, observing that cultural norms about women’s subordinate status to the dominance of men, make them vulnerable to GBV and HIV, the SIFs understand the relationship between culture, poverty, and gender inequality, and vulnerability. An important feature of this femininity, which I am calling the ‘good girl’ in process femininity, is challenging the idea that girls and women should passively accept their subordinate position in their families and communities, and accept and persevere through the inevitable suffering to which it makes them vulnerable. As part of the ‘good girl’ in progress femininity, the SIFs aspire to greater independence and respect in their relationships and their community. For the SIFs, this independence is achieved through education and the earning potential that is assumed to follow from it.

However, the transitional ‘good girl’ in process femininity shares a number of similarities with the traditional ‘good girl’ femininity. The SIFs also value conservative morals and virtue, and while they recognise that they have a right to and would like more equitable relationships, they still aspire to marriage and children as an important part of their femininity. They also still seem to value a certain degree of respect and obedience to their parents and other adult authority figures like Xoli (a trusted social worker in the community and our partner in the project).

Like the modern girl femininity Jewkes and Morrell (2012) identified among their participants, the ‘good girl’ in process femininity is “part reality, part fantasy” (p. 12). The social and economic constraints on girls’ agency remain and limit the extent to which the SIFs can embody this more independent femininity. Nevertheless, the transitional ‘good girl’ in process femininity is proof that the SIFs are capable of and have begun to imagine alternative identities.

In the next section of the chapter I elaborate on the features or characteristics of these two femininities and how they are influenced by context and socialisation.

7.3 Girlhood from the Perspective of Girls

The stories told by the SIFs through the visual products presented in the previous Chapter indicate that they are astute observers and analysts of their own lives and communities. Through their cellphilms and digital stories, the SIFs effectively communicate the complexity and nuance involved in girls’ constructions of their femininities as they navigate poverty, ‘culture,’ and hegemonic gender norms. In the thematic analysis offered in this section of the chapter, I draw on the visual data as well as transcripts from post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions and my field notes. The themes discussed below elaborate on the characteristics and features of the two femininities discussed and described above, demonstrating how the SIFs’ social and material circumstances influence the ways in which they construct their femininities.

7.3.1 Girls-in-Crisis? The Precarity of Girlhood

I opened this thesis in Chapter One with a quote from Mark Heywood’s keynote speech at the 2011 South African AIDS Conference: “[i]n South Africa being young and a woman is a risk factor for unwanted pregnancy, rape, HIV and death.” I provided evidence from literature

supporting the veracity of Heywood's (2011) statement even now, a decade later. Without exception, girlhood is portrayed in the SIFs' cellphilms and digital stories as precarious. In their visual products, the SIFs consistently show how girls and young women in *eMangweni* are vulnerable to EFM including *ukuthwala ngenkani* (being abducted), other forms of GBV, HIV, unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy, abandonment, and death. The SIFs' visual products are thus further evidence supporting Heywood's (2011) statement. There can be no doubt that many girls and young women in South Africa grow up in circumstances of extreme adversity and contend with enormous challenges. Girls and young women in resource-poor, rural communities are particularly vulnerable due to the combination of poverty and gendered cultural beliefs and practices. GBV, for example, is

fundamentally linked to gender inequality, which is often a "product of the 'so-called cultural practices', and belief systems that disempower girls and leave them with little control over their lives or their bodies" (Moletsane, 2011, p. 89 in Wiebesiek & Treffry-Goatley, 2017, p. 74).

Reflecting their understanding of this dynamic, the precarity of girlhood is shown in the SIFs' cellphilms and digital stories to be result of a combination of poverty, unequal power relations related to age and gender, ideas about culture and tradition, and the limited choices available to girls and young women to which these circumstances give rise. The girl protagonists in these narratives experience various hardships and suffer greatly. In *Early Marriage 1*, the girl is evicted by her cruel mother-in-law for being unable to have children. In *Force Marriage 1*, Mbali is coerced into marriage to TK who then abandons her with two children. In *Teenage Pregnant 1*, Slindile is coerced into having sex with her boyfriend who then implies that she is promiscuous before abandoning her and their unborn child. Married as a result of *ukuthwala ngenkani*, in *Forced Marriage* Smangele is rejected by her parents after leaving her abusive

husband and ends up homeless. The story told in *Poverty Leads to Prostitution* is relentlessly bleak and Nosipho's fate is HIV, unwitting incest, and suicide. Also forced to do sex work when she has no other way to survive or support her younger sister, in *Drop out of School*, Nombuso acquires HIV and dies.

In their cellphilms and digital stories, the SIFs portray hardship and suffering as unavoidable for girls. Even in their speaking back cellphilms, the film-makers do not change the story so that the girls can avoid hardship and suffering altogether and therefore, do not resolve the crises in the protagonists' lives. Instead, in a display of remarkable resilience, the girls in the stories draw on their individual inner strength and resources, accept their fate, endure and persevere, and forgive those who have wronged them. The SIFs' portrayal of suffering as inevitable reflects the realities of the context in which girls and young women contend with poverty, GBV, HIV, unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy, and a lack of resources on a daily basis.

Even when they have the best, most selfless intentions, when they are coerced, or have no other choice, girls suffer and bear the consequences of what happens to them and of what are framed as their decisions. For example, Smangele is given no choice in the matter when she is abducted and manipulated by her would-be husband through the use of traditional herbs. Her parents nevertheless reject her when she tries to return home after leaving her abusive husband. For Nosipho (*Poverty Leads to Prostitution*) and Nombuso (*Drop Out of School*), their desire to support themselves and provide for their families leads to them making the 'decision' to do sex work with dire consequences for both of them. In *Teenage Pregnant 1*, Slindile's boyfriend, Sabelo, uses various tactics to coerce her into having sex with him including a veiled threat of violence when he tells her that she must not think that she can be "cheeky" with him. Slindile

must face the consequences of an action to which she did not consent. Put simply, it seems that no matter what they do and no matter how hard they try to do the right thing, girls suffer.

The inevitable suffering portrayed in the SIFs' visual artefacts is gendered. In their original and speaking back cellphilms, and in their digital stories, it is the girls and not the boys or men who must endure and overcome the consequences of their 'decisions' and what happens to them alone. In *Substance Abuse 1*, for example, it is the two girls who experience negative consequences as a result of going to the tavern and drinking alcohol. One of the girls gets very (and mysteriously) ill. The other girl gets pregnant after having drunken sex with her boyfriend without contraception. She is then abandoned by her boyfriend who denies paternity. The boyfriend, however, experiences no negative consequences for the very same action of going to a tavern, drinking alcohol, and having sex without contraception. When Sabelo denies paternity and abandons a pregnant Slindile, who is then thrown out of her home, he absolves himself of any responsibility for the pregnancy and for the care of the child. In this way, the gendered inevitability of suffering contributes to the precarity of girlhood.

Providing insight into how the SIFs position themselves in relation to vulnerability and risk, all four of the original cellphilms end with the protagonist in tears, hopeless and helpless. These endings reveal that the SIFs feel, to a large extent, powerless against the contextual factors that make them vulnerable and have little control over what happens to them. If this sub-set of data was analysed independently of the other visual products that comprise the complete data set the SIFs created, the girl-in-crisis narrative, propounded by international development discourse is a relatively accurate reflection of the lives of girls and young women in *eMangweni* and their agency or lack thereof. Indeed, the stories told in the original cellphilms share a number of similarities with the girl-in-crisis narrative in which poor girls from the global South

(they are never white) are portrayed as perpetually vulnerable, passive, and “at risk from ‘cultural practices’ such as early marriage and from highly racialised figures of predatory men in their own communities” (Wilson, 2015, p. 19). Powerless in the face of the unavoidable hardships by which they are beset, the girl protagonists in the original cellphilms are the girl-in-crisis. They wait, crying, for rescue.¹¹³

However, importantly, a number of the SIFs’ visual products, even some of the original cellphilms, suggest that while they see suffering as inevitable and are aware of their vulnerability and the limits of and constraints on their agency, they do not see themselves as always and completely helpless and unagentic. Through their cellphilms and digital stories, the SIFs identify some ways, some moments, and some circumstances in which girls and young women are able to act (with varying degrees of success) to secure if not always the most positive, then perhaps the least negative outcome for themselves. For example, in *Early Marriage 1*, while the girl does not at any point challenge her mother-in-law, she does actively challenge Themba (her fiancée/husband). The girl is angry with Themba and points out that he has been dishonest and disappointed her. Her body language is confrontational – she is standing up straight, facing Themba directly, looking him in the eyes and pointing her finger at him as she shouts at him. She is assertive, almost defiant, in the following exchange between them:

Themba: You didn’t tell me that you cannot bear children

Girl: Was there a reason for me to tell you?

Themba: ... I don’t accept it

¹¹³ It is at this point in the girl-in-crisis narrative that the neoliberal international development organisation, programme, or campaign is presented as the vehicle through which the girl is saved. Through ‘empowerment’ and education, the girl-in-crisis is “‘freed’ from the burdens of her husband, child, hunger, and community, and the flies of poverty” by an international development organisation or NGO so that she can be “stripped of her sociocultural, geopolitical, and historical “baggage” and left to embark on a solitary journey of economic development and personal empowerment” (Bent, 2013, p. 11) to become the girl-as-saviour. Girls in the global South can only have and exercise agency when it is given to them by rescuers from the global North. Only the specific type of neoliberal girl power agency that promoted by international development organisations is recognised and rewarded.

Girl: I don't care. That's on you.

Although Sabelo wears her down and she eventually gives in to his coercion, in *Teenage Pregnant 1*, Slindile does not simply acquiesce to his requests (demands) for sex, nor does she remain silent. She resists and clearly refuses Sabelo and attempts to assert herself using his own words against him when she says “you said you love me.” In *Force Marriage 2*, although Mbali forgives him she does not meekly accept TK's apology and take him back. In this way the protagonists in the SIFs' visual products do not entirely embody the figure of the girl-in-crisis. The resisting and speaking back cellphilms clearly involve acts of agency and resistance. In *The Rape*, the protagonist reports that she has been raped to the police. In doing so, she challenges the silence and shame surrounding rape and, through her expectation of assistance from the police, requests that they acknowledge the crime and take action.

Another way in which the SIFs contest the girl-in-crisis narrative in their visual products is by looking towards themselves and their own community for resources and strategies to address the challenges that they and other girls and young women in *eMangweni* face rather than waiting for rescue from an outside source. This comes through in the speaking back cellphilms, and more strongly in the resisting and speaking back cellphilms. In these visual artefacts, the SIFs' protagonist does not resign herself to her fate, waiting to be ““freed” from the burdens of her husband, child, hunger, and community, and the flies of poverty” and so that she can be “stripped of her sociocultural, geopolitical, and historical “baggage” and left to embark on a solitary journey of economic development and personal empowerment” (Bent, 2013, p. 11) as international development discourse would have it. In their resisting and speaking back cellphilms, for example, the protagonists draw on their own internal strengths and resources as well as resources that *should* be available in their community, like the police and social workers

who are, crucially but perhaps not realistically, both willing and able to do their jobs effectively. In *Drop out of School*, for example, Nombuso's younger sister seeks and receives help from a social worker which enables her to finish school, go to medical school and ultimately succeed in life. In all three of the resisting and speaking back cellphilms, the protagonists are aided by the police who are portrayed as sympathetic and are willing and able to take immediate action. In *The Rape*, the protagonist takes her action a step further by joining the SIFs saying, "I would like to join the Social Ills Fighters so that we are able to stop the abuse inflicted on girls here in our community."

In the SIFs' cellphilms and digital stories, the girls' reliance on themselves and the resources that should be available in their community may be in part due to the fact that large international NGOs and government campaigns targeting girls and young women do not reach many deep rural areas in South Africa, including *eMangweni*. Because they are not aware of them, the SIFs do not imagine relying on them for assistance. Their narratives also reflect how few the resources available in *eMangweni* are, and of those how few, the SIFs feel they might be able to access and draw on. However, the solutions offered by the SIFs in their visual artefacts also suggest that they believe that solutions *can* be found within their community and, significantly, that they are part of those solutions.

As I argued in Chapter Three, it is important to avoid portraying girls and women as only victims, thereby not recognising the resources and agency they do have, while simultaneously avoiding attributing to them more resources, power and agency than they actually have. In telling their own stories through their cellphilms and digital stories, the SIFs have eloquently communicated how this tension plays out in their day-to-day lives. I discuss agency in greater depth later in the chapter. It is clear that the SIFs and other girls and young women in

eMangweni are hugely vulnerable and at great risk of EFM and other forms of GBV, HIV, unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy, and becoming ever more deeply embedded in the cycle of poverty. With little power, agency (due to social and economic constraints), and few resources available to aid them, the situation could be described as a crisis. By pointing out examples of the SIFs' agency, my intention is not to minimise the seriousness of the challenges with which girls and young women in rural South Africa contend daily. I am attempting to demonstrate that the single story of the global South girl-in-crisis does not reflect the SIFs' lived realities and fails to recognise and account for the complexity of their context shaped as it has been by colonialism, apartheid, international economic policy and the structural causes of poverty. In exercising the agency that they have and in their acts of resistance, the SIFs and the protagonists in their cellphilms and digital stories offer a challenge to the single story of the girl-in-crisis. In other words, the girls in *eMangweni* are not in crisis in the way that they are portrayed to be in international development discourse, even though girlhood is certainly precarious.

7.3.2 *Femininity, Marriage, and Fertility*

Marriage is the focus of or features in most of the SIFs' visual artefacts, reflecting the importance of marriage as a social institution in *eMangweni*. Through their cellphilms and digital stories, the SIFs convey the complexities and nuances of the dynamics around marriage, particularly EFM, in *eMangweni*. In this context, having children is also shown to be important for both men and women.

7.3.2.1 *"A woman's grave is with her in-laws": The Importance of Marriage to Femininity*

Also translated as "a girl's grave is not at her [natal] home," the idiom 'a woman's grave is with her in-laws,' came up during a discussion about why marriage is considered so important

for women in *eMangweni*. Literally, the phrase means that a woman must be buried with her husband's family into which she was incorporated when she married and not with her natal family. Figuratively, it refers to the fact that an unmarried woman does not comfortably belong anywhere. Adult women are expected to get married and have children. Married women have clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and positions within families which are linked to particular customs and traditions. Having failed to meet the expectation that she will marry and have children, the roles, responsibilities, and positions of adult women who remain unmarried are far less clear.

In the SIFs' cellfilms and digital stories, marriage appears as central to successful femininity. In *Force Marriage I* Mbali's mother is horrified when she thinks her daughter does not want to get married at all: "Haibo, Mbali! What am I hearing?!"¹¹⁴ As Veeh explained during a participatory data analysis discussion

If you are not married your parents and the neighbours would say that there is something wrong with you, especially if your friends are also married.

In the exchange below, the SIFs explain that the social pressure to get married to achieve and demonstrate successful femininity is part of the motivation for girls to enter into early marriages:

Cnah: I think it is because the saying that "a woman's grave is with the in-laws". Yeah. I think that contributes in her making a decision which makes her end up marrying an older man.

Veeh: I am thinking about...how can I put this? ... oh, maybe the man asks and you say no, he will say that maybe this the first and only chance you have to get married.

¹¹⁴ *Haibo* is an exclamation in isiZulu expressing shock or disbelief.

Wendie: I think it is because the saying ‘a girl’s grave is not at her home’. I think that also contributes.

This exchange also touches on the anxiety that girls and women have about the risk of turning down a proposal and not receiving another one and therefore remaining unmarried. It is interesting to note that in this exchange the idea that a girl or woman could propose marriage does not occur to the SIFs.

In *eMangweni*, marriage is associated with social rewards and is therefore something to which girls and young women (are expected to) aspire. The ward councillor explains: when a female gets married it is seen as an achievement for people of this area. In *Force Marriage*, for example, both Mbali’s mother and her friend, Zama, are excited about TK’s proposal and encourage her to marry him. In *Teenage Pregnant 1* one of Slindile’s friends encourages her to meet with Sabelo at his house, saying that he might be “Mr Right”, and might “marry you.” In *Teenage Pregnant 2*, after Sabelo apologises for denying paternity and abandoning Slindile and their child she forgives him and they get married in a joyous celebration. This is the ‘happily ever after’ ending that girls are taught to long for and aspire to. Slindile’s successful femininity is affirmed as she achieves what is often thought of as one of the most important goals in a woman’s life. In *Drop out of School*, part of the evidence of Nombuso’s sister’s success and happy life is the fact that she gets married and has children. It is not marriage itself to which the SIFs object. It is EFM including coerced marriage and *ukuthwala ngenkani*.

Because of its centrality to successful femininity in *eMangweni*, in the same way that the threat of remaining unmarried can form part of girls’ motivation to marry, the threat of having an unsuccessful marriage, and therefore failed femininity, can be a powerful incentive for women to stay in unhappy and/or violent relationships. For example, in *Abuses is the Crime*, the girl’s

mother refuses to report her abusive husband to the police because that would mean that she would no longer be married. The girl's mother's reluctance to no longer be married could be in part due to financial reasons. As discussed in Chapter Three, in contexts of poverty like *eMangweni*, men are more likely than women to find employment in the formal economy. As a result, women are often financially dependent on men. In addition to this, certain aspects of life are also very difficult for single women (unmarried, divorced, less so for widows) in many communities. There are particular customs and rituals that can only be performed by (senior) male members of the family, and women often need to be represented by a husband, father, brother, or uncle in proceedings of the traditional court (Hunter, 2010). However, having learned from the SIFs about the social importance of marriage for women in *eMangweni*, it also seems likely that the girl's mother did not want to experience the shame of a failed marriage (and therefore failed femininity). Similar to the women in Shai's (2018) study, according to the SIFs, womanhood is legitimised through marriage. Like the women in Hunter (2010) and Willan et al.'s (2019; 2020) studies, there are a number of possible reasons for women in *eMangweni* choosing to enter into and/or stay in unhappy and/or violent marriages and relationships, including financial support and social pressure.

7.3.2.2 *"I do not want a wife who is unable to have children": The Importance of Fertility to Femininity*

Marriage is a necessary but not sufficient condition for successful femininity in *eMangweni*. Child-bearing also appears in the SIFs' narratives as central to constructions of successful femininity. This is made very clear by Themba and his mother in *Early Marriage 1*. Upon hearing the news of her son's impending marriage, Themba's mother tells him "I want grandchildren here," Themba's reaction when the girl tells him she cannot have children, and

his mother's eventual eviction of the girl on the grounds that she is 'barren' are further evidence for the central role of child-bearing in marriage.

Like marriage, motherhood is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for successful femininity. Girls and women are expected to get pregnant and have children within a marriage (Dube et al., 2017). As shown in *Teenage Pregnant 2* when Slindile is rejected by her mother for getting pregnant, having a child out of wedlock, to use an antiquated phrase, is still associated with shame and embarrassment in *eMangweni*. When Slindile comes to beg forgiveness and her mother turns her away, her mother says to herself: "The child does not respect me. She returns asking for forgiveness, but she shamed me in the community and still has the guts to return and ask for forgiveness. This child is making me sick, really sick!"

In the same way that marriage is associated with respectability for women in *eMangweni*, so is having children within a marriage. Securing a husband and bearing children prove and affirm a woman's worth in terms of three key measures of femininity – her desirability to men, her virtue, and her fertility. A girl or woman who has a child outside of marriage has failed to achieve successful femininity on two levels. First, she has failed to demonstrate her womanliness by securing a husband. Second, her pregnancy and her child(ren) are proof of her loose morals. Fertility is acceptable only within the confines of marriage where it is proof of a woman's femininity and part of her duties as a wife, and not outside of marriage where it is proof only of her unrestrained sexuality. In *eMangweni*, when a girl or woman gets pregnant outside of marriage, there is still pressure on both the girl or woman and the boy or man to get married to restore the girl or woman's respectability and ensure that the child is legitimate.

7.3.3 *Girlhood at the Intersection of Poverty and Culture: Girlhood as Selfless*

In addition to the social pressure to get married discussed above, through the SIFs' visual products and our discussions of them, particularly our participatory data analysis discussions, it became clear that the SIFs understand EFM in *eMangweni* as a practice that takes place at the intersection of poverty and culture, where gender inequality is understood to be inherent to culture.

7.3.3.1 *Lobolo, Poverty, and Culture*

According to the SIFs, community members, and members of the traditional leadership many, though not all, adults in *eMangweni* understand EFM to be a harmless, even positive practice that is integral to their 'culture.' For example, in my field notes about our first community engagement meeting with the traditional leadership and members of the community to address EFM on 20 February 2019, I wrote

[A]n older man stood up and asked the room (and not Lebo and Nkonzo) why we (the research team from UKZN) are against marriage. Everyone else was so quiet and he spoke with great passion. He said that early marriage and *ukuthwala* are part of their culture and that there is nothing harmful about them. Another man stood up and said that getting married at a young age is important because it stops girls getting pregnant outside of marriage and that the girls want to get married young because they love the boys.¹¹⁵ ...The group of older women who are responsible for planning *Ukuphuma kwezintombi* (the maiden's coming out ball) sat in the front two rows on one side of the room. Most of them had their arms crossed, shook their heads, exchanged glances, and whispered among themselves while Lebo, Nkonzo, Xoli, and Councillor Mpembe spoke. Almost the first thing Lebo said when we were debriefing after the meeting was

115

that she could tell from their body language, facial expressions, and behaviour that the women were not impressed with what was being said. It was clear even to me sitting at the back of the room... While I was cleaning up after lunch some of the women [who plan *ukuphuma kwezintombi*] were teasing me, telling me they would find me a husband, and when I was saying goodbye to [the *iNkosi*'s chief advisor], he joked that he would find me a husband in *eMangweni*.

In contrast, the SIFs were very clear about the fact that they experience EFM as harmful, oppressive, violent, and unjust, and are vehemently opposed to any form of it, particularly *ukuthwala ngenkani*. That they chose EFM as the main focus of our work together shows how strongly they feel about it. The phrase "No more vows for cows!" although not coined by the SIFs became a kind of catch phrase, succinctly communicating their opposition to the practice, and their understanding of the role of culture and poverty in it.

Although *lobolo* (bride price) is considered a time-honoured tradition by many Zulu people, for the SIFs it is heavily implicated in the practice of EFM and is a symbol of the commodification of girls and young women. The SIFs understand *lobolo* and EFM as a transaction between two families in which the girl or young woman is traded or 'sold' to the groom and his family as a *makoti*¹¹⁶ (vows) in exchange for or for the price of a certain number of cattle (cows). Understood in this way, a girl or young woman's value and worth is literally calculated in terms of the number of cattle her family receives as *lobolo*. That girls and young women are often not consulted or even informed about these arrangements, and their objections silenced or ignored only adds to the dehumanising effect of the practice as it is experienced by the SIFS. The sense that girls and young women are valued only for their potential to bring in

¹¹⁶ Bride

lobolo or that this is valued more highly than they are, is illustrated in this exchange that took place during the post-screening discussion of the digital stories:

Lisa: Who is important in this digital story? Who is seen as important in forced marriage? Is it the husband, the girl, the cows?

Cynthai: It's the cows. It's the husband.

Lebo: So, what would you say to the parents? What should be the most important?

Bonah: It should be the girl, because it is her life after all. Our message is no more vows for cows. Girls are the number one priority.

Further reinforcing the idea that the girl or young woman herself matters little, as depicted in *Forced Marriage*, once the *lobolo* in the form of cattle has been received by a girl or woman's family, it is difficult for the girl or young woman to back out of marriage arrangements or the marriage and return to her natal home regardless of the reasons for her return (Dube et al., 2017). Lungoh explains:

your parents turn you back and make you go back to the husband even though you don't want to, even if your husband hits you. They do this because they've received the cows. They say the cows do not return back to the husband.

The SIFs display a clear understanding of the role that poverty plays in dynamics around *lobolo* and EFM including the fact that families' eagerness to receive *lobolo* is not always and/or only motivated by greed. Although they still do not condone it, the SIFs are aware that poverty and the desperation that accompanies it can lead families to prioritising *lobolo* over the wishes and/or well-being of their child. Receiving *lobolo* would be a most welcome windfall for many of the families in *eMangweni* many of whom struggle daily with meeting their most basic needs. This is depicted in *Force Marriage 1* through Mbali's mother's joyful exclamation "We

will now receive *lobolo*!” In addition to receiving *lobolo*, having a daughter marry and join her husband’s household would further lighten the financial burden as there would be one less mouth to feed. Cnah explained that relieving the some of the financial pressure on their families is a motive for some girls and young women to get married early:

I think young children get married at an early age because at their homes they are poor and you think your family will be rich by getting you married. The reason for young girls to get married at a young age is because they think that they will be able to change their family’s poverty status by getting you married off.

Mpiloh added:

Maybe you don’t want to be a burden on the family.

For both girls and young women and their families, the possibility that the girl’s (potential) husband and/or his family might be able to provide for his wife in such a way that she can live in relative comfort is a powerful incentive for marriage. In *Force Marriage 1*, Mbali’s friend, Zama, frames the potential marriage as an “opportunity” to escape poverty. She tells Mbali: “You know friend, you will live a comfortable life and forget about this miserable life that you are living now” and encourages her to “stop playing with such a good opportunity.” Bonah explains:

One of the reasons that makes girls to want to go get married while they are still young is that when the older man is courting her, he attracts her with the promise of money and that he works. She then tells herself that when they’re married this means they will live a happy life and her life will not be the same as that of other girls, girls that are still in school and that he will buy her everything that she wants.”

The SIFs also explained that for girls who do not achieve well at school and cannot plan on a future based on academic success, marriage can appear to be a viable strategy to secure a future for herself:

Lungoh: It is that because you have poor grades, you see the best way out of poverty through marriage.

The logic behind these motivations for marriage is arguably protective. However, through their cellphilms and digital stories, the SIFs demonstrate that, rather than an opportunity to secure a better life, EFM often increases girls' vulnerability to GBV and HIV, prevents them from finishing school, and often traps them more deeply in the cycle of poverty. Wendie explains:

When they drop out of school, and go get married, they will become poor. They will be abused, with children and contract disease.

Mbali's circumstances at the end of *Force Marriage 1* are a good example of this. The SIFs stress that EFM prevents girls and young women from "reaching their goals" and "achieving their dreams" attributing this failure, at least in part, to being forced to leave school:

Bonah: If girls are forced to get married they won't achieve their goal.

Mpiloh: I think that mothers and boys should not force girls to marry them, especially men that they do not love. They must leave be, to continue with their studies so that they are able to fulfil their dreams.

As discussed above, it is not marriage to which the SIFs object, but EFM. For the SIFs, it is about having the freedom to choose who they marry and when. Not having this choice, having no say in their future contributes to a sense of powerlessness and worthlessness. The SIFs further explain that once girls are married, particularly if they are married to much older men,

they continue to have no or very little power. Of girls who get married early, Lungoh observed that “Yeah, they are not independent, they are controlled by the men”.

In our post-screening discussions, it also became clear that for the SIFs, love is an important factor in marriage, as indicated by the following comments:

Bonah: It is that you are forced into marrying someone that you do not love.

Mpumeh: I think that mothers and boys should not force girls to marry them, especially men that they do not love.

The SIFs recognise coerced marriage as a form of forced marriage. This is clear in the title and content of *Force Marriage* 1. The cellphilm does not tell a story of *ukuthwala ngenkani* or a marriage concluded as a result of physical force, but rather about the coercion and pressure to marry that girls and young women experience from their parents, their peers, and the men who intend to be their husbands. Mbali marries TK with the appearance of willingness after her mother, her friend, and TK have all dismissed her protestations and clearly expressed wishes and pressured her into the marriage. Cnah explains:

There is a lot of that going around, of girls being forced into marriage. Even your friends pressure you into getting married. Even your mother pressures you into getting married and in some instances the mother of the boy also comes and pressures you to marry their son. They would say their son is working and has this and that. They force you into marrying their son.

Under the weight of this pressure, and knowing that their marriage might relieve some of their family’s financial burden, or be an opportunity for them to secure their futures, girls and young women cannot consent.

It is important to note that as fervently as the SIFs oppose EFM, not all girls and young women in *eMangweni* share their objections. As discussed above, there are social rewards associated with being married, and, like the girl in *Early Marriage 1* and *2* some girls and young women are motivated by romantic ideas of love and marriage. It is also significant to acknowledge that so important is marriage in *eMangweni* that boys and men are also pressured by their families to get married. As Bonah explains, “many times the boy’s parents have already said to him, ‘now you must get married, go and find a wife’ so he is being forced at home”.

Discussed briefly above, EFM is not supported by all adults in *eMangweni*. In *Early Marriage 1* the girl tells Themba that her mother would try to stop her from marrying him. The audience understands from this that the girl’s mother would not approve of her daughter marrying at such a young age. During the course of our work together, inspired by their daughters, two of the SIFs’ mothers began to speak out against EFM at community dialogues and meetings. The SIFs (and the university research team) received vocal and dedicated support in their work to address EFM from a number of adults in *eMangweni* as well, including Xoli (our partner who is a social worker at Thembaletu), the ward councillor, their school principal and one of their teachers, and a nurse from the local clinic. There were also members of the community, including older men, who spoke in favour of ending EFM in *eMangweni*. Further, as I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter, we received support from local and provincial government structures and, somewhat more reluctantly, the traditional leadership.

7.3.3.2 Marriage, Love and (Re)productive Labour

While the dynamics around marriage are tackled in a number of the SIFs’ visual products, the cellfilms *Early Marriage 1* and *2* provide insight into dynamics within marriage for girls and young women in *eMangweni* as understood by the SIFs. For the girl protagonist in *Early*

Marriage 1, love appears to be an important factor in her decision to marry Themba. She declares that marrying him will be “easy because I already love him.” This declaration is contrasted with the instrumentalised understanding of marriage and the role of the *makoti* (young or new bride, newly-wed) that the girl’s mother-in-law has. When Themba tells his mother that he is engaged to be married she is overjoyed, not least because, as she tells Themba, she is tired of cooking and cleaning for him and she is looking forward to no longer having to do any work around the house. When they first meet, the girl’s mother-in-law tells her what is expected of her as a *makoti*. She says that “a wife who sleeps late is not wanted,” that a wife wakes up early and does all the chores including tending the fields. Later in the cellphilm, when in the scene where the girl confronts Themba, she is obviously hot and tired from hard work. As discussed above, in addition to the *makoti*’s obligation to work very hard doing all of the household chores, the importance of fertility and child-bearing in marriage comes through strongly in the cellphilm. This is demonstrated through the mother-in-law’s emphasis on it when Themba first tells her that he is engaged (“I do not want a wife who is unable to have children”), to Themba’s reaction when the girl tells him she cannot have children, and the mother-in-law’s eventual eviction of the girl on the grounds that she is ‘barren.’ Early on in the narrative, it becomes very clear that the girl’s worth, at least to her mother-in-law, is found in her (potential) capacity for productive and reproductive labour. The girl’s mother-in-law’s very practical (as opposed to romantic) approach to marriage is further emphasised when she tells Themba that he “will have to find a new one [wife]” as though he is replacing a useful household appliance. Cnah explains:

When you get married when you are young, you might find yourselves being married into a family that will treat like a slave. Your husband might leave you alone, your job is just to get pregnant and have children.

Through this cellphilm the film-makers also show that *ukuhlonipha* (respect) is expected and practiced in *eMangweni*. This is demonstrated through the stooped posture of the girl when she is interacting with her mother-in-law, the fact that she does not make eye contact with her, unquestioningly agrees to do as she instructs, and does not challenge her when she is being chased out of the house. The film-makers also show the influential role of the mother-in-law in her son's marriage, and therefore her daughter-in-law's life.

7.3.3.3 “they are paying the damages to show that they are buying you”: The Commodification of Girlhood

Inhlawulo, often translated into English as damages, is a traditional form of justice or retribution between two families. It involves the family of a boy or man who has in some way ‘compromised’ or ‘violated’ a girl or woman ‘compensating’ her family as a form of reparation. *Inhlawulo* is paid by the boy or man's family to the girl or woman's family for getting a girl pregnant before she is married. *Inhlawulo* is also paid by the perpetrator's family to the victim/survivor's family in cases of rape or sexual assault. Payment is made in the form of livestock like cows and goats, sometimes even chickens, or in some parts of South Africa now, cash. This process is usually facilitated by senior male members of the two families and/or the traditional court. It is, in some communities, even recommended and facilitated by the police as an alternative to arresting the perpetrator. *Inhlawulo* is often the only ‘consequence’ boys/men face for their actions against a girl/woman, and even this ‘punishment’ is not always meted out. *Inhlawulo* did not feature in any of the SIFs' visual artefacts, but came up in discussions about justice for girls and consequences or punishment for boys and/men.

Many, but not all, of the SIFs see this approach to justice as a betrayal of and a lack of justice for the victim/survivor. Their analysis was that poverty and the desire for economic benefit

often trumps justice for the girl. As Veeh explained during a participatory data analysis discussion

...most of [the families] they are suffering financially so when they get the opportunity to get the money they will just grab it without thinking what their child is feeling.

Like *lobolo*, *inhlawulo* can be seen as a form of commodification of girls and women, and illustrates how poverty exacerbates this problem. There is an economic value assigned to the physical and psychological violation of a girl or young woman. The price of her body and her autonomy can be quantified in terms of livestock or cash. The idea of ‘paying damages,’ too, speaks volumes about what it is that is valued about girls and women. There is a sense in which the perpetrator paying the girl’s family for ‘damage’ to the girl is more about the girl being ‘damaged goods’ and less about him paying for his crime. The family of a ‘damaged’ girl or woman must often ask for less *lobolo* because, as she is no longer a virgin, she is considered less valuable to her prospective husband’s family, and thus, to her own family. As Lungoh explains:

It is because they are paying the damages to show that they are buying you. it is no different from like buying you when they are paying the damages. This is showing that they are buying people that they have damaged, why are they buying people?

A number of the SIFs question whether *inhlawulo* is an effective or adequate consequence, because it does not sufficiently inconvenience the boy/man or perpetrator:

Veeh: I think that the parents of the girl should not allow the damages to be paid from the boy’s parents. This is because for some, that is not a huge thing to do, it has no consequences.

Lisa: So, the practice of paying reparation...the damages

Veoh: Yes, the payment of the damages should be stopped because that a person to continue raping young girls and young women with the thought that if I rape them, I have a herd of cows, I can just take one and give it to the family and I will continue raping. But if they go to jail he will see his life being over and learn a lesson that they must not rape young girls and women in the community.

Some of the SIFs, did see the benefit of *inhlawulo* as a form of apology and respect to the girl's family for getting her pregnant before she is married. The exchange below is an excerpt from a lively conversation about the pros and cons of *inhlawulo*:

Cnah: There is this law right, that says that when you get a girl pregnant you have to pay the family with a cow. I think that law should be abolished.

Wendie: Why?

Cnah: Why should they pay with a cow? Because they intentionally get you pregnant, right? They always pay with the cow. I am not against the paying but I see the method of paying allowing people to continue. Sometimes they say it was a mistake. How can they pay for getting someone pregnant if it was a mistake?

Wendie: I view it in this way. If someone is paying for you getting pregnant it is because they are saying sorry to your parents for making a mistake by sleeping with the girl of this house, while it she was not ready to do so, because we are not yet married. That is how I see it.

Cnah: But what does that say about your life?

Wendie: What do you mean? We have agreed that we are going to have sex so we have to find solutions to the situation that we are in. It's not that he is buying the girl, but it is a form of saying sorry, cleansing your house because he has disgraced it. That is how I see it.

This exchange also touches on issues of girls' sexuality, respectability, and virtue to which I return later in the chapter.

7.3.4 Girlhood at the Intersection of Love and Violence

Linked to the precarity of girlhood is the uneasy relationship between love and violence that comes through in the SIFs' visual products and our discussions. Although also something that they desire, love and relationships are portrayed by the SIFs as fraught with potential danger for girls and young women. At risk is their safety, their physical and mental health, their virtue and respectability.

7.3.4.1 "You said you love me": Romance and the (Tacit) Threat of Violence

In *Teenage Pregnant I*, the film-makers demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of two parallel discourses about love, sex, and relationships that often co-exist, each represented in the narrative by one of Slindile's two friends. One of these parallel discourses revolves around romantic notions of love and marriage. It is represented by the friend who encourages Slindile to go to Sabelo's house, telling her that he might be "The One," and "Mr Right," and might marry her. The other discourse, represented by Slindile's other friend, revolves around the constant threat of violence: "he will rape, force you to have sex with him without your consent."¹¹⁷ Girls, it seems, must navigate this treacherous boundary between love and violence in order to stay safe, preserve their reputations, and achieve happiness.

¹¹⁷ These parallel discourses converge when violence and abuse are explained as demonstrations and expressions of passionate love.

The exchange between Slindile and Sabelo in *Teenage Pregnant 1* is particularly informative. Sabelo uses love to manipulate Slindile into doing what she has clearly stated she does not want to do, and when this tactic is unsuccessful, he resorts to the tacit threat of violence when he tells her that she should not be “cheeky” with him. Sabelo then uses a third strategy to coerce Slindile into having sex with him when he pleads with her. The implication of Sabelo’s comment about Slindile being cheeky with her friends making her think she can be cheeky with him also suggests that there is a level of acquiescence, deference, and obedience expected from girls/women by boys/men. Slindile questions Sabelo’s motives and strategies, almost using his own words against him, when she says “you said you love me.” Sabelo dismisses this immediately saying “those are only just words,” revealing his dishonesty and manipulation, and his disregard for Slindile’s wishes. Sabelo wears Slindile down. She remains silent and allows herself to be led away by him to a room where the audience assumes they have sex, but she is clearly reluctant and at no time does she actively consent. This is a painfully familiar story and could have been set in various contexts across the globe.

In this relationship, Slindile’s boyfriend is both the object of her affection and hopes for the future (marriage) and the threat to her safety and well-being. It is clear that Sabelo has no interest at all in what Slindile does or does not want. She clearly rejects his advances, but, as the saying goes, Sabelo does not take no for an answer and in the end his two-pronged attack using love and violence is successful and he gets what he wants. Importantly, Slindile is not silent, she is *silenced*. She clearly communicates that she does not want to have sex with Sabelo, but she is silenced when he completely disregards her clearly stated wishes. During the post-screening discussion of the original cellphilms, Cynthai made this layered statement:

I think that when you are a girl you are scared of boys, of dating boys, because when you are raped, people say that you were in love with him or that what you wanted to

happen. So, you are even scared of your friends and the community of what they are going to say.

Here it seems that the fear of the boy is interwoven with the fear of being blamed for him raping her.¹¹⁸

The exchange below again illustrates how love and trust as ideals of romantic relationships are used by boys and men as tools to manipulate women and girls, as is the, often unspoken, threat of abandonment or withdrawal of love:

Lisa: Can you say 'no condom, no sex'?

SIFs: Yes [sounding hesitant]

Lisa: Can you say that?

Veeh: Yes, you can say it but...

Lisa: You sound doubtful.

Bonah: He will say 'you don't love me'.

...

Mpumeh: Oh, I think that some of the girls get pregnant because their partner that they are having sex with did not want to use a condom. So, when they suggest to use a condom, they say 'you don't trust them' or 'you don't love me'.

We discussed this strategy for manipulation a number of times, exploring different ways to respond when boys/men say things like this, what this kind of behaviour really means about how the boy/man really feels about the girl/woman to whom he says or does this. Over time, these discussions made their way into some of the SIFs' visual products and the way they understood and talked about love and relationships. For example, in *No does not Mean Yes*,

¹¹⁸ I will discuss this statement further later in the chapter

the protagonist is reluctant to report her boyfriend who is trying to coerce her into having sex with him because she loves him. The counsellor tells the girl that her boyfriend doesn't love her and that he is abusing her "even now" and (echoing what Lebo, Nkonzo, and I have said many times in our conversations) that "If he loved you, he would listen to what you have to say." Boys waiting for girls, not pressuring them into having sex, having a baby, or getting married until they are ready became part of the SIFs vocabulary around love and relationships. For example, during post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions, the SIFs made the following comments:

Cynthai: if the guy truly loves you he will for you until you are ready

Bonah: If the person who wants to marry you, truly loves you, he will wait until you finish school.

Mpumeh: But if he loves me, he will wait for me until I achieve my dreams.

Respect was also something that the SIFs increasingly incorporated into their understandings of love, as illustrated in the comments below:

Veeh: they need to respect your decisions

Cnah: If you see that your boyfriend wants a baby and you do not want a baby, you have the right to say no, leave him and get someone else who will respect you.

Although some of the SIFs showed signs of a budding feminist mentality when we first started working together, the growing confidence that they as a group displayed during our time together in terms of their right to be treated by parents and boyfriends, and other boys and men with respect and consideration, and to make decisions about their own lives and futures was wonderful to observe.

7.3.4.2 “When a man rises, a woman takes a back seat”: Unequal Gender Relations

The SIFs are aware of how age and gendered power dynamics play out in relationships between girls/women and boys/men. This is illustrated in the exchange below which took place during the post-screening discussion of *Teenage Pregnant 1*:

Lisa: Can you do that? Can you say ‘let’s go have sex, but I want to continue studying, so, let’s use a condom.’ Are you able to do that?

Veeh: The thing is that boys think they have power over girls and that they are better than girls. So, when you as a girl make a decision, they say ‘you will listen to me, I am the man in this house.’ When a man rises a woman takes a back seat.

Cnah: So, he will just say ‘Who are you? I am making the decision in this relationship, you can’t tell me what to do.’

Wendie: It is not only men, but also boys say that as well.

Exploring how girls might respond in such a situation, the conversation continued:

Lisa: Ok so, when a boy says ‘a girl doesn’t make decisions, I’m the one who makes the decisions.’ Is there something that you can do? What can you do? What can you say?

Cnah: No! That cannot happen. You cannot force me if I don’t want to! I would rather leave.

Nkonzo: Okay, leave the relationship, that is one option. What else can you do? Others would say ‘I love him though,’ right?

Cnah: Yes.

Nkonzo: You love him, but at the same time you don’t want to have sex, or you don’t want to have unsafe sex, because you will end up pregnant. So, what can you do? She has one suggestion, she will leave him, ‘ok then bye’

Mpumeh: I would say that if you do love me lets us talk about it, like partners, let us share our thoughts about this.

While Cnah's declaration is a promising display of her belief in her independence and her right to make her own decisions and have those decisions respected, actually negotiating this with a partner is, for many girls and young women, difficult, possibly even potentially dangerous. In addition to the kind of manipulation described above ('You do not trust me'), violent responses to women asking their partners to use condoms are well-documented in the literature on the link between HIV and gender inequality in South Africa (see, for example, Dube et al., 2017; Mash et al., 2010; Pitpitan et al., 2012). What Mpumeh suggests is a promising indication that the SIFs are coming to see that communication is a crucial part of a healthy relationship, and that it is not unreasonable or inappropriate for girls and women to discuss issues affecting their safety, health and well-being with their partners. However, it is also reminiscent of how Slindile tried unsuccessfully to assert herself with Sabelo in *Teenage Pregnant 1*. It remains unclear exactly boys and men could be effectively encouraged to adopt a similar attitude.

The SIFs' increased sense of their own agency and confidence in their rights indicates that they are beginning to be able to imagine an alternative way of being in which they are not silenced and dismissed as their protagonists were in the original cellphilms. Just the ability to imagine such alternative identities is, as Willan et al. (2020b) point out, a key challenge. It can be seen as a crucial first step towards challenge, resistance, and change in the hegemonic gender order in *eMangweni*. However, on its own, it is not enough, and more independent and assertive behaviour among women and girls has in some contexts in fact increased their vulnerability to violence. This phenomenon has been documented in development literature (see, for example, Hughes et al., 2015). A common critique of programmes intended to 'empower' women is that

they are told in these programmes that they have power and rights, the right to assert themselves and exercise their rights, and to justice when those rights are violated. All of this is, of course, true. Be that as it may, these women re-enter their communities armed with knowledge that they cannot use, because their environment has not changed and is not receptive to the women's more assertive attitude and behaviour. The SIFs demonstrated a keen awareness of this dynamic and were adamant that working with girls and not boys would not lead to an improvement in relationships between girls and boys and would not result in a reduction in coercion and other forms of IPV. For example, in response to a question about what they might change in order to improve the project, the SIFs explained:

Mpumeh: The boys also should know how to behave in the community because it not like the girls only who are troublesome, the boys also are troublesome. So, I think if maybe the group have maybe two or four boys or they start on their own. That would also help.

Veeh: Yeah what I would like to happen um as Mpumeh said, to add on that if... we cannot do this on our own. So, we need boys to know... they can behave like this and girls can behave like this. So yeah.

In contexts like *eMangweni* where patriarchy and culture are mutually constitutive, to say that challenging male power and dominance will be difficult, is perhaps an understatement. The SIFs understood that it would be possible to disrupt the hegemonic patriarchal gender order only with the willingness, co-operation, and support of both girls and women and boys and men

7.3.5 Girlhood, Sexuality, and Power

Sexuality is informed by gender and operates within its broader framework of power relations (Wiebesiek, 2015). As a system of values and principles, morality focuses heavily on sexuality. Unequal gendered power relations as they are played out in the realm of sexuality are often framed as morality. As a result, sexuality is a particularly precarious component of girlhood.

7.3.5.1 The Impossible Position of Girls

Foucault argues that sexuality is an “especially dense transfer point for relations of power” (1979, p. 103). This can be observed within hegemonic gender relations in which “the sexual advances of men as an expression of male power are condoned” (Wiebesiek, 2015, p. 114). As part of their performance of masculinity, boys and men are expected to prove their virility. They are considered to be legitimate sexual aggressors who have limited control over their powerful sexual urges. In contrast, ideas about women’s virtue as an important feature of their femininity lead to the expectation that girls and women should be ignorant about sex. A certain degree of passivity and acquiescence to male dominance is also expected of girls and women as a sign of their femininity. Girls and women should not, for example, pursue a boy or man nor should they initiate sex. Simultaneously, however, girls and women are expected to fiercely guard and defend their virtue “by resisting the [inevitable] sexual advances of men for fear of losing their virtue and reputation, often symbolised by virginity” (Wiebesiek, 2015, p. 113), thereby failing to achieve successful femininity.

In this way, girls and women are put in an impossible position. They must defend their virtue against men’s attempts to compromise it, but they must do so while maintaining an appearance of passivity and acquiescence, risking abandonment, and not angering their would-be seducer. Rejection violence, both physical and verbal, that girls and women are often subject to when

they reject men's advances, ranges from being called a prude or a tease to physical and/or sexual assault, even femicide (see, for example, Thacker, 2019). In this dynamic, girls and women, who have significantly less power than men, have all of the responsibility and bear all of the consequences. How this dynamic plays out is illustrated in *Teenage Pregnant 1*. Slindile is forced to choose between her virtue and the very real possibility of violence. She makes her choice and is abandoned by Sabelo anyway. She is left with the shame of an unplanned pregnancy, Sabelo's insinuation about her promiscuity, and responsibility for the baby.

7.3.5.2 The 'Right Time': Sexuality and Morality

Attitudes towards girls' sexuality among those in eMangweni who support EFM appear to be contradictory. On one hand, a girl of 15 is not considered old enough to have sex – she must wait for the 'right time.' On the other hand, at the same age she is considered old enough to get married and have children. These attitudes towards girls, sexuality, and marriage no longer appear contradictory when they are understood to be a reflection of values related to controlling girls and women's sexuality, rather than a reflection on age as an indicator of an ability to make a choice or decision. From this perspective, girls' sexuality is only problematic when it is not carefully controlled and policed. When she is not married, it must be controlled through abstinence. When she is married, it is contained and controlled by her husband and is therefore not a threat to the moral fabric of the community. This conservative attitude is reflected in the SIFs' own relatively conservative attitudes towards girls' sexuality, and their awareness of the dangers of unrestrained sexuality.

In *Teenage Pregnant 2*, Slindile's mother says about her daughter, "She's after things that are not of her age" meaning that Slindile is too young to be having sex. Slindile's mother feels that by having sex too young and getting pregnant, her daughter has disrespected her and shamed

her in the community. This was the first of many times that the idea came up in our discussions of there being a ‘right’ time for girls and young women to have sex and that they should wait until that time, for example:

Lungoh: Girls must not be in a rush to start doing things that is not within their control but they must wait for the right time.

Mpumeh: Girls should wait until the right time, because the way is known by those who are already ahead of us

Cynthai: ...you must learn how to carry yourself when you are a girl and to wait because everything has its own time.

Feeh: If you are a girl, you must be proud about being a virgin girl, by being abstaining, not chasing things that are for adults, put your legs together. It is good to know that sex does not start and does not end, you must wait until the time is right. Parents must teach us about the terrible consequences of having a child while you are still young because you have not waited.

From these narratives, it was not clear when exactly the ‘right’ time is. Sometimes it was after finishing school, sometimes after marriage, sometimes when you’ve reached your goal or achieved your dream, and sometimes at some unspecified time constituting adulthood. Feeh’s layered comment above reveals a particularly conservative attitude towards sexuality that echoes the values of the gendered discourse about sexuality circulating in *eMangweni*. These values are shaped by ideas about culture infused with patriarchal ideology. Although the SIFs did not mention religion, often, many, if not most, people in *eMangweni* attend church and consider themselves religious. Through the spread of Christianity that was an integral part of,

and indeed a frequently used justification for, colonialism, Christian religious ideology has heavily influenced values about sexuality in South Africa (Hunter, 2010)¹¹⁹.

Feeh's comment is also an example how the SIFs' attitudes toward girls' sexuality are influenced by public discourse about adolescent girls' sexuality that is, more often than not, centred around danger, pathology, and moral panic. This moral panic is often, but not always, linked to religion and culture. The legacy of colonialism and religion is also implicated in this discourse. As discussed in Chapter Three, this hyper focus on the fertility of the indigenous population in colonialist ideology and practice has made its way into international development discourse. This hyper focus is revealed in the emphasis on controlling fertility and the shift in focus from women in the global South to girls who, having not yet left school, get married, and start having children, still have the potential to be transformed into the ideal neoliberal subject (see for example Kabeer, 1999; Khoja-Moolji 2015, 2018; Wilson, 2015). In South Africa, the disproportionate risk of girls between the ages of 15 and 24 to HIV and relatively high rates of unplanned and unwanted pregnancy reinforces these discourses of danger and pathology. As Zeeh observes: Parents must teach children about the things that they can face if they are having sex and also children must abstain from having sex.

The somewhat coarse saying that girls must "close their legs" is one that the Networks for Change research team and I heard a number of times in *eMangweni* (and elsewhere in South Africa). It has layered meaning. Girls must control any inappropriate and unseemly sexual urges they may have (girls and women should not be sexual beings, but beings who have sex) *and* protect their virtue. The implication here is that 'boys will be boys' and try to 'get between

¹¹⁹ See also Tamale (2014) and Coetzee and du Toit (2017) for discussions of religion, culture, and sexuality in colonial and postcolonial Africa.

their legs’ and it is the girls’ responsibility to keep them out using this simplistic strategy which, among other things fails to take into account the complexities of context and unequal power relations. These dynamics add to the complexity of the impossible position in which the SIFs, and girls and women more generally, find themselves.

7.3.5.3 ‘At home they are scared to tell us these things...They do not tell us anything’: Taboos about Talking about Sex and Relationships

Taboos around talking about sex with adults, expectations about children behaving respectfully towards adults, and fear of being judged make it difficult, often impossible, for the SIFs and other young people in South Africa, to discuss sex and relationships with the parents or other adults. The SIFs expressed a desire to be able to have such conversations ‘at home,’ i.e. with their parents, usually their mothers. For example, Mpiloh noted:

At home they are scared to tell us these things, I do not know why. They do not tell us anything. If maybe you are dating, your mother would just say you will see for yourself, and you do not know what to do. So, this means that your mother doesn’t say anything. What should happen is that you should just sit down with your parent and have a conversation about this. Talk about how life is.

Although sex education has formed part of the Life Orientation Curriculum in South African schools since 2000, the teaching of this part of the curriculum is beset by difficulties including inadequate and insufficient teacher training and teachers’ own conservative attitudes and unwillingness to teach the content (see, for example Francis, 2013 and George et al., 2018). Bonah explains that learners also fail to take sex education seriously:

But even at school during the LO class we are not taught much, it’s a brush up. We should be learning that. Because many people just laugh and not listen to what is being

said. When we are being taught during the LO lesson some are just sleeping, things like that.

Contributing to the lack of enthusiasm for the teaching and learning of LO is the fact that it is not an examinable subject and does not count towards the average grade for qualifying for university entrance. As a result, both teachers and learners often prioritise other subjects over LO.

Judgmental attitudes of healthcare workers and the fear of gossip also prevent girls going to clinics for contraception (see, for example, Wood & Jewkes, 2006). Cnah explained that

...some children are scared to go to clinics to get condoms. When you take the condom from the clinic the people see that you are now having sex.

Girls have difficulty accessing accurate information and support from parents and teachers about sex and relationships as well as sexual and reproductive health support and services. With limited access to accurate and reliable information, girls do not know what options are available for contraception, for example, and are not in a position to make informed decisions. Ignorance also makes them vulnerable to manipulation. As an example of this Bonah said, “Sometimes boys would say ‘you won’t get pregnant if we only sleep once.’”

In spite of having just articulated these challenges, when we were discussing possible solutions, the SIFs returned to abstinence, and going to the clinic for contraception:

Veeh: Girls must go to the clinic to get contraceptives, so that they do not get pregnant, or abstain, because abstaining will ensure that you do not get pregnant. Boys must agree to use a condom and parents must teach their children about the dangers of having sex.

An acute awareness and understanding of the problem did not enable the SIFs to develop solutions over which they do not have much control. Ideally, girls should be able to choose to be sexually active, those who choose to be sexually active should have access to sexual and reproductive health services and support, boys should feel that it is their responsibility to wear a condom, and parents should discuss sex and relationships with their children in an open and non-judgemental way. By these measures, *eMangweni* (and many, if not most, other places in South Africa and elsewhere) is very far from the ideal. Due largely to their age and their gender, the SIFs have limited power and control in the spheres in which changes need to be made.

7.3.6 Boys and Men as Villains

The SIFs consistently portray boys and men as untrustworthy, controlling, threatening, and dangerous. They are the aggressors, the perpetrators, the betrayers in *Force Marriage 1*, *Substance Abuse 1*, *Teenage Pregnant 1*, *Poverty Leads to Prostitution*, *Forced Marriage*, *The Rape*, *Abuses is the Crime*, and *No does not mean Yes*. At best, as illustrated in *Early Marriage 1* and *2*, they are ineffectual and weak. The SIFs talked about men and boys in the same way in our post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions. For example, talking about some of the things that being part of the Networks for Change had taught her and the other SIFs, Mphiloh noted that they learned that “we as women could change the situation, because the men are drunk and beating our women so we want to stop that and everything that happens”.

The SIFs also describe boys and men as unable to control their powerful sexual urges, and as using poverty as a tool to manipulate. One scenario they describe involves step-fathers who rape their step daughters:

Cynthai: The step-father then sleeps with the child. The stepfather says to the child if you tell your mother he will stop supporting the family, and that point your mother is

not working. The step father continues sleeping with you, and you keep quiet with the hope that he will continue to support the family.

Cnah: Another thing is that your mother won't believe you, and it's hard to kick the stepfather out of the house.

The use of the euphemism 'sleep with' instead of rape or even sex is interesting here and suggests that so strong is the taboo about talking about rape that even when talking about the sexual abuse of a child, it is best not to use the term. Another possible explanation is that talking about the sexual abuse of a child is awful enough without using a word so laden with dreadful meaning.

Another scenario described by the SIFs involves a sort of transactional relationship:

Veeh: It does also happen that maybe in your home you are poor and there is a rich man in the community who supports your family and continues to do so without asking for anything but in the end he asks to be paid off by something, and that ends up with him sleeping with you. Raping you.

Here the word 'rape' is used. It is possible that Veeh is more comfortable using the word than some of the other SIFs. Another possible explanation is that it is not as difficult to identify and name the crime when the perpetrator is outside the family.

In the situation described below, the SIFs explain that because the mother does not satisfy her husband's needs because she is unfaithful, he "releases his stress onto the child":

Mpumeh: In some instances, old men sleep with children because the mother does certain things.

Nkonzo: Like what?

Mpumeh: Like she leaves her man and does not take care of him and then he sleeps with the child.

Nkongo: When you say, she leaves the husband/boyfriend and does not take care of him, can you explain a bit further?

Mpumeh: So, the mother would leave the husband and get involved in another intimate relationship with another person. And then the father releases his stress onto the child.

Nkongo: So, when the mother finds a new boyfriend while she's still married to the father and sleeps with the boyfriend and does not sleep with the father, the father will take it out on the children? He will start sleeping with the children?

Mpumeh: Yes

In this situation the mother is framed as the cause and therefore, at least as much to blame for the sexual abuse as the father who perpetrates it. The father's guilt is diminished by the fact that he was not having his sexual needs met by the person who should be responsible for that (his wife) and must find some outlet for his sexual frustration and the shame of the slight on his masculinity of his wife's infidelity.

The portrayal of boys and men in the SIFs' visual products does not seem to contradict how boys and men in the global South are characterised in international development discourse (inherited from colonial ideology) as always and only menacing and dangerous, preying on girls and women in their communities (Wilson, 2015). However, once again, the story is a little more complex than the boy or man as villain and the girl or woman as the damsel in distress. Seemingly paradoxically boys and men are also the objects of the girls' love and hopes for the future. They are, generously, offered redemption in three out of four of the SIFs' speaking back cellphlms. To dismiss this – the girls' desire for love and intimacy – would be to do them a disservice. Girls' ideas about and hopes for love and intimacy are integral to the dynamics of

relationships between girls and boys, men and women. Treating young peoples' relationships as only about sex and risk, results in messaging, advice, and responses to young peoples' sexuality and intimate relationships that is always only partial and therefore only ever partially useful or effective. It is, thus, essential, to include a consideration of love and desire in work with young people towards more equitable, healthier, happier relationships.¹²⁰

It is noteworthy that fathers are absent in most of the SIFs' visual products. When they do appear, they are not portrayed in a positive light. In *Abuses is the Crime*, for example, the girl protagonist's father is a violent drunk. In *Poverty Leads to Prostitution*, Nosipho's father abandons his family with dreadful consequences. As the comment below demonstrates, the SIFs challenge traditional gender roles that position men as the authority and the decision-makers in the family:

Lungoh: There has to be equality, not a situation where the father thinks of himself as the oldest and therefore he will be the only one making the decisions for the family, because when something happens and the mother gives her opinion, the father would beat her up and say 'he is the man of the house' the mother cannot stand being beaten all the time.

Instead, counter to the dominance and violence of hegemonic masculinity, the SIFs want men who are not violent and take care of their families and love their families (Mpiloh).

7.3.7 *Girlhood, Agency, Choice, and Responsibility*

A proper estimation of girls' agency would involve recognising the constraints on girls' agency, as well as the ways in which they can and do exercise agency.

¹²⁰ See Michelle Fine's seminal 1988 article *Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire*.

7.3.7.1 Unfortunately, girls do not choose for themselves, but they do make a choice”: The Illusion of Choice

The SIFs invited our community partner and the local ward councillor to the screening of their digital stories and resisting and speaking back cellphilms. Also present was another PhD student who was planning to use PVM in her study and who, with the SIFs’ agreement, had joined the research team on the trip to observe how the PVM process might look in the field. The SIFs were noticeably more quiet than they usually were during discussions when it was just me and various members of the university research team. They have enormous respect for our community partner (a social worker in the community). The ward councillor is older, a man, and holds a position of authority not just as a ward councillor but also as a member of the traditional leadership in *eMangweni*. The PhD student was an isiZulu-speaking woman in her 50s, who was a school principal at the time, and, it became clear during the discussion, quite conservative views. The contributions of these three adults were illuminating in terms of the messages that the SIFs and other girls and young women in *eMangweni* receive about their agency, choices, and responsibilities, and are worth quoting at length.

Ward Councillor: I also grew-up in this area, when you are growing up you need to be a dreamer, I had told myself that at the age of 25 years I would get married, have a wife. But I saw something, I came back from varsity¹²¹ at the age of 21 years, and I was not working. I saw that I was very close to reaching 25years, but I had not acquired anything of value, my dreams, there is nothing that I can do, getting a job is still very far from me. I had to change my dreams, I told myself that I will get married at the age of 30 years. Fortunately, god was on my side because I got married at the age of 30. I got married when I had the ability to, they know at home, I started by rebuilding my father’s

¹²¹ A colloquial term in South Africa for university

house. ... I also wanted to get married first before I had children. I had children after I got married. I knew I was not going to get married to a person who was not educated. Fortunately, I got married to a person who already had a degree at the time. But I got married at the age of 30 years, with my own money, and had bought a house as well. Buying a house is expensive, at the time a house costed (sic) R 400 000.00 it was not cheap, but I bought that house and I got married. I also have challenges, but I do not tell everyone, but what I am saying is that what I am sharing is very personal, it is like we are boasting. You have to be able to share with the people that are around you that in life you have to plan, so that you are able to know the position you have with the person you want to have a life with. Unfortunately, girls do not choose for themselves, but they do make a choice because you won't agree to be with a fool. A person says to you, they will take you and make you their wife, yet they cannot even take care of themselves. They cannot even buy food for themselves, but they say they will take care of you, does that even make sense, think about it. If they do not stop do not rush them. PhD student: I am happy that the girls are hearing this from the horse's mouth, from a male. When someone tries to force you into doing something, you can say this is not going to happen to me, that is just it... So, it is all in the state of mind.

In this exchange it is clear that neither the ward councillor nor the PhD student have recognised the constraints on girls' agency and 'choices' due to the limited power that they have in a context of unequal age and gender power relations, gendered cultural expectations, and poverty. The ward councillor's words "Unfortunately, girls do not choose for themselves, but they do make a choice because you won't agree to be with a fool" neatly sums up the impossible position in which the girls find themselves. The ward councillor, as a man, and one who is part of the traditional leadership in *eMangweni* has far more power than any of the SIFs. From this

position of power, which gives him access to choices, he expects the girls, who he acknowledges do not choose for themselves, to make better choices. The PhD student's response reinforces unequal gendered power relations when she describes the ward councillor's statement as "from the horse's mouth, from a male." Her painfully simplistic suggestion that girls can just say no when someone is trying to force them to do something, that is "all in the state of mind," is not only unrealistic, it also places all of the responsibility of ensuring that they make good choices and succeed in the face of not insubstantial adversity, squarely on the shoulders of girls. Simply put, girls and young women are asked to make choices that they do not necessarily have and are then blamed when they fail to make these choices.

Following these statements, I tried to intervene respectfully by emphasising that girls' agency and choices are heavily constrained. However, it was clear to me that my intervention stood little chance against the sort of messages that the SIFs and other girls and young women must hear constantly. I wrote in my field notes that evening:

A lot of the discussion today was frustrating to say the least. And if I feel like this, imagine what the SIFs and other girls in *eMangweni* must feel. The fact is that more often than not, they don't have a choice or they make the best choice they can from the options available to them at the time. The idea that all they need to do is decide that bad things will not happen to them, and they will be fine is just not realistic. And this is the sort of thing they hear everywhere: all you need to do is believe in yourself and make good choices and you will overcome insurmountable barriers and obstacles and succeed. I mean, I get it [what the ward councillor and the PhD student were saying] in a way. I suppose that they're trying to be motivational or something but I really feel that it does far more damage than good. Nkonzo and I were talking about it and he and

I both noticed how quiet the girls were and how they seemed almost defeated sitting downcast with their shoulders drooping. (Field notes, 21 July 2017)

As illustrated in the exchange below, not only are girls held responsible for their success or failure, they are expected to find solutions to the challenges they face, many of which are structural and beyond their control or the control of any one small group of people, for that matter:

Xoli: I am now going to touch on this, I always see that when people are in distress they run to social workers, they are called a jack of all trades, of which we are not a jack of all trades. It's all lies, it's on you and me, working together to solve a problem, let us meet half way. The reason why I am there is to facilitate whatever you would like to do. I will be there to guide you, but there is nothing that I will do for you about your life, you are the one who is the driver of your life, you are the steering, you are the key to your life, what I can do is to facilitate here and there, but if you come to me and expect that will help you, it is so difficult because this is your life. You have to come with a plan to me of what you want to do, then I will help you.

What Xoli is saying here certainly makes sense to a certain point. People cannot always expect social workers (or the government, or teachers, for example) to solve everyone's problems without the full co-operation and participation of those experiencing those problems. Undoubtedly, social workers in communities like *eMangweni* are expected to do too much with too few resources. Xoli and her organisation are overburdened in a community in which there are precious few other resources on which people can rely. However, the extent to which it is realistic to expect girls who face enormous challenges, many of which are beyond their control, to develop a plan on their own to address these, is overstating their power and agency in a way that is not constructive.

Very much on this same theme, Xoli goes on to discuss unplanned pregnancy:

There is something that I have been noting in all the stories, is that there is poverty but there are children, not just a child. Have you noticed that? And you know what? You guys are Social Ills Fighters, and one of the social ills is teenage pregnancy and guys the solutions are right here in your hands. So, what is very important is that do not create expenses, things that you have to have responsibility for, that are beyond your ability. Do you hear that? For example, people who are educated, people who have good jobs, if you were to notice, they have got fewer children. ... I do think if it happened to those who have children who are in this program it was a mistake, because they were not part of the program before. But I do not expect any of you who are in this group to fall pregnant. Do you see what I am saying?

The difficulties girls have with accessing contraception, with negotiating condom use, and the extent to which abstinence is a girl's choice (in the case of sexual coercion, for example) do not need repeating here. Again, all of the responsibility is being placed on the shoulders of girls here: "the solutions are right here in your hands."

Again, I made an attempt to intervene, arguing that that is not always easy to negotiate condom use, and that in the case of coerced sex, of rape, the choice to have sex and use contraception is taken completely away from the girl or woman. This interjection seemed to have little impact, however, as Xoli continued immediately afterwards saying:

I think also one of the important things, is that they are building us, they have got all the resources, but unfortunately, they are not using those resources wisely from us who are bring them the information. I was talking to a group at a camp about sexual reproductive health; we were talking about sex; they were afraid to talk to us and I then

said, guys, no we are here to help you and we want to call a spade a spade. It was a secret. So as we are here we are not going to say a spade is a fork, because we do not want you to get out of this camp without information. So, do not be afraid, let us talk, let us talk openly. Because the problem is if you are not talking to us, when you are outside with your friends there will be peer pressure, then you do not have the information on how to protect yourself. So, if they are going to take this information we are giving them, effectively, I wish, but I know, I wish they could utilise and use this information effectively, those who are not having kids, those who are not thinking to have sex, just to stay away until they are intellectually matured, because that decision it needs someone who is matured. So that they do not regret it, so that they do not cry over the opportunity they are getting. Moreover, it is not only pregnancy it can be pregnancy plus, which is now two burdens. ... I have been through a lot, but said that to myself. I was determined and focused. I did not look down, my eyes were there, at the future, I wanted to be there and I am going to be there. I have not stopped; I am still going to be there. I am not saying that I did not make any mistakes, I made them, but I learnt from those mistakes, I rectified them and moved on. I didn't make a mistake and then say it already over, so I am not going to continue. No, I was focused and determined. Like they are saying the poorer you are the more the child is affected, but it is up to you on whether you want your children to be affected. I said to myself I won't let my kids live the life I have lived while growing-up, and I have tried my best. ... So, it is up to you on what you want to happen. You do not have excuses, because you have a back-up in us.

Again, it is not necessary for me to repeat the difficulties that girls have accessing contraception, negotiating condom use, and choosing abstinence. The suggestion that they have

“all the resources” but are choosing not to use them “wisely” is not entirely accurate and does not take into account the limits and constraints on those resources, including judgement for making decisions that do not align with particular values. If I was one of the SIFs and was well aware that Xoli’s expectation of me was that I would abstain from sex and not make any ‘mistakes, I would be reluctant to talk openly and honestly about my decision to have sex and how to best protect myself. Indeed, during a participatory data analysis discussion when one of the SIFs suggested going to Thembaletu (Xoli’s NGO) for assistance, another replied: “They are scared to go there.” The message that girls must persevere and stay focused also comes through strongly in this quote.

7.3.7.2 “The decision she took was a terrible one”: Expecting Girls to Make Decisions They Do Not Have

The SIFs seem to have internalised these ideas about choice, agency, and responsibility. For example, in *Drop out of School*, the film-makers set up an interesting contrast between Nombuso and her younger sister. Although she is in a very difficult situation having been orphaned and urgently needing to provide for her younger sister, Nombuso’s “decision” to “prostitute” is compared to her sister’s decision to seek help from social workers. Nombuso’s decision is framed in the digital story as the wrong decision (although not without compassion), and her sister’s as the right decision. This interpretation was confirmed by Cnah in the post-screening discussion:

Nombuso decides to go to find some work, even she didn’t find it. I think the decision she took was difficult, maybe she did not want other people to help her. Because some people do not want to help, but want to laugh at you and your troubles. That is how it is. I can say that the decision she took was a terrible one, it would have been better maybe if she also would have gone to find help from the social workers, like how her

sister did, so that she could live a better life. But it is also a lesson that we must learn that we must be patient no matter what, no matter what happens, not to neglect school, because education is the key in life.

Understood in this way, Nombuso's error was that she was not patient, she did not ask for help, and she was too hasty and eager to earn money so she dropped out of school thereby ruining her chances at a good (in both the moral sense and wealth sense) life. Because of her bad choice, Nombuso faces the terrible consequences of HIV and, ultimately, death¹²². In contrast, having made what is framed as the right choice to ask for help, Nombuso's sister is rewarded with success – she becomes a doctor and gets married and has a family.

Nombuso's 'decision,' and that of Nosipho in *Poverty Leads to Prostitution* can be seen as an example of distributed agency as conceptualised by Campbell and Mannell (2016) and discussed in Chapter Three. In deciding to go out to find work to support themselves and their families, and, finding no other way of earning money, doing sex work, these characters are negotiating multiple constraints in their efforts to secure the best outcome for themselves and their families in terms of being able to meet basic needs. Morals are so often the privilege of the (relatively) wealthy. It is easy to take a moral stance on sex work when one is able to meet one's own basic needs and those of one's family. Nombuso and Nosipho's options are: do sex work and survive along with your loved ones, or take the moral high ground and starve and let them starve.

¹²² This despite how very effective anti-retroviral treatment (ART) is at delaying the onset of AIDS and prolonging the lives of HIV positive people, and the fact that it is fairly widely and reliably available even in rural areas in South Africa (although it is sometimes difficult to access due to long distances to clinics, the expense of transport, and difficulties getting time off work). As a result, deaths due to AIDS in South Africa have declined steadily since ART started to become available in the public health care system in 2004.

It is encouraging that the SIFs' attitudes seemed to shift over time. For example, in a participatory data analysis discussion that took place in August 2018, just over a year after the screening and discussion of the digital stories, the exchange below took place when reflecting on the digital stories:

Lungoh: Yeah, it is not like their choice. It is a choice but also it is about what is happening. The pressures.

Bonah: The pressure, yeah. You are not eating then you have to go and look for a job.

7.3.7.3 "As Social Ills Fighters you need to do something about this": Holding Girls Responsible for Solving the Problem

In July 2017, after a day at our digital storytelling and resisting and speaking back cellphilm workshop, Mpumeh was walking home when she was slapped in the face three times by a young man when she refused to talk to him. She reported the incident to Xoli and spoke to the other SIFs about it. In the exchange below, which took place the day after Mpumeh was assaulted by the boy, it almost appears as if Xoli is demanding an answer from the girls who, unable to provide one that seemed to satisfy her, grow more and more bewildered:

Xoli: Someone beat one of the members. You are Social Ills Fighters, what are you going to do about it? ... I want us to discuss this thing, what are you going to do? ... I think we have a challenge as Social Ills Fighters, what are we going to do?

Cnah: I think the first thing that we need to do is give the boy a warning, and tell him off, like tell him off.

Xoli: How are you going to make him aware?

Cnah: We will tell him that what he has done is wrong, if he continues and he beats her again we will take stronger action against him. We will get him arrested, he will not

like to be arrested, tell him off. If he continues to stop her on her path and swears at her, we will take it to people who are in authority.

Xoli: What do others say?

Bonah: I am thinking that maybe another way would be to go to the councillor, meet the boy and tell him not to take us lightly. When a person doesn't want to speak to you, you must let them be, do not hit to try and force them to speak to you.

Xoli: I want a plan, what are you going to do? What action are you going to take? Step-by-step.

Lungoh: We need to meet him, three of us, no maybe two, no one, because it will be difficult. Meet up with him on the road, and then tell him what he did is wrong.

Mpumeh: He will turn on us.

Cnah: He is related to the councillor.

Mpumeh: He will turn on us and beat us up.

Veeh 7: I think we should ask Mr Councillor to call him, and then tell him what he has done is wrong.

Xoli: As Social Ills Fighters how are you to act when a person faces a problem like this? How are you going to act to this kind of a problem? Because you are making these kind of films you need to act when situations like these happen. How are you going to act? I want a plan that comes from you, because this is something you will always do so that you fight social ills. That you are Social Ills Fighter is ok, but you need to have a plan.

Mpiloh: What I can say is that our plan is to fight social ills, as we are Social Ills Fighters.

Xoli: So you have one now, you need to fight this. I will be supporting you, but I want to see you move. What action are you taking? I don't know if you are understanding

what I am trying to say? I hear what you are saying, that you will call him, that you cannot go there because he is older. So what are you going to do in order for him to be here and listen to you? Because at the end of the day he has to be called but, how are you going to do it in such a way that it doesn't make you more vulnerable to him? You just need to have a plan. So, one spoke about the councillor, getting him involved. Who are the leaders? You cannot work alone. You need to work with people. Do you understand what I am saying, as much as we are empowering you, but you cannot take things into your own hands, others need to be involved. Like, you need to be vocal to the leaders, that you have come across this situation and it happened to one of the members. Introduce yourselves as Social Ills Fighters, so one of the members' experiences this, either you go straight to Councillor, not one-by-one but as a group, ok this is what happened to them, and we would like 1,2,3 to happen, how can you be able to help us Councillor, we would like to meet his parents, as Social Ills Fighters all together. Can you be able to help us Councillor or Mrs Xoli to facilitate this? Then you go there hear them talk, not a four people but as a group. I don't know whether I am wrong, but involve others, not that you are doing this on your own. Then you take what you are saying to the community, where you are going to talk about these things, address these things. That is my opinion but as Social Ills Fighters you need to do something about this. Because if you fail to do this, it means whatever you do you won't be able to fight it. It pains me that you were hit, but at the same time for me, I am sorry that I have to say this, it is a blessing in disguise for you guys to shine. Just use this opportunity and take action. Sometimes there must be pain, so that something beautiful can come through. I am not trying to me be mean, you understand what I am saying, it is a blessing in disguise, but it is a chance for you show who you are. You are Social Ills Fighters. It is time to fight. Does it make sense?

SIFs: Yes

Xoli: I will wait for you to make a decision; I want you to move forward but I want you to lead it. I am here to support you but I want you to move forward as well, because if we fail on this one, then we won't be able to overcome the others, we need to fight.

In response to her questioning, the SIFs gave Xoli the ideas that they had and, although both Xoli and the SIFs acknowledge the difficulties associated with the SIFs trying to address the problem ("you cannot go there because he is older," "he will turn on us and beat us up"), Xoli continues to insist that they need a plan.

The exchange below took place during a discussion in December 2017 in which we were reflecting on the Networks for Change project. In it, Mpumeh explains how she felt about the incident and the response to it. Mpumeh wanted justice and felt that she did not get it. The matter was considered resolved when the boy's family apologized to hers, but she was not satisfied. The response left her and the other SIFs feeling demotivated and defeated.

Mpumeh: I was coming from one of the workshops here... a young man just came by and I was just walking and he started talking to me and I ignored him and he slapped me three times. I reported this at home and also to the group members here [the SIFs]. I was hurt and it still hurts. Just thinking about it... and there was nothing done to solve it. My spirit hurts. I just feel like crying when I think about it, because I was the one who was hurt and his family came by to apologise, but not to me. But they apologised to my parents and said that...

Nkonzo: Did he apologise?

Mpumeh: No, he did not apologise but his mother came to apologise but even then she apologised to my parents, not me. I am deeply hurt by this, because there was no decision that was taken.

Nkonzo: What do you think should have happened?

Mpumeh: I personally wanted him... I wanted to go to the police station, to report him, but Mam' Xoli said we must meet as a group as the Social Ills Fighters, to talk about it and to decide what will be done to the young man and we ended up without a solution. And I said we must go to the police station, and she said it's too late, the group said that.

Nkonzo: And you, what do want you to happen?

Mpumeh: I wanted him to get arrested, but the others said if I get him arrested people will say I got a person arrested, and that was hurtful. But I was hurt, he hit me.

Nkonzo: Is it the one that has made you demotivated?

Veeh: Yes, because Mama (Xoli) said if we are not able to resolve the issue that Mpumeh has, we will not able to solve other issues.

Bonah: Because, I would speak and ask why my issue was not resolved if someone else's issue isn't being resolved.

Nkonzo: But do you not see that, maybe, at that time you did not know, what you know now?

Veeh: No, besides that, when I spoke about Mpumeh's issue, and suggested that we speak to our teachers to help us, maybe they will give us more options that what we have, people did not take me seriously, and I just ended up giving up as well.

...

Nkonzo: My other question is that, due to what you know now, what happened to her and your response to it, are you able to see that you now have a better understanding, and have more information about when something like this happens, like that of Mpumeh, you would respond better, than the way you did? Because at the time you had not had these conversations.

Lungoh: I personally see it not happening, because when this happened to Mpumeh, the day before we were all here, the counsellor was even here. The counsellor even said, if a boy threatens you or maybe he has said he will hit you or he has hit you, we must report it to the police station. But we told the counsellor but even now he has not done anything about it. He is just quiet ... The thing is we had told him and he said he will help us. And we trusted him that he will help us.

The assault on Mpumeh, the response to it, and how she and the other SIFs felt about it is a perfect example of overestimating girls' agency and power and, in doing so, failing to provide assistance that is useful and effective. Xoli's intentions were good, but ultimately her response had the opposite of the intended effect. By minimising the constraints on the girls' agency in this situation and others like it, rather than inspiring the SIFs to think of creative solutions and keep working for change, the SIFs were left feeling defeated and demotivated knowing that they were expected to solve this issue, but, not having received any guidance on how to do so, still unsure how. Mpumeh offered a solution, one that would have made her feel better and one that she had a right to pursue. She wanted to go to the police to report the incident as girls are often told to do and as the SIFs *should* do, but was discouraged from doing so for fear of the backlash there might be against her for having someone arrested. Her solution was rejected. The SIFs reported the matter to trusted adults – Xoli and the ward councillor – as they had been encouraged to do just hours before the assault took place. The ward councillor failed to make good on his word and did nothing about the situation. The solution reached between the two families left Mpumeh feeling devalued.

7.3.8 *Rescuing the Girl-in-Crisis?*

Exploring ways to address the challenges faced by girls and young women in *eMangweni* and other rural communities in South Africa, the SIFs emphasised the importance of education and goal-setting (and, by implication, self-belief) as crucial to improving the lives and well-being of girls and young women.

7.3.8.1 *“Education is the key in life”: An Overemphasis on the Emancipatory Promise of Education*

This was one of the most consistent messages in the entire data set. Education is portrayed as the key to escaping poverty and achieving success as communicated through the contrast between the lives of Nombuso and her younger sister in *Drop out of School*, for example. In *Force Marriage 2*, Mbali returns to school and in the post-screening discussion of the cellphilm we were told by the film-makers that she went off to university. In *Substance Abuse 2*, the protagonist’s return to school is also portrayed as main factor in the solution to her problems. In our post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions, education and staying in school were presented as perhaps the most important element of any solution came up frequently:

Wendie: When they drop out of school, and go get married, they will become poor. They will be abused, with children and contract disease.

Veeh: As girls we need to stand with each other, and protect each other, to stay in school because education is the key to success.

Mpiloh: In my view people in our community should see the value in education and to teach children, so that they do not end up in poverty, ending up having the family spilt up.

Zesu: I think that people must be encouraged to think about education as important. we must learn that we must be patient no matter what, no matter what happens, not to neglect school, because education is the key in life.

Bonah: we need to be educated, because it is the one way that can take us out of our current situation, by focusing on education

Bonah: I think that parents should encourage their children to finish school so that they are able to achieve their dreams.

Cnah: One of the solution is you need to tolerate school, even if it is difficult. Success comes from perseverance. If you are educated, you can do as you please and you will be independent.

In her 2018 book, *Forging the Ideal Educated Girl: The Production of Desirable Subjects in Muslim South Asia*, Khoja-Moolji problematises what she refers to as a “unifying discourse” (p. 1) that has “immense epistemic influence” (2015a, p. 88) about girls’ education being the obvious solution to many of the challenges in the global South, including poverty, that has been taken up by international development organisations and governments across the globe (see also Khoja-Moolji, 2015). She maps the chain of reasoning behind this thinking as follows:

it is assumed that if girls in the global south can obtain schooling, they will marry at a later age, delay childbearing, participate in the wage-based economy, take good care of their children and families, and ultimately bring their nations out of abject poverty and violence. (Khoja-Moolji, 2015, p. 88)

The SIFs as well as many people in *eMangweni* and across South Africa (across the globe even) seem to have internalized this discourse about education as a panacea. The ward councillor, for example, during the post-screening discussion of the digital stories, made the following statements that are closely aligned to the chain of reasoning described by Khoja-Moolji (2015):

These kids [the SIFs] have an opportunity to change their lives and the lives of their families. ... There is nothing that I would not do for all of you to help you to be educated so that you are able to change your lives, your families' lives, because at the end of it all, you have to have safe, secure homes for your own families.

In South Africa, the beliefs about education and its potential to contribute to improving the lives of South Africans are complex. Such beliefs have been influenced by colonial and apartheid education policies, the promises of free, quality education for everyone in South Africa post-apartheid. In spite of the questionable quality of the education offered in the public school system, particularly in rural areas, many South Africans believe that securing a matric or getting a university degree is the (only) pathway to success and escape from poverty. Young people find themselves disillusioned and hopeless when they reach these educational goals, but, in a country with extremely high rates of unemployment, do not find employment.

Khoja-Moolji, (2015, 2018) argues that this way of thinking and the programmes, policies, and interventions it underpins fails to recognize, acknowledge, and respond to the diversity of girls

in the vast geographical area that comprises the global South. It also “portrays the current social and economic difficulties that girls face as ahistorical and apolitical occurrences, making invisible the conditions and complicities that produced them” (Khoja-Moolji, 2015, p. 88).

While for many South Africans it is not as simple as finishing school, getting a degree, getting a job, and becoming wealthy, staying in school can be protective for girls in certain contexts, and a formal education does in many circumstances give a person greater access to a more lucrative job market. As such education certainly is important, but it is not a ‘silver bullet,’ and leading or allowing young people to think it is, does them an enormous disservice.

7.3.8.2 Believe in yourself: Expecting Girls to Save Themselves

Echoing the messages in campaigns like *ZAZI* and *She Conquers* which, as discussed in Chapter Three, portray girls’ decision-making process as independent of context, and closely linked to the ideas about education discussed above, the SIFs have internalised ideas about perseverance, knowing yourself, setting goals, and staying focused as being key to success:

Cynthai: I also think that children should also set goals for themselves, so that it always reminds them of what they want to be and should not give up because perseverance leads to success.

Mpumeh: A person needs to set goals for themselves because if they do not they will not see a need to be in school and will end up getting married while young.

Vu: I think that girls must set their own goals for life while they are still young so that they do not end up getting married while they are still young

Lungoh: I think that girls should have goals set for themselves, that will always remind them of what they want to be in future. To just have a vision and be able to take your own decision so that you are not easily tempted and pressured.

Cnah: think the message should be about goal setting. The girl in the cellphilm did not know about goal setting, she only knew that she should just get married and did not care about anything else.

This attitude is supported by Xoli, who, during the post-screening discussion of the digital stories, told them:

Think about your goals, because if you do not keep thinking about it every day you will lose track.

Goal setting and focus are certainly important. However, in circumstances where girls have very little else to rely on and are expected to thrive in spite of adversity, these ideas can become disabling. An over-emphasis on these ideas also renders invisible or at the very least obscures contextual factors and constraints with which girls must contend as they work towards their goals. These ideas can become a version of the damaging messages of meritocracy as a neoliberal ideology: If you want it enough and you just work hard enough, you can achieve anything. Using the same logic, if a girl fails, it is because she did not want it enough or work hard enough to reach her goals. Stories about people who have overcome all of the odds are used to prove this to be true. While they do exist, these people are, however, the exception rather than the rule. Research on resilience has shown that

in situations of adversity, resilience is observed when individuals engage in behaviours that help them to navigate their way to the resources they need to flourish (Ungar, 2011a). These processes occur, however, only when the individual's social ecology (formal and informal social networks) has the capacity to provide resources in ways that are culturally meaningful. The personal agency of individuals to navigate and negotiate for what they need is dependent upon the capacity and willingness of people's social ecologies to meet those needs. (Ungar, 2013, p. 256)

With a social ecology with limited capacity and willingness to meet the SIFs' needs, it is difficult to thrive.

7.4 Synthesis

In this chapter I presented the thematic analysis of the visual data discussed in Chapter Six as well as transcripts of post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions, and my field notes. An analysis of the SIFs cellfilms and our discussions reveals that, although girlhood in *eMangweni* is precarious the girls do not entirely embody or reproduce the girl-in-crisis discourse. Moments of agency offer a challenge to this one-dimensional view of girls in the global South. The SIFs demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of EFM as a practice at the intersection of poverty and culture where unequal gender relations are understood to be inherent to ideas about culture. For the SIFs, poverty exacerbates the negative impacts of practices like *lobolo*, *inhlawulo*, and *ukuhlonipha*. Contributing significantly to the precarity of girlhood is the uneasy relationship between love and violence that often characterises relationships between men and women and within families. Like many gender theorists, researchers and practitioners in the fields of GBV and HIV, the SIFs know that in order to

effect real change in the hegemonic gender relations in *eMangweni* men and women, boys and girls must all be involved.

The SIFs recognise that girls and women are in the impossible position of being expected to be passive and acquiescent in relations with men, but also resist their, sometimes aggressive, sexual advances in order to protect their virtue while at the same time trying to keep themselves safe from any form of rejection violence. Unfortunately, recognising this dynamic does not automatically translate into effective strategies for managing it. The illusion of choice allows for an over-emphasis on girls' agency and responsibility, and obscure the limits and constraints on girls' choice and agency created by broader structural and macro-level factors like poverty, and gender inequality. The SIFs seem to have internalised the popular reductive discourse around education as a panacea.

The idealised construction of young femininity in *eMangweni*, what I have called traditional 'good girl' femininity is characterised by passivity, acquiescence, adherence to culture and traditional norms and values, and conservative morals. It is in relation to this form of femininity as well as masculinities that the SIFs construct the transitional 'good girl' in progress femininity which, although it shares a number of similarities with traditional 'good girl' femininities, also includes challenge and resistance to hegemonic gender relations.

In the next chapter I respond to the third sub-question I asked in this study: *How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?*

CHAPTER EIGHT

“No more vows for cows!”: Using PVM to facilitate Girl-led Community-based Policy-making for Social Change

8.1 Introduction

In September 2016, the first Networks for Change meeting with the *Amangwe*¹²³ traditional leadership and community was held at the traditional court building.¹²⁴ Xoli (a social worker and one of our community partners) and the ward councillor, who is on the traditional council, liaised with the traditional leadership to set up the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Networks for Change project, ask for permission to conduct research in *eMangweni*, and garner support from the community. The meeting was attended by the *iNkosi*'s chief advisor, some of the *iziNduna*, other stakeholders and members of the community. After I introduced the project and Xoli and the ward councillor spoke in support of it, a number of stakeholders, including the principal of the local high school¹²⁵ and a nursing sister at the local clinic affirmed the need for the project in the community and offered their support. However, in closing the meeting, the *iNkosi*'s chief advisor declared: “You’re welcome, just don’t change anything” (Field notes, 02 September 2016). Xoli, the ward councillor, and I were pleased that we had been granted permission to work in *eMangweni*, but were wary of the caution to “not change anything” as change was precisely the intention of the Networks for Change, PVR, and my study.¹²⁶

¹²³ As discussed in Chapters One and Five, the study was located in *eMangweni*, a deep rural area comprising several villages. *eMangweni* is home to the *Amangwe* Nation and falls under the governance of the *Amangwe* Traditional Authority.

¹²⁴ I was the only member of the UKZN research team who was able to attend the meeting. I presented the project with interpretation assistance from Xoli.

¹²⁵ The same high school from which the SIFs (my co-researcher participants) were later recruited.

¹²⁶ Also see Treffry-Goatley et al. (2018) for an account of this meeting.

In this chapter I respond to the third sub-question I asked in this study: *How might PVM (participatory visual methodology) be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?*

To do so I draw on transcripts of post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions, the Social Ills Fighters' (SIFs)¹²⁷ policy posters and action briefs and the discussions we had while creating them, detailed meeting notes taken during community engagement meetings and community dialogues, and my field notes. My analysis generated three broad themes: 1) Community attitudes towards early and forced marriage: Restorative Nostalgia and Reflective Nostalgia; 2) Girl-led Community-based Policy-making; and 3) "No more vows for cows!": Girls, Agency, and Resistance through participatory visual methodology.

I start the chapter by recounting the stories of the four Social Ills Fighters (SIFs) who were directly affected by early and forced marriage (EFM) during the study as a foundation for the analysis that follows.

8.2 The Social Ills Fighters and Early and Forced Marriage

As discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, when we started working in *eMangweni*, although we were aware that EFM was an issue in some parts of South Africa, including parts of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, we were not aware that it was practiced in this community. Even Xoli, who has lived in the area for about 20 years, was not aware of this until the first Networks for Change PVM workshop with the SIFs. It is clear from the discussion in the previous chapter that the SIFs oppose EFM. Early marriage is defined as a marriage where one or both parties is below the age of 18 (CGE, 2021). However, for the SIFs, early marriage includes marriages where, although both parties are 18 or older, one or both of them has not

¹²⁷ My co-researcher participants in this study

completed high school (see the discussion of Hlah below). The SIFs draw a distinction between different types of forced marriage including *ukuthwala ngenkani* and coerced marriage, emphasising the social and economic pressures girls and young women face in relation to marriage. During the time that I was generating data for this study, four of the SIFs were directly impacted by EFM.

8.2.1 Hlah

Hlah was the first of the SIFs to be involved in EFM. Although she was 19 at the time and it was therefore, not technically an early marriage, Hlah had not yet finished school when she got married. Neither the other SIFs nor Xoli were aware of any plans that Hlah had to get married and up until the marriage in September 2017, she had been as vocal about her opposition to EFM as any of the other girls in the group. The SIFs learned about her marriage through gossip in the community. They informed Xoli who tried unsuccessfully to investigate further and to find out where Hlah was and how to contact her. Some relatives of Hlah's confirmed that she was married, but assured Xoli that she was not forced to marry. It was rumoured that Hlah had left her parent's house without their knowledge after the family had gone to bed, and had gone to her (now) husband's home. Representatives of her (now) husband went to her father the following morning to begin *lobolo* (bride price) negotiations. Xoli later received, via SMS, a photograph of Hlah dressed in the traditional attire of a *makoti* (new bride). There were rumours circulating that Hlah got married because she was pregnant and did not want to bring shame on herself or her family. Once she was married, she did not return to school and dropped out of the project. Having moved to another village, we have not seen or spoken to her since.

In their disappointment in Hlah, the SIFs struggled to recognise that there might have been factors about which they were not aware that influenced her decision:

Mpumeh: Like early marriage [the cellphilms], yeah.

Nkonzo: What touched you about early marriage?

Mpumeh: Early marriage touched me, because we had made it with a girl that used to be with us in the group. She was the one that played the roles almost in all of the plays [we staged]

Nkonzo: Was she older than all of you?

Mpumeh: She was older than us here

Cynthai: She was our role model here

Veeh: We looked up to her, and all that she did. But she disappointed us by doing that...

I thought she was learning by coming here, but no, she was not here, she was somewhere else.

...

Lungoh: Yeah, she disappointed us, because we looked up to her as the oldest here in the group. And she is my neighbor and I looked up to her a lot, because she was well behaved. A person in the neighborhood that was better than others, because she was that well behaved.

Nkonzo: My question is: was it her decision or a decision that was taken for her by other people?

Lungoh: I think it was her decision because there is forced marriage and early marriage. Because she was not forcefully taken away, to be forced into marriage, she left on her own, and she was happy when she left. I think it was her decision. Her parents were not there, and they woke up and she was not there she left at night.

Cnah: If she did not want to leave she would not have left at night, if she did not want to leave she would have left during the day. She left during the night at the time when she knew that her parents won't be in the home.

When Xoli phoned me to tell me about Hlah I was at work in Durban. I did not write anything down at the time but this is the sort of moment that one remembers in great detail. I recall being shocked and sad. I was shocked because she had seemed as opposed to EFM as any of the SIFs. I was sad because she had said or hinted nothing to any of us and may have felt that she could not for fear of being judged, and because we were unable to trace her so we could not even reach out to make sure she was okay and continue to offer her some kind of support if she wanted it. My shock revealed my naivete. Although the SIFs were opposed to EFM, and were becoming increasingly able to articulate this and the different futures they wanted for themselves, the material and social circumstances in which the SIFs lived had not changed. Marriage was still considered a good thing for a girl and her family, and families were still facing the daily struggle with poverty. Half angry with Hlah for getting married and half sad because she had dropped out of school and would now be entirely dependent on her husband and his family, Xoli was bitterly disappointed.

Maybe Hlah was pregnant, maybe she was worried about being 19 and unmarried, maybe she was not doing well at school, maybe she loved her now husband, maybe she felt coerced, maybe it was a combination of some or all of these reasons that induced her to get married. I will probably never know.

8.2.2 Khanyoh

In August 2018 Xoli and I were standing outside of the *KwaNdlela* community hall warming ourselves in the sun when she pointed up towards one of the hills. She asked if I could see the

doek¹²⁸ flapping in the wind on a pole.¹²⁹ “That is where Khanyoh is now living with her husband.” Sixteen-year-old Khanyoh got married in June 2018 to her boyfriend who was a taxi driver and nine or ten years her elder. Xoli had not been aware of any plans that Khanyoh and/or her family had for her marriage. However, she told me that she had not been surprised when she heard that Khanyoh had not returned to school after the mid-year school holidays. Khanyoh and Xoli had not been particularly close. Xoli had tried to speak to Khanyoh a number of times about working harder at school and spending less time with her boyfriend. None of the SIFs had known about any plans Khanyoh had to get married. They, too, seemed unsurprised. Although she now lived just on the hill above the community hall where we often held our workshops, neither the SIFs nor Xoli had seen or spoken to Khanyoh since school had closed for the holidays.

Although she was quite boisterous with the other SIFs, Khanyoh had been relatively quiet with me and the rest of the Networks for Change research team, so we did not know her as well as some of the other SIFs. She seemed to value tradition slightly more than the other SIFs. For example, she wore isiphandla,¹³⁰ rarely wore trousers,¹³¹ and although she participated enthusiastically in making the cellphilms and digital stories, she rarely contributed significantly to our discussions about EFM. The SIFs were reluctant to be drawn into conversation about Khanyoh’s marriage, and the only clear response I got was from Cnah who simply shrugged and said: “She made her choice” (Field notes, 18 August 2018).

¹²⁸ A South African word for a headscarf worn by women.

¹²⁹ It is a tradition in *eMangweni* for a doek to be displayed at the groom’s family home when there is a new bride.

¹³⁰ *Iziphandla* (plural, *isiphandla* singular) are wristbands made of animal hide which signify a connection to ancestors.

¹³¹ Girls and women are discouraged from wearing trousers by the more conservative, traditional members of the community in *eMangweni*.

8.2.3 *Cynthai*

Between Christmas 2018 and New Year's Day 2019, Cynthai got married. She was 16. Neither Xoli nor the SIFs were able to find out what happened. All her relatives and neighbours would say was that Cynthai had got married and moved to a different village. Cynthai was an active and enthusiastic member of the SIFs who expressed her opposition to EFM during our workshops. Cynthai did not return to school and her phone number no longer worked. None of us believed that Cynthai had wanted to get married.

8.2.4 *Veeh*

In that same week between Christmas 2018 and New Year's Day 2019, Veeh was abducted with the intention of forcing her into marriage. Veeh was 17, and had not yet finished school. She was abducted in broad daylight while walking alone not far from her home. The abduction was witnessed by a number of community members who did nothing in response to her cries for help. Veeh resisted her abductors, but was forced into a car and taken to her abductor's home where he and his family tried to force her to marry him. Although terrified, Veeh continued to refuse. Veeh's mother was unsure what to do because *ukuthwala ngenkani* (abduction) is a practice accepted and supported by many in *eMangweni*, and opposing it would give rise to criticism and backlash from the community. Veeh's sister alerted the SIFs about the situation and they contacted Xoli. The SIFs and Veeh's sister were able to convince her mother that Veeh did not want to get married – that it was not possible that she had gone willingly with her abductor. Xoli encouraged Veeh's mother to go to the police station to report the abduction and get their help getting her daughter back. With some persuasion from Xoli, the police and Veeh's mother went to the abductor's home where they demanded that she be released. Traumatized but otherwise unharmed, Veeh was able to return to her home and go

back to school for the 2019 academic year. Her abductor was not arrested and no case was opened against him.

Following her return home, Veeh was subjected to backlash and shaming by members of the community who felt that she should return to her abductor and get married. Veeh found support among the SIFs, from Xoli, her school principal, and one of her teachers. Each incident was a harsh reminder that in spite of the SIFs' commitment to addressing EFM in their community, our best efforts to support them in that commitment, and Xoli's constant and unwavering support for each of them (albeit sometimes more well-intentioned than effective as discussed in the previous chapter), social change takes time. It was clear that we had not yet made enough progress with changing peoples' attitudes to and beliefs about EFM in *eMangweni*. Further, unable to improve the economic situation of any of the families in the community, we were unable to provide a feasible alternative to financial motives for marriage.

8.3 Community Attitudes towards Early and Forced Marriage: Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia

Through their visual products and our discussions about them, it was apparent that the SIFs felt that there was support for EFM from many, if not most, people in their community. Casual conversations with other members of the community when we were in *eMangweni* for our PVM workshops confirmed the SIFs' analysis, as did what the ward councillor, who was born and grew up in *eMangweni* said about it, and later Xoli¹³². However, it was when we began a series of community engagement meetings with the traditional leadership, members of the community, and other stakeholders including the South African Police Service (SAPS), that

¹³² Once she had found out about EFM from the SIFs, Xoli began to ask about it around the community. Because of her work with Themba lethu, Xoli knows many people in the community by whom she is trusted and respected.

we first encountered these attitudes from a broader range of people in a formal setting. There were four such meetings held in 2019: 20 February, 12 March, 15 July, and 03 November. All four meetings were held at the *Amangwe* Traditional Court building.

In this section I draw on the detailed notes that were made about each meeting and my field notes. After consulting the ward councillor and the *iNkosi*'s chief advisor, the university research team and Xoli had decided not to ask for permission from those present to audio record or film the meetings. Doing so would have been disruptive and may have compromised the somewhat delicate relationship that we had built with the traditional leadership over the years. We were acutely aware of the significance of being allowed to hold the meetings at the Traditional Court Building and wanted to be respectful of that. Further, we did not want the traditional leadership or community members to feel that they were being observed, monitored, or, even worse, chastised. Instead we wanted, as much as possible, to create a space in which to facilitate meaningful dialogue about EFM. So, each member of the university research team, the project Principal Investigator (PI), Nkonzo (research assistant), and myself, took notes at each meeting. These were then all compared and combined into one document and read again by each member of the research team to ensure that they were an accurate record of the events and discussions that took place.

8.3.1 Community attitudes towards Early and Forced Marriage

That EFM continues to be practiced in *eMangweni* is powerful evidence for the support of this practice. Nevertheless, during our first community engagement meeting to address EFM that took place on 20 February 2019, various people initially attempted to deny that forced marriages and/or marriages of girls under the age of 18 took place in *eMangweni*. For example,

I recorded the following in my field notes about the meeting (parts of this excerpt are a repetition of the quote that appears in Chapter Seven):

After [the PI] introduced the findings of the project so far and said that the girls and young women we work with ... oppose EFM, the *iNkosi* responded with questions about who the girls are that we're working with and how they were recruited and, hardly surprising, why we aren't working with boys. It was a bit of deflection, I think, because he didn't mention EFM at all. Then one of the *iziNduna* (headmen) spoke and denied that young girls are forced to get married in *eMangweni*. None of the other *iziNduna* contradicted him nor did any of the other community members present. Then an older man stood up and asked the room (and not Lebo and Nkonzo) why we (the research team from UKZN) are against marriage. Everyone else was so quiet and he spoke with great passion. He said that early marriage and *ukuthwala* are part of their culture and that there is nothing harmful about them. Another man stood up and said that getting married at a young age is important because it stops girls getting pregnant outside of marriage and that the girls want to get married young because they love the boys.

The principal of the SIFs' school has been concerned about EFM in *eMangweni* for a long time and has kept records of the girls who have left his school because of EFM. For example, in 2014, 11 girls dropped out of school because of EFM. He informed the meeting that since the start of the 2019 academic year on 9 January (7 weeks), eight girls had dropped out of school because of EFM. In each of the four community engagement meetings and the community dialogue that took place over the course of 2019, the principal made a strong case for ending EFM in *eMangweni*. What follows is an excerpt from the detailed notes about the community engagement meeting held on 20 February 2019:

The principal also notes that the main problem is the parents. He says that is where the issue is, because when he tries to intervene the parents say, 'we will ask the girl if she wants to be married or not.' said that the parents do not protect their children from this. They allow it to happen and even encourage it. He then shared an experience of unsuccessfully trying to intervene, stating that at one point he came to the parents with the police and the parents gave him exactly that response [ask her if she wants to be married or not] and the police said they cannot do anything because of that. The principal also recalled that at one point he casually asked the girls at his school during break time why they are interested in getting married, they said to him 'if you are asked that means you are lucky because not everyone gets to be married at a young age'. He added that they also get pressure from the parent to get married ...but there are also some parents who do intervene (community engagement meeting notes, 20 February 2019)

To remind people that EFM is not, in fact, harmless, and that not all of the girls and young women in *eMangweni* saw it as a positive thing, Xoli shared parts of Veeh's story (keeping her anonymous by not using her name) in each of the four community engagement meetings that took place in 2019. Through Veeh's story, Xoli reminded those present that the parents of girls and young women and the community as a whole are implicated in these practices. The following excerpt is from the detailed notes taken about the first community engagement meeting on 20 February 2019:

[Xoli] shared a recent experience of a girl who refused and fought back. She said that the girl was made to sit at a mountain for the entire night surrounded by men who tried to force her to write to her parents that she wants to be married and that the parents must not come after her, but she did not. Xoli said that although the girl's mother had

at the beginning agreed to allow her child to be forced into marriage, she changed her decision, found some courage, went to the police and got her child back. Xoli then said that there was an outcry from the community towards the girl and her mother as to why they are going against the norm and practices of the community. She added that there is pressure from the community for girls to get married. She then said that it is not only the parents but also the community. She mentioned that the girl had screamed for help from one of the older women nearby, a mother herself, who responded ‘a child should never shout at an adult’ and did nothing. ... Xoli concluded by asking if children cannot run to elders in the community for help who will they run too? (Community engagement meeting notes, 20 February 2019)

In addition to making strong arguments against EFM and in support of girls and young women, both the principal and Xoli’s contributions corroborate the SIFs’ analysis of the dynamics of EFM in their cellphlms and digital stories and our discussions of them.

During the community engagement meeting that took place on 12 March 2019, a member of the community stood to speak. What follows is an excerpt from the detailed notes that were taken about this meeting:

One of the stakeholders apologised for arriving late. He then said that he hears that forced marriage is now the same as rape. He added that one of the speakers was correct in saying that ‘we are not wanting to change our culture.’ He said that during a meeting with representatives from the King¹³³, the King’s representatives referred to them as rapists¹³⁴. He stated that he could not speak at that meeting but questioned why the

¹³³ He is referring to the King of the Zulu Nation. His Majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu sent a delegation to eMangweni in 2017 to investigate reports of EFM.

¹³⁴ The King’s representatives may have been referring to statutory rape. The age of sexual consent in South Africa is 16. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act no. 32 of 2007 allows for consensual sex between partners between the ages of 12 and 16 provided that both parties are aged between 12 and 16 and/or any age gap between the parties is not greater than two years. In cases where one person is aged

representatives from the King did not ask about how they do things in the community or seek to understand what was going on rather than telling them what not to do. He went on to say that the mayor of the municipality also came to the community and said that marriages should stop. ... He said that when President Mbeki made the law that everyone is now equal they fought that. According to him, girls should be educated but they should get married, they must not escape. He concluded by saying that a house is built by a boy and that he is aware that this might not go well with others' views. (Community engagement meeting notes, 12 March 2019)

For this man, challenging EFM constituted a challenge to what he felt was his culture. From his statements about the meeting with representatives of the King, he was resentful of even the King of the Zulu Nation interfering in and criticising "how they do things in the community." Notably, there is also no ambiguity about his stance on gender equality.

Initial attempts at deflection and/or denial could not hold against the evidence presented by the project PI, the principal of the SIFs' school, Xoli, the ward councillor, and other stakeholders who recounted experiences of EFM that they were aware of or involved in. By the end of the first community engagement meeting, there were no longer any attempts to deny that EFM is practiced in *eMangweni*, although some community members and stakeholders, including some of the *iziNduna*, did continue to express their support for EFM. Part of the defence of EFM was that it was harmless, and even beneficial¹³⁵. This argument was countered by the PI presenting the SIFs' work on their behalf¹³⁶, by their principal, Xoli, and the ward councillor.

between 12 and 16 and the other is older than 16 and there is an age gap greater than two years between the partners, the older partner is considered to have committed statutory rape.

¹³⁵ See the quote from my field notes in Chapter Seven: "... He said that early marriage and *ukuthwala* are part of their culture and that there is nothing harmful about them."

¹³⁶ The SIFs were not present at the community engagement meetings, but were present at the community dialogue which took place in April 2019 which I will discuss later in the chapter.

It also became apparent that it was not the university research team that had come from outside the community to attack their culture, but rather the girls and young women affected by EFM, and other members of the community who have their best interests at heart, that take exception to the practice. The defence that EFM is a part of culture in *eMangweni* and should, therefore, not be questioned or challenged can be understood as an example of restorative nostalgia, conceptualised by Boym (2001) as “a longing for [a way of life] that no longer exists [and possibly] has never existed ... a sentiment of loss and displacement” (Boym, 2001, p. xiii in Moletsane, 2013, p. 20).

8.3.2 Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia

It became apparent during our community engagement meetings over the course of 2019 and the community dialogue, that a tension exists in *eMangweni* between, on the one hand, a sense of pride in culture and a desire to restore and preserve it as it was during what are imagined to be better times in the past. On the other, there was also the need to question practices and customs that may no longer serve a (good) purpose or may even be harmful. In post-apartheid South Africa (and other former colonies around the world), there seems to be a strong desire among many Indigenous people to, as Moletsane argues (2011; 2013), retrieve, restore, preserve and protect the traditions and practices that were lost or destroyed during colonialism and apartheid, and to use this reclaimed culture and traditions as the basis upon which to construct and perform their identities. According to Moletsane (2013), “[t]his naming, claiming or re-establishing an identity can and does operate on both an individual and a collective (or community or racial) level” (p. 20). Furthermore, this kind of restorative nostalgia can be seen as a response to alarming new phenomena with which people and communities have to contend and of which people and communities have to make sense, such as the HIV pandemic (Moletsane, 2011; 2013). Support for practices like EFM can be understood as an example of

restorative nostalgia and it seems that this is the case in *eMangweni*. In addition to a desire to reclaim their culture, for the people of *eMangweni*, there is also the encroaching of modernity on the traditional, rural way of life as movement between the rural and the urban becomes ever easier and more affordable, and technology brings the world into peoples' homes via smart phones and the internet.

In contrast to the restorative nostalgia noticeable in the quotes of the community members above, there was also evidence of reflective nostalgia, a kind of remembering that “reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment or critical reflection” (Boym, 2001, pp. 49–50 in Moletsane, 2013, p. 20). The following excerpt of a statement made by the ward councillor from the detailed meeting notes from the February 2019 community engagement meeting is an example of this:

[The ward councillor] then suggested that they need to look at their cultural norms in their society. They need to look at what practices have they have made normal, that are now going on unquestioned when they are carried out. He said that this is important because they are the ones which allow for this kind of issues to occur. He added that they also need to look at the pattern that is followed when a young girl is forced into marriage or gets married at a young age. He further said that in their community there is this perception that when a girl has not married by the age of 15 or 16 there is something wrong with her and that when you are 20 years of age and above you have expired no longer fit for marriage. He said that this is why some of the girls agree to be married while they are still in school. (community engagement meeting notes, 20 February)

Reflective nostalgia is also evident in the statement made by a community member described below:

One stakeholder said that what was being discussed in the meeting is a practice that has been normalised into tradition. He stated that it is the elders of the *Amangwe* Nation who made this into a tradition, as it serves the interest of men who want cows. He then asked how this practice could be done away with as it has become a tradition. He continued to say that the people who do this are boys who have failed at school, and that this used to happen to young women not young girls. He added that the law needs to come back. He continued that the people who do this come from families where their parents went through this as well. He concluded that the law needs to be implemented. (community engagement meeting notes, 20 February)

This man observes that EFM has changed over time; that it did not use to involve young girls. This recognition of change is important because it challenges the idea that culture in general and this practice in particular is immutable. The man also asks how the practice can be done away with now that it is tradition. Boym (2001) defines tradition as “...a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition which automatically implies continuity with the past” (p. 42). It is perhaps this automatic continuity of the past and the values and norms inculcated in the practice of EFM that imbues this tradition with such power in *eMangweni* that changing it is not considered a simple task. When he suggests that the law needs to come back, it is unclear whether this man is referring to customary or western law. Given the context and topic of the discussion in which these comments arose it is likely that he is referring to customary law which was a functioning legal system¹³⁷ before the

¹³⁷ Although, like all legal systems, not unproblematic.

colonial period and apartheid. The first democratic government of South Africa went to great lengths to reinstate customary law to a position of honour and respect, and to make it possible for the two legal systems to co-exist in South Africa (see, for example, Nhlapo, 2017). Practices or traditions like *ukuthwala intombi* and *ukuphuma kwezintombi* would have been governed by customary law.

Reflective nostalgia, as Moletsane (2013) argues, makes it possible “...to legitimise people’s need to ‘go back to the past’, but also to view that ‘past’ critically, and to make it ‘usable’” (p. 54). As demonstrated here, this kind of nostalgia is crucial to challenging ideas of reclaimed culture and tradition like EFM, that can be harmful and perpetuate and exacerbate forms of age- and gender-related inequalities that render girls and young women particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse. The reflective nostalgia of the ward councillor and other members of the community enabled the discussion about ending EFM to continue constructively, although not entirely without opposition.

8.3.3 Early and Forced Marriage and the Patriarchal Bargain

As discussed above, there is some enthusiastic support of EFM, a kind of patriarchal bargain (see Kandiyoti, 1988) by some women and women’s groups in *eMangweni*. These include the women who organise *ukuphuma kwezintombi* (discussed in Chapters 6 and 7), mothers of girls and young women who coerce them into marriage or allow *ukuthwala ngenkani* (as emphasised in the action brief on forced marriage discussed below), mothers of men who coerce girls and young women to marry their sons (or pressure their sons to marry), and even some girls and young women themselves. As I argue in Chapter Three, the intersection and interaction of different forms of inequality and oppression compounds the marginalisation and vulnerability of women and girls, influencing both the form that patriarchy takes in particular contexts, and

the patriarchal bargain(s) available to women and girls. In *eMangweni* poverty and patriarchy seem to mutually exacerbate each other in a continuous bidirectional relationship that constrains girls and women's power and agency and increases their vulnerability. In these circumstances, supporting, or at the very least not actively opposing EFM, can be seen as a way for girls and women to "maximise their security and optimise their life options" (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274). The combination of the social rewards associated with the marriage of a daughter and the financial gains from *lobolo* that may relieve some of the burden of poverty are the benefits of this bargain with the patriarchy.

With *lobolo* (bride price) and *inhlawulo* (paying damages or retribution) involved, the bargain here is somewhat more literal than it may be in other cases. In their opposition to EFM, the SIFs are resisting the positioning of girls as commodities with which people can bargain.

8.4 Girl-led Community-based Policy-making

In August 2018, as the first step towards community engagement which was to be the focus of our work in 2019, we held a PVM workshop with the SIFs during which we developed policy posters and action briefs based on their cellphilms and digital stories and the numerous discussions that we had had about these visual products. In total the SIFs created seven policy posters and seven action briefs.

8.4.1 Policy Posters and Action Briefs

As discussed in Chapter Five, we began the process by discussing what policy posters and action briefs are and what they can be used for. We then watched each of the cellphilms and digital stories taking note of themes and identifying the problems that would be the focus of each policy poster. The SIFs then developed the messages that they wanted to appear on the

policy posters and decided on and produced the images for the posters – either photographs or photographs of drawings. We then worked on developing the action briefs, starting by discussing each component of an action brief: the context, problem, solutions, what others can do, and what we can do. With help from the adult members of the research team, the SIFs wrote the text for each component of the action brief and then decided on the images that they wanted to use and where they wanted them to appear. In this section, I present two sets of policy posters and action briefs as examples of what these policy- and action-focused visual products might look like and the information they might contain.

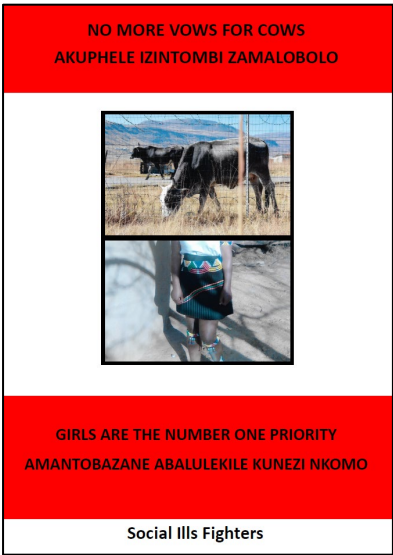


Image 8.1 The policy poster that the SIFs produced about forced marriage

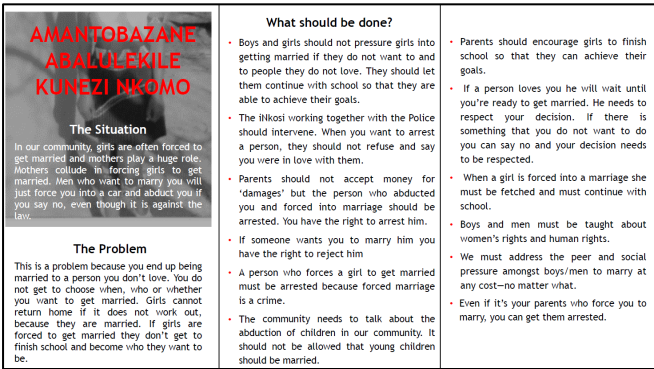


Image 8.2 The action brief that the SIFs produced about forced marriage

This policy poster and action brief use what became something of a catch-phrase for the SIFs, “No more vows for cows!”, to challenge and address forced marriage. The two images on the policy poster are of cattle and of a girl or young woman dressed in traditional attire. The image of the girl or young woman dressed in traditional attire, which also appears in the action brief, alludes to the role of ideas about culture and tradition in the practice of forced marriage in *eMangweni*. In ‘The Situation’ section of the action brief, the SIFs summarise the problem of forced marriage in *eMangweni* as follows:

In our community, girls are often forced to get married and mothers play a huge role.

Mothers collude in forcing girls to get married. Men who want to marry you will just force you into a car and abduct you if you say no, even though it is against the law.

In this description of the situation, the SIFs emphasise the role of mothers in forced marriage more than they did in the post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions.

The SIFs present a list of 12 actions that should be taken to address forced marriage. Each action includes an individual or group who/that should be involved in that action. In this action brief, the SIFs emphasize arrest as an important strategy to address forced marriage in *eMangweni*. They urge the *iNkosi* and SAPS to work together to intervene in cases of forced marriage. In this same point, the SIFs call on these important stakeholders to take girls seriously rather than dismissing their requests for help because the girls are only pretending to not love the boy: “The *iNkosi* working together with the Police should intervene. When you want to arrest a person, they should not refuse and say you were in love with them.” To identify such powerful authority figures and insist that they be accountable in this way, especially the *iNkosi*, is an impressive act of agency. The SIFs also identify parents as important role-players, calling on them to no longer accept *inhlawulo* (damages) from perpetrators but have them arrested. Rights appear directly in three of the 12 points that the SIFs make:

- 1) Parents should not accept money for ‘damages’ but the person who abducted you and forced you into marriage should be arrested. You have the right to arrest him.
- 2) If someone wants you to marry him you have the right to reject him.
- 3) Boys and men must be taught about women’s rights and human rights.

The focus on arrest is an indirect reference to rights. It is significant that the SIFs recognize that they have a right to reject offers of marriage. The third point made by the SIFs is an important one. Boys and men do need to be taught about girls and women’s rights and be made aware that GBV in any form is illegal. However, teaching boys and men women’s rights does not necessarily automatically translate into transformation of unequal gendered values. The SIFs make an important point about “address[ing] the peer and social pressure amongst boys/men to marry at any cost.” This statement is an acknowledgement of this important part of the dynamic of forced marriage, and draws attention to the need to work with boys and men to end forced marriage in *eMangweni*. The SIFs include the community in their list of action points, recognising the important role that the community plays in supporting this practice. They call for their community to end the silence around forced marriage by asking them to talk about it, and to stop allowing it: “The community needs to talk about the abduction of children in our community. It should not be allowed that young children should be married.”

The second set of policy poster (Image 8.3) and action brief (Image 8.4) focus on early marriage.



Image 8.3 The policy poster that the SIFs produced about early marriage

WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE READY BEFORE YOU MARRY SO THAT YOU CAN BE INDEPENDENT The Situation In my community early marriage is seen as a way to relieve poverty in the family. When a girl is failing at school, getting married is seen as the best option for her future. When girls fall in love with older men, they get married before they are ready. Girls' older friends who are married pressure them into getting married. Older men promise that if girls marry them, they will do things for them to improve their life. There is a belief that girls can't be buried at home. If a girl believes that she will only get one chance to get married, she will accept a proposal from an older man. The Problem This is a problem because young girls aren't physically ready to be pregnant and have a baby. Girls who marry early will become dependent on their husband because they won't finish school and reach their goals. This gets them and their children stuck in a cycle of poverty. Young girls aren't ready to take on the responsibilities of being married. When a girl marries young, her husband has more power, so she won't be able to consent to things and might be at risk of HIV.	When a woman's husband goes away to work, he might have sex with other women and get HIV. When he comes home he might give it to his wife, and then blame her when she tells him she is HIV+. Because they weren't able to date before they got married, sometimes young women start to see other people while they are married. What should be done? • Early marriage is not a solution to poverty or to failing at school. • The police need to investigate early marriages that infringe on the rights of the child. Those who marry children must be arrested by the police. • We must have community meetings to educate our community about the importance of education, and about early and forced marriage. • The iNkosi should pass a law against early and forced marriage. • Parents must not allow children to marry while they are still young even if there is no money at home • If there is a child that has married while they are still young, their parents must go and get their child and bring them back to their home, and the child must go back to school.	• Young people need to set goals for themselves for their future. If they do not set goals they will not see a need to be in school, and will see getting married while young as a good option. • Young people must only get married when they are older than 18, and when they feel ready • Young people must learn to say no to peer pressure. • Young people must be taught that if the person who wants to marry you and truly loves you, that person must wait for you to finish school and achieve your dreams before getting married. • Young people need to stay in school no matter how difficult it is. Success comes from perseverance and persistence. Educated people are able to be independent and make their own decisions in life. • Old men should stop marrying young girls. • Teachers should stop dating learners. It is illegal. • Older women should educate young women and girls about the challenges of getting married while you are young and not educated, and about getting married to a person who doesn't work.

Image 8.4 The action brief that the SIFs produced about early marriage

The image on the policy poster is of a girl or young woman holding out her hand, palm facing out, indicating a refusal. The message on the poster, in English at the top of the poster and in isiZulu at the bottom of the poster, reads: “Wait until you are ready before you marry so that you can be independent.” In the section of the action brief, ‘The Problem,’ the SIFs’ summary of their analysis of why early marriage is harmful for girls and young women is succinct and insightful:

Girls who marry early will become dependent on their husband because they won't finish school and reach their goals. This gets them and their children stuck in a cycle of poverty. Young girls aren't ready to take on the responsibilities of being married. When a girl marries young, her husband has more power, so she won't be able to consent to things and might be at risk of HIV. When a woman's husband goes away to work, he might have sex with other women and get HIV. When he comes home he might give it to his wife, and then blame her when she tells him she is HIV+.

The SIFs then present 14 actions that should be taken to address early marriage, including who should be involved or responsible for these actions. Like the previous action brief, the actions include community meetings to educate the community about the importance of education and early marriage, police investigating reports of early marriage and arresting perpetrators, the *iNkosi* passing a law that makes early marriage illegal in *eMangweni*, and parents not letting their children get married early and going to fetch them if they are abducted for marriage. It is noteworthy that four out of the 14 actions listed in the action brief involve young people as the responsible parties. None of the other groups or people identified by the SIFs appear more than once in the list. According to this action brief, young people must set goals, only get married when they are older than 18 and when they feel ready, learn to say no to peer pressure, and stay in school no matter how difficult it is. This disproportionate focus on young people's responsibility for addressing early marriage simultaneously minimises the constraints on the choices that young people have and relieves the adult members of the community of much of the responsibility for ending this practice in *eMangweni*.

The policy posters and action briefs once again demonstrate the SIFs' detailed and perceptive understanding of the dynamics around EFM in their community. The list of action points that

appears in each action brief suggests promising development in the SIFs' sense of agency over time, including their sense of having a right to challenge EFM and not quietly accept being treated like commodities or like they do not matter. Indeed, the significance of the SIFs identifying EFM as violence and openly questioning and challenging these practices in a very conservative community in which girls and young women like them have little power, cannot be overstated.

We had planned to start 2019 with a planning workshop focusing on the activities and approaches we would take to engage the community about EFM and advocate against it. However, following Cynthai's marriage and the abduction and attempted forced marriage of Veeh, the university research team, Xoli, and the SIFs agreed to hasten plans to engage with the community. Through the SIFs' cellphilms and digital stories and during our discussions about these visual artefacts, and during the process of creating the policy posters and action briefs in August 2018, the SIFs identified some of the key stakeholders who they felt should be involved in addressing EFM in *eMangweni*, including the *iNkosi*, SAPS, and parents. We decided to invite these and other stakeholders to a community meeting to give feedback about the results of the project thus far in the hopes of stimulating discussion about EFM. As discussed above, this meeting, which took place on 20 February 2019, was the first of four community engagement meetings. In April 2019 we held a very well attended community dialogue in the *KwaNdlela* community hall. Many of the action points the SIFs developed came up in the community engagement meetings and the community dialogue discussed below – raised by the PI of the project, Xoli, the ward councillor, their school principal, the nursing sister from the local clinic, one of their teachers, and, eventually, some of their mothers. One of the main outcomes of this process was a protocol to address EFM which was signed by the *iNkosi* on behalf of the *Amangwe* Nation on 13 March 2020.

8.4.2 Working within the System to Change It: Community Engagement Meetings

As discussed in Chapter Five, before the first community engagement meeting in February 2019, the SIFs, Xoli, and the university research team discussed whether or not the SIFs should be present at the meeting. For a number of reasons, we decided that they would not attend. First, to attend, the SIFs would have had to have been absent from school. Second, because women and children, especially girls, are not encouraged to attend or participate in proceedings of the Traditional Authority, we did not want to be in any way disrespectful of the traditions of the community thereby compromising our chances of success. There is an appropriate time and place for overt resistance and opposition, but this was not it. Insisting that the girls be present in contravention of the norms and rules of the traditional court could have alienated the traditional leadership and community preventing any further collaboration on addressing EFM in *eMangweni*. In this way, our decision was to work within the very system that we were seeking to change. Third, we were concerned for the well-being of the SIFs who might face censure or worse in the community for being seen to be disrespectful of tradition and culture. It is important that, although they were not present at the meetings, the decision that they would not be was made in a participatory way.

The SIFs may not have been physically present, but, through their visual products and quotes from post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions presented by the project PI, their voices were heard. As I noted in my field notes, in our debriefing after the second community engagement meeting, the project PI, Nkonzo, Xoli, and I agreed that it was “hearing the girls’ words about EFM and how it made them feel that seemed to have the most effect on people of anything that was said today” (Field notes, 12 March 2019).

8.4.3 *The SIFs take Centre Stage: Community Dialogue*

Unlike the community engagement meetings, the SIFs were present at the community dialogue which took place on 17 April 2019. Accompanied by some of their parents and their school principal, the SIFs were not only present, but screened and spoke to one of their digital story, *Forced Marriage*. The SIFs told me that they wanted to attend the dialogue and that they wanted to screen one of their visual products. I expressed my concerns to them about the possibility that they may face harassment or be ostracised by the community, but they were determined that this was the course of action they wanted to follow and assured me that they were aware of the potential risks involved. After helping them to prepare what to say, the SIFs presented their own work with pride and confidence. They held the attention of the large crowd and received applause after the screening and the brief discussion that followed. This public challenging of EFM in front adults and especially members of the traditional leadership is a clear demonstration of the SIFs' growing sense of confidence and agency.

In a promising show of support, the dialogue was attended by the *iNkosi* and a number of *iziNduna*. Although unable to stay for the entire event, the *iNkosi* was present for the first hour-and-a-half of the dialogue. In his opening remarks, he clearly stated that EFM should no longer be practiced in *eMangweni*:

[The *iNkosi*] said that while parents might be overjoyed about early marriage for their children, but they should be glad when it only happens when all of the protocols for it have been followed. He said that when a person gets married when they are underage they are not fit physically, mentally, and emotionally to be married, and that is why there is a push for the age of 21 as the minimum age for marriage in *eMangweni*. He went on to talk about the consequences of a person marrying while they are under age, amongst them that when they get older they want to get a divorce and that complicates

things, as the cows need to be returned for something that should have not have happened in the first place. He further stressed that if parents continue to allow early and forced marriage to occur he will not intervene when they want their cows back. He stated that in cases of early and forced marriage there will be a fine that will have to be paid by all those involved. The *iNkosi*'s final remark was that early and forced marriage has a lot of negative impacts on not just the girls but on the [*Amangwe*] Nation itself, thus it should stop.

A number of the stakeholders who had attended the first two community engagement meetings attended the dialogue and spoke, including Mrs M, a representative from LifeLine¹³⁸ placed by the Department of Social Development at the local police station. In response to comments from the crowd, during her planned contribution, Mrs M “insisted that they were not against culture, but encouraged parents to allow their children to at least finish matric (Grade 12) even if it is difficult financially because without it, they will not be able to do anything” (community dialogue notes, 17 April 2019). Like the people discussed above, for some in *eMangweni*, EFM is an important cultural practice and any attack on it is seen as an attack on culture. In a move that reminds me of the subtle manipulation and manoeuvring described by Sa’ar (2005) that girls and women employ in their efforts to ensure favourable outcomes, or, at the very least avoid adverse outcomes, while avoiding direct conflict, rather than insisting that EFM is against the rights of the girls and young women involved, Mrs M negotiates to prevent people from feeling alienated, asking them instead to allow their children to finish school.

¹³⁸ LifeLine is a non-profit organisation that offers free counselling to those in need. They offer both face-to-face counselling in major cities in South Africa and 24-hour telephone counselling.

Lieutenant G, from the *Amangwe* police station, addressed the crowd at length. What follows is an excerpt from the detailed notes on the community dialogue compiled by the university research team

[Lieutenant G] noted that although there are some people who support EFM and benefit from it, and there are those who oppose this practice he wanted to be clear that the abduction of a girl or woman with the intention of forcing her into marriage is unlawful. He explained that even if a child who is under age goes willingly because they think that they are in love it is still illegal because the law states that a minor cannot give consent to be married. ... He added that when a parent accepts *lobolo* they have also gone against the law because they have allowed something that is against the law to happen. ... Lieutenant G went on to say that it is disheartening when the community prevents the police from ensuring that the law is upheld and people who have broken the law are arrested. He said that they would receive reports that a child has been abducted and they would come out and search for the child while people who know where the child is just watch the search and do not help. He added that even those with knowledge about the whereabouts of the child that has been abducted are also going against the law. According to him, sometimes parents would open a case with the police in order to arrest the perpetrator, but the following day when *lobolo* negotiators arrive the parents change their minds and want the *lobolo* and not for their child to return. Lieutenant G asserted that this encourages those who do this practice of abduction to continue. He said that parents and the community are the ones who are blocking the law from working. Some parents, he said, blatantly say to the police that they should not open a case, because they want to see if the *lobolo* negotiators will come the following day. ... Lieutenant G stated that there is now a provision in the law, which places the parent(s) and the perpetrator on equal footing should the parent(s) accept the

lobolo. He said that this means the parent(s) who accept the lobolo will also go to jail like the perpetrators.

Lieutenant G's comments clarify points of law and make clear to the community that whether it is a cultural practice or not, EFM is a crime. His contribution also reinforces the SIFs' understanding of the dynamics around EFM in *eMangweni* as he calls out parents and the community for their complicity in this practice.

8.4.4 A Protocol to Address Early and Forced Marriage in eMangweni

In the first community engagement workshop, the *iNkosi* asked the project PI to assist with the development of a protocol to address EFM in *eMangweni*. I was tasked with putting together a first draft of the protocol drawing on what had been discussed in that first meeting and various pieces of South African legislation including the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (no. 120 of 1998), the Marriage Act (no. 25 of 1961), the Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005), and the Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013). The project PI and Nkonzo reviewed the first draft before we began to share it with stakeholders. Over the next few months, various drafts were reviewed by the SIFs, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and the National Prosecuting Authority as well as the traditional leadership and community in *eMangweni*. The traditional leadership and the community approved the draft presented to them during the final community engagement meeting held in November 2019. The final document (both an isiZulu and an English version) was signed by the *iNkosi* on behalf of the *Amangwe* Nation on 13 March 2020 (see Appendix E).

The response protocol sets the minimum age for marriage at 18, prohibits the payment of *inhlawulo*, and establishes a response protocol that involves the *iNkosi* and the traditional

council, SAPS, the Department of Social Development, the schools and parents or guardians. The response protocol thus includes both customary law and ‘western’ law. Importantly, the protocol includes a definition of coercion:

“Coercion” means the action or practice of persuading a person to do something by using physical, psychological, emotional or financial force, threats or intimidation and includes, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Where the person submits to the marriage as a result of (i) the use of force or intimidation by the prospective spouse or any other person (ii) a threat of harm by the prospective spouse against any person;
- (b) where there is an abuse of power or authority by any person to the extent that one of the spouses are inhibited from indicating his or her unwillingness or resistance to the marriage, or unwillingness to participate in the marriage;
- (c) the abuse of a position of vulnerability as defined;
- (d) kidnapping / abduction.

Further, one of the principles of the protocol is that “A marriage is considered forced if it takes place under any form of coercion as defined in this protocol.” This definition of forced marriage is crucial because, as the SIFs have pointed out, coerced marriage is not always recognised as a form of forced marriage. Marriages concluded as a result of coercion are sometimes considered legitimate because the girl said yes, or did not say no, or did not resist.

The protocol has been presented to the Office of the Premiere of KwaZulu-Natal, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature’s Quality of Life Standing Committee, the Provincial Council of Traditional Leaders, and the National Prosecuting Authority’s provincial Human Trafficking, Harmful Traditional Practices, Prostitution and Brothels (HHPB) task team.

The project and my work with the SIFs began with them identifying and defining the key issues affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in their community. As it continued, they chose the issue on which they would like to focus: EFM. Guided by our discussions with them and their policy posters and action briefs, we engaged in a process of community-based policy-making, representing them and their opinions and wishes even when they could not be physically present. At the subsequent community dialogue, they stood in front of their community and their traditional leadership and declared that they opposed EFM. Throughout the process of developing the protocol, the SIFs emphasized the need to include coerced marriage as a form of forced marriage. In this way, while the community-based policy-making process described and discussed in this section was, to a large extent facilitated by adults, it was led by the SIFs (girls).¹³⁹

8.5 “No more vows for cows!”: Girls, Agency, and Resistance

Perhaps the most significant display of the SIFs’ agency is their consistent, uncompromising challenging of the practice of EFM in their own community. For girls, who have very little power in the age and gender hierarchy of *eMangweni*, to challenge, resist, and hold their community accountable for a practice that is considered an important part of culture in *eMangweni* and therefore, unassailable, is an act of impressive agency. Just choosing to criticise this part of ‘culture’ was an act of subversion and resistance. It required them to disagree with and stand in opposition to the majority of adults in their community, the traditional leadership, even some of their peers. In challenging EFM, the SIFs confronted the age and gender hierarchy, hegemonic gender relations, and their ‘culture.’ Wary as I am of attributing to the SIFs more agency than they have, and the risk of sounding like one of *those*

¹³⁹ See Haffeejee et al. (2020) for a discussion of the relationship between the adult research team and the SIFs in this work.

white, English-speaking, middle-class women who condescendingly admire the strength and resilience of black girls and women, I feel that it is necessary to recognise the courage that it took for the SIFs to challenge EFM.

8.5.1 Girls have Power

Kabeer argues that agency involves “the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them ... encompass[ing] observable action, meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their *sense* of agency, their “power within”” (1999, p. 438). The SIFs’ certainly developed a sense of motivation and purpose, as sense of their “power within” over the time that we worked together. For example, reflecting on the year past in late 2018, Veeh said

It happens ‘cause when you hear people talking and ask yourself ‘am I doing the right thing?’ but at the end of the day you finalize your thoughts and ask yourself ‘if I am not the one who is going to do this then who will?’ That’s the question that everyone has in their mind. And say to ourselves ‘I am a girl. If I am not fighting for other girls, who will? ‘Cause in this world men do not.’

Cnah reflected on the change that the SIFs have observed in themselves:

...back then we were all thinking in the same way as our community thought about the people living in our community, but we who have joined this group we have seen that we now think differently from how other people are thinking. There is that, we have learned a lot, like girls have power and they do get that pride within them that is what I have learned.

For Lungoh and Mpiloh, being a part of the SIFs helped them to feel that it is possible for things to change and for girls to be involved in that change; it also helped them to challenge beliefs in male dominance:

Lungoh: Ok uh for me. For me what made me join this group was because I saw the way things were happening in our community, so I wanted to change...so that we could, we as women could change the situation, because the men are drunk and beating our women so we want to stop that and everything that happens.

Nkonzo: So, you saw it as an opportunity

Lungoh: Yes, an opportunity to shine as a girl and as a woman to make men aware that what they doing is wrong

Mpiloh: Uh-m what made me to join this group, is that it is based on human rights, and how we should like live our lives and take control of our lives. We must not keep that belief that men are in control are ... they are, got more power than us... that you know... even us that we can run the world just as they do.

Bonah and Wendie reflected on how, through the Networks for Change project, in which my study was located, their self-esteem improved despite the fact that girls are not valued in their community:

Bonah: It has helped me a lot, because it brings girl power... 'cause I was just not being comfortable with being who I am, cause in our community being a girl is something that you can't be proud of. People are just... males actually are not taking girls seriously by the way we look. People just get drink, bring up children, rape them, sort of abuse them, actually abuse them. So now this group brings back that thing to me that as a girl I can bring the change in my community. I can do things better, maybe not just in my community but also in the world

Nkonzo: And for yourself?

Bonah: Yes, it has changed me and helped me to develop.

Wendie: I think um my self-esteem has become high, it not low as it was... and I have learned to be strong ... and as someone who has been through a lot, you know... I have learned that I am not alone, I do have support from everywhere yeah (Inter: yeah, good)

The SIFs demonstrated a growing sense of their own agency in spaces outside of the Networks for Change. They independently approached their school principal and told them about our project and what we were discussing and learning. They then requested time during class and assemblies to engage with other learners in the school about various issues including EFM and GBV, and HIV prevention.

The SIFs also felt that they had observed some change in their community which they attributed to the Networks for Change:

Lungoh: I think the project is doing a good thing, a good job, because uh-m, it's got too... it changed peoples mind a lot, you know... bring the change yeah in the community, in our community... yeah. I think it's doing a good job.

Cnah: I think it's doing a good job because uh... that helps us to see that everything we do people are seeing it, and are interested in what we are doing. ...So, I think it's successful because maybe people are starting to change. Our community is not the same as it was before, so yeah. I see that there's change that has occurred.

Mpumeh: Yeah, yes there is change in our community and some of the people are... uhm there was a girl that was abused by her boyfriend, but now everything is ok. Because they realized that even if they are men that does not mean they have power over women.

One of the aims of research within the critical and transformative paradigm is transformation, not just in terms of social and policy change, but also on a personal, individual level (Mertens, 2007; Ngidi, 2020; Romm, 2014). The SIFs' recognition of their worth and power as girls is an important part of this transformation. It is particularly significant given the way that girls and young women in *eMangweni* seem to be valued not for themselves but rather for their potential for productive and reproductive labour, and as commodities in the exchange of vows for cows as discussed in Chapter Seven. In his efforts to make a compelling argument for ending the practice of EFM in *eMangweni*, the ward councillor made an interesting comment during the community engagement meeting in March 2019, as recorded in the detailed meeting notes:

[The ward councillor] added that there needs to be an understanding that a girl child is important because a girl works for their home, for the people. They do not waste their money, but they use it to improve the lives of their families and communities.

While the intention here is good, and he does move away from ideas about girls as commodities to be traded via marriage, the ward councillor's comment still fails to recognise girls' worth as individual human beings. Rather, he emphasises their worth as potential contributors to their families, and community, what the girl can do for others and what others can get from her. It is also interesting that the ward councillor's comment echoes the investment in girls as smart economics argument in neoliberal development discourse which transforms the girl-in-crisis into the girl-as-saviour discussed in Chapter Three (see also, Khoja-Moolji, 2015, 2018; Wilson, 2015; Bent, 2013).

As discussed in Chapter Three, Willan et al. (2020b) found that a key challenge in their work with the young women in the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures intervention was

“supporting [them] to imagine new identities and shift towards, and sustain, these, partly as there were limited ‘alternative identities’ available to the women, and those available were difficult to achieve” (p. 8). As they began to recognise their value and worth, the SIFs also began to imagine new identities and new futures for themselves in which their only option was to get married and have children. Through our discussions of their goals and plans for the future and our encouragement, the SIFs began to imagine studying further (going to university), having jobs, and being more independent. Their plans still included marriage and children, just later in life and based on their own choices. The SIFs were particularly inspired by our project PI, who shared her own story of growing up in rural Lesotho to become a highly respected Professor at the university.

The SIFs coming to recognise their inherent value and worth as human beings, and the possibilities of a different future for themselves is a transformation that is valuable in itself. It is also a first and necessary step towards transformation in the broader community. The sense of value and worth, the sense that they are capable of doing more than getting married and having children if that is what they choose is significant. Without this, the SIFs may not have been able to challenge EFM. The feeling that their work is having some impact in their community reinforces their new-found confidence and sense of self-worth.

At the same time, however, it is important that the SIFs (and others, like teachers, parents, us as researchers) do not overemphasise this sense of personal agency, and then blame themselves when their social ecology fails to meet their needs. Grounding their sense of personal agency, worth, and value in the realities of their context and the broader context of South Africa is key to avoiding the neoliberal girl power trap that demands that girls thrive, regardless of the structural and material constraints in their environment (Gonick et al., 2009).

8.5.2 PVM: Building Confidence and Creating Safe Spaces

As discussed in Chapter Four, participatory visual methodology (PVM) is useful for reducing power differentials between the adult researcher(s) and the younger co-researcher participant(s), fore-grounding the voices of co-researcher participants as they allow for the co-construction of knowledge and collaborative meaning-making. The SIFs visual artefacts, particularly their cellphilms and digital stories are a good example of what Barley and Russel's (2019) contention that

[t]he visual, when understood within the context of its own production, is seen as being a multimodal tool to access participants' voices and gauge their realities... When collaboratively produced, visual data can be an important way of empowering individuals within the research process through having direct control over the artefacts that are used to represent themselves and/or aspects of their culture (p. 224).

As demonstrated in Chapters Six and Seven and in this chapter, through the process and the product created, PVM stimulated communication and dialogue with and among co-researcher participants and prompted and encourage communication and dialogue with broader audiences like policy-makers, as a step towards social change. The process of creating the visual products, the visual products themselves, and the discussions about those visual products that have been discussed in this thesis demonstrate how the use of the visual can help to facilitate discussions about sensitive topics, such as EFM and sexual violence, which participants might find difficult to talk about using other methods such as interviews and focus group discussions (see also Blackbeard & Lindeggar, 2015). In addition, PVM offers a way to work around language barriers – not just those created by researcher(s) having a different language to the

participants¹⁴⁰, but also difficulties with discussing sensitive topics. Following the screening of the cellphilms and digital stories, Nkonzo and I reflected on the fact that the SIFs did not choose to speak a great deal about their visual products:

The SIFs, with some encouragement, introduced the cellphilms and made one or two comments about their own or other groups' work, but they didn't really engage in-depth with the content in response to our probing. ...Talking about it on the drive home, Nkonzo and I both felt that it was almost like they were a bit confused by our attempts to question them further about the cellphilms or digital stories and got the impression that they were thinking 'We've just told you. We've just answered your question in the cellphilmdigital story. What more do you want us to say?'... Nkonzo also reminded me that sometimes not saying anything is an act of agency. (Field notes, 20 July 2017)

In the later discussion at which Xoli and the ward councillor were present the SIFs were unusually quiet, but this was likely because, given the hegemonic age and gender hierarchies in *eMangweni*, they did not feel particularly comfortable to speak freely and disagree with their elders, especially one that is male.

This study provides an excellent example of one of the benefits of PVM: that unlike more traditional research methods like interviews and focus group discussions, PVM has the potential to provide us with answers to questions that we did not know to ask. Because neither the university research team nor Xoli were aware that EFM was practiced in *eMangweni*, we would not have asked questions about it in interviews or focus group discussions and it is very possible that this issue would not have come up in response to questions focused on other forms of GBV.

¹⁴⁰ I discuss language in greater detail in section 4.8.1 in the next chapter.

As discussed in Chapter Four, another benefit of PVM is that the process creates both literal and figurative safe spaces in which co-researcher participants feel safe and comfortable to express themselves and engage even on difficult topics. Through the PVM process the girls were able to articulate how they understood EFM, and the gendered dynamics around it. It is unlikely that they had had such an opportunity before, especially with adults. It is also important that we, as the adult research team, listened to what they had to say and took it seriously. The SIFs reflected on this during a discussion that we had looking back on the year (2018):

Cnah: I am so happy that I could be part of it, this project, it has helped me a lot and I wish it could continue for many years, you know. And to have someone like Lisa who listens to us you know, and is able to solve our problems, yeah I think there should be more people like her.

Veeh: So being part of this group, has meant being part of a family that is able to talk about everything and raise your problem and get a solution and get help, everything like that you know. Its good, it's really good being in this group

Mpumeh: I learnt a lot as well, because like when we were here we felt happy. There was no one discriminating against us or other people, it was like we were at home. It was fun. We enjoyed ourselves. We ate, we were not deprived of anything. We had everything. It was fun, we learnt a lot. We will now be able to teach others with what we have learnt here, especially when people ask us why are we here we will be able to tell them.

Being seen and heard, and being valued for who they are seems to have had a positive impact on the SIFs. By helping to lower the power gradient between the adult researchers and the younger SIFs, the PVM process allowed us to develop relationships built on trust and mutual respect, co-produce knowledge, and use this knowledge to work towards context-relevant, responsive social and policy change.

8.5.3 Disrupting the Trope: Not Girls-in-Crisis

With this recognition of the SIFs' agency, constrained though it may be, it is clear that they do not embody the figure of the girl-in-crisis, not least because they are not one-dimensional. Redolent of colonialist ideology, according to the single story of the girl-in-crisis, girls in the global South are always and only the helpless victim of poverty, culture, and predatory men (Bent 2013; Bent & Switzer, 2016; Khoja-Moolji, 2015, 2018; Wilson, 2015). However, things do not just happen to the SIFs, they are active participants in their own lives. Certainly, they are vulnerable. No clearer evidence of this is needed than the stories of Hlah, Khanyoh, Cynthai, and Veeh (who were directly impacted by EFM). Yes, ideas about culture and tradition contribute significantly to this vulnerability, but, the single story of the girl-in-crises obscures the fact that the SIFs vulnerability is the result of a complex of intersecting factors including structural and material circumstances, and, importantly, patriarchy.

The way in which the SIFs exercise their agency does not necessarily fit the mould of the neoliberal concept of the "feminist revolutionary subject" (Madhok et al., 2013), and does not have the same independence of the fully self-actualized neo-liberal subject of the empowered girl (Gonick et al., 2009). However, in their decision to tackle EFM, in their astute analysis of the dynamics around the practice in their community as illustrated in their visual products and our discussions about them, and in their participation in the community-based policy-making

process, the SIFs have demonstrated that when they are given the space within intergenerational partnerships, they are capable and agentic.

8.6 Synthesis

In this chapter I have responded to the third critical question that I asked in this study: *How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?* For a number of reasons, I began the chapter by recounting the stories of the SIFs' direct experiences with EFM as we, the adult researchers and the other SIFs know them (except in the case of Veeh who told us about her experience). First, in doing so I make it clear that EFM is most certainly still happening in *eMangweni* and any attempts to deny it are disingenuous at best. Second, through these experiences, I also draw attention to the limits of participatory research. The issues that are tackled in this kind of work are large and complex and rarely can they be quickly resolved. I believe, as do other researchers who do this kind of work (especially those who have far more experience than I do), that PVR can be a useful, appropriate approach for working with communities and co-researcher participants to answer some research questions and stimulate social and/or policy change. However, to be clear, it is not always the best or most appropriate approach, it is not always successful (however that be defined), and there are limits to what can be realistically achieved in particular studies and projects in certain contexts. Where this approach is successful, it is certainly never a neat, easy, or quick process. Third, the SIFs' direct experiences of EFM lay the foundation for the discussion of community attitudes toward EFM.

EFM and EFM as a proxy for culture are contentious issues in *eMangweni*. As demonstrated by the excerpts from the detailed notes about the community engagement meetings and community dialogue, there is still strong support for EFM in *eMangweni* that is underpinned

by restorative nostalgia. Comments made by various members of the community also corroborate the SIFs' understandings and analyses of the dynamics around EFM in *eMangweni*. Glimpses of reflective nostalgia (e.g., of the ward councillor and other members of the community) are encouraging and help to calm the fears of those who may feel that by challenges to the practice of EFM equate to an attack on their culture. I also argued that girls' and women's support for EFM in the community can be understood as a kind of patriarchal bargain – an effort to secure the best and most secure outcome for themselves, their daughters, and/or their families.

With the protocol to address EFM in *eMangweni* as one of its most significant outcomes, the discussion and analysis of the girl-led community-based policy-making process reveals that this process was enabled through PVM. The knowledge needed to understand and address EFM in *eMangweni* was co-produced through the PVM process. It was also through this process that the SIFs began to see themselves as holders of valuable knowledge, and as capable of making changes in their community. The visual products generated through the PVM process were invaluable tools for advocacy and awareness-raising during the community-based policy-making process and allowed the SIFs and their voices to be present and heard even when they were not physically present.

The PVM process was also central to the development of an understanding of girls' agency and resistance, and to supporting, encouraging and facilitating it. Over the time that we worked together, the SIFs reported developing a greater sense of self-worth and agency. This personal and individual transformation was a form of resistance the patriarchal attitudes towards girls in *eMangweni* as valuable only in terms of their potential for productive and reproductive labour and as commodities in what the SIFs understood to be a trade between two families facilitated

by marriage. In recognising, building on, and finding ways to exercise their agency along a continuum of resistance, the SIFs demonstrate that they are so much more than the girl-in-crisis.

In the next and final chapter, I conclude the thesis by offering a summary of the findings of the study, and reflecting on the theoretical, methodological, and empirical contribution of the study to working with girls to understand how they construct their femininities in a context of poverty, rurality, HIV, and GBV.

CHAPTER NINE

Girlhood and the construction of femininities among adolescent girls in a rural context: Conclusions, Contributions, and Implications

Stories matter. Many stories matter.

(Adichie, 2009, 17:34)

9.1 Introduction

When Mark Heywood said in his keynote address at the fifth South African AIDS Conference in 2011 that “[i]n South Africa being young and a woman is a risk factor for unwanted pregnancy, rape, HIV and death,” he was telling a particular (and compelling) story about girls and young women in South Africa. Indeed, there is abundant evidence that girls and young women are at enormous risk of GBV (including EFM), unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, and HIV (see, for example, Abdool Karim & Baxter, 2016; Artz et al., 2020; Joyner, 2016; StatsSA, 2018; Ward et al., 2015). Heywood’s story of girlhood (and young womanhood) in South Africa is not untrue, but it is incomplete.

As I have argued in this thesis, this incomplete story is problematic for a number of reasons. First, it is limiting and fails to recognise and acknowledge the agency, albeit constrained by their social and material context, that girls and young women do have and are able to exercise. Second, it echoes that of the racialised perpetually vulnerable, hopeless, and helpless girl-in-crisis, a story produced, reproduced and popularised first through colonial discourses, and more recently through international development discourse. The girl-in-crisis discourse and the narrative to which it gives rise focuses on ideas about girls’ choice and responsibility that obscure the structural causes of poverty and inequality including the unequal social, political

and economic power relations between the global North and the global South (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Wilson, 2015). Third, largely absent from the girl-in-crisis discourse, a discourse that I have argued has been imported into South Africa via international development organisations and programmes, are the perspectives and narratives of girls and young women themselves. As Taft, writing about girls' activism, points out, "[girls] appear, but they do not speak" (2010, p. 16). This absence, coupled with poor and limited understandings of the lived realities of girls and young women, the contexts in which they live, and the constraints on their agency, has implications for research, programmes, policies, and interventions aimed at supporting girls' health and well-being often. The result of the limited understanding of girls and young women's realities in so-called developing contexts is what Campbell and Mannell (2016) have described as a "poor fit between the realities of women's lives and the assumptions underpinning international programmes and policies" (p. 1). Fourth, not all girls in the global South are equally vulnerable.¹⁴¹ In South Africa (and elsewhere in the world), the girl-in-crisis is a racialised and classed figure. The girl-in-crisis, in South Africa, refers to Black African girls and young women, particularly those who live in rural areas, townships, or informal settlements. Girls of other races and Black African girls who belong to the middle or upper class¹⁴² are excluded from this story.

There is plenty of literature *about* girls and young women in South Africa, much of which focuses on their vulnerability to HIV and other STIs, GBV, unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy, and transactional sex, and often pathologises adolescent girls' sexuality. In this thesis, I wanted to find out, *from the perspective of girls themselves*, how they construct their femininities, and how they *position themselves* in relation to risk. I also wanted to explore how

¹⁴¹ See the discussion of the empowered girl in the global North in Chapter Three of this thesis.

¹⁴² Still a minority

to work *with* girls to address some of the challenges to their health and well-being in sustainable, holistic, responsive, and context-relevant ways.

In light of this, the main research question that this study aimed to answer was: *How might PVM be used to explore the construction and reimagining of femininities among girls and young women in a context of poverty, rurality & GBV?* In order to answer this main research question, I posed three sub-questions:

- 1) *How do a selected group of adolescent girls in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?*
- 2) *How do the girls position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?*
- 3) *How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?*

In the next section of the chapter, I provide a brief overview of the study and how I went about responding to these questions.

9.2 Overview of the Study: Using Participatory Visual Methodology to Work *with* Girls

My study was located within the ambit of a larger, multi-year, international, interdisciplinary project. The *Networks for Change and Well-being: girl-led, from the ground up policy-making to address sexual violence in Canada and South Africa* or the Networks for Change project, as it is known, is a partnership between McGill University in Canada and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. The project aimed to use participatory visual methodology

(PVM) to work with indigenous girls and young women in Canada and girls and young women from rural areas in South Africa to better understand sexual violence in their communities, and to facilitate and support girl-led social and policy change to address it. The focus on girls and young women from rural areas in South Africa reflects the fact that this population group is particularly marginalised due to a combination of factors, including their age, gender, ideas about culture and tradition that still shape social relations in important ways in these areas, and their literal and figurative distance from resources and services (Jewkes et al., 2002; Kovacs, 2017).

9.2.1 Overview of the theoretical framework

My study was framed by feminist postcolonial theory and social constructionist theories of gender. I used feminist postcolonial theory to frame my overall approach to the study and to guide my use of social constructionist theories of gender that were largely developed in the global North. I situated my use of participatory visual methodology within feminist postcolonial theory in order to realise my commitment to doing collaborative social research *with* my co-researcher participants that generates co-produced knowledge that can be used to stimulate and support transformation and social change. Feminist postcolonial theory also framed my analysis of the potential of PVM to facilitate the co-development of collaborative, context-relevant, sustainable approaches to addressing early and forced marriage (EFM), a key issue my co-researcher participants identified as negatively impacting their lives, ‘from the ground up.’ I used social constructionist theories of gender, particularly the notions of idealised constructions of gender and hegemonic gender relationality, in my analysis of how the Social Ills Fighters (SIFs), my co-researcher participants in this study, construct and reimagine their femininities.

The literature review in this thesis suggests that girls' constructions of their femininities are influenced by the social and material conditions that marginalise women and girls and constrain their agency and the choices available to them, including poverty, patriarchy and gender inequality, and ideas about culture and tradition. Confronting the colonial and neoliberal ideology in international development discourse, the smart economics approach to development, the "girling" of development (Hayhurst, 2011, cited in Khoja-Moolji, 2015, p. 87), reveals how the figure of the girl-in-crisis is produced and reproduced and has become the incomplete single story of the girl in the global South that ignores the complexity of the lived realities of girls and young women.

Co-existing with the girl-in-crisis is the girl-as-saviour. The girl in the global South is simultaneously perpetually vulnerable, passive, and at risk (the girl-in-crisis) and the holder of the potential to end poverty for themselves, their families, communities, and, ultimately, the world (the girl-as-saviour) (Bent, 2013, Switzer, 2013, Wilson, 2015). Produced through neoliberal, post-feminist girl power discourse, the girl-in-crisis, on the intervention of international development programmes usually focused on education, needs to be 'empowered' to make the 'right' choices that will redefine their future and enable them to be the saviours of themselves, their families, and communities. Both the girl-in-crisis and the girl-as-saviour draw on the same colonialist discourses based on gender and cultural essentialism that rely on the selflessness, hard work, and passivity of girls and young women (Wilson, 2015). The girl-as-saviour co-exists with the girl-in-crisis, both produced and reproduced in narratives of vulnerability/responsibility, involving decontextualised understandings of girls' agency and choice, that rely on persistent colonialist discourses based on gender and cultural essentialism. Thus, central to my analysis in this study were the concepts of agency and choice.

The literature further suggests that programmes and policies aimed at supporting the health and well-being of girls and young women cannot be successful when they are based on such incomplete, decontextualised, and inaccurate understandings of their lives, needs, strengths, and constraints in context. Instead, in order to be effective, policies and programmes must take into account the context in which girls and young women live and be based on co-constructed knowledge developed collaboratively with them.

Informed by this understanding, I took a participatory approach to working with my co-researcher participants and aimed to learn from the perspectives of girls themselves how they understood their context, their risk and vulnerability, and their agency. I also spent a great deal of time in the community and getting to know people. In my analysis, I focused on the SIFs' understandings of their femininities, girlhood and gender in the context of their community and our joint interpretation of the data rather than interpreting the data on my own back in my office at the university in Durban. Further, in my analysis I paid particular attention to what the SIFs communicated about their context through their visual artefacts and in our discussions.

9.2.2 Overview of the Methodology

It is unusual for a PhD study, at least in the Humanities and Social Sciences, to be located within a larger project. I had decided some time before I joined the Networks for Change project as the project co-ordinator what I wanted my study to focus on and that I wanted to use a participatory approach. In fact, I had designed a study that was located within girlhood studies and involved using a participatory approach to working with girls in rural community in KwaZulu-Natal to explore how they construct their femininities. However, when I joined the Networks for Change project, it became clear that there was such a close alignment between the project and the kind of doctoral study I wanted to do and that I would be intricately involved

in every aspect of the project. I also became very invested in the project. I discussed it with my supervisor and the PIs of the project and was given the opportunity to conduct my research for my doctoral study within the Networks for Change.

As discussed in Chapter One, the Networks for Change (2015 – 2021) was a partnership project between the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and McGill University in Canada. Framed within the field of girlhood studies and located within the critical and transformative paradigm (Mitchell et al., 2017), the project aimed to use participatory visual methodology (PVM) to work with girls and young women in Canada and South Africa to better understand sexual violence in their communities, and facilitate and support girl-led social and policy change. While the focus in Canada was on working with indigenous girls and young women, in South Africa our focus was on girls and young women from rural areas. Thus, fortunately, did not have to change my approach to my study, the paradigm in which it was located, or the rural context in which it would be conducted in order to ‘make it fit’ within the Networks for Change.

I was also fortunate that for my study, located as it was within the larger project, I often worked in close collaboration with other members of the Networks for Change research team. This meant that I had plenty of support, learned a lot from them as my study progressed, and was able to draw on their different knowledges, perspectives, and skills throughout my study. It also meant that I had the experience, rare for PhD students, of being able to peer debrief with colleagues who knew the context, co-researcher participants, and data almost as well, if not as well, as I did. For example, I facilitated only one of the workshops that I used to generate data for my study completely on my own. The others I led or co-facilitated with the rest of the Networks for Change research team. All of this added to the richness of my study and the huge

amount that I learned during the course of it. It has, however, made it difficult to separate my study from the larger study. I tend to think of my study as a piece of the entire puzzle of the South African arm of the Networks for Change project.

The research design and methodology of my study were influenced by feminist postcolonial theory and my personal commitment to doing collaborative ethical research with co-researcher participants to co-produce knowledge that can contribute to efforts to stimulate and/or support social change. The decisions that I made about the research design and methodology of my study and the theories used to frame it were informed by the critical and transformative paradigm (Mitchell et al., 2017) within which the larger project was located. In this paradigm, which draws on the tenets of both the critical paradigm and the transformative paradigm, knowledge is understood to be situated, subjective, value-laded, and socially constructed within a complex cultural and historical context characterised by patterns and structures of power which privilege certain kinds of knowledge over others. Central to this paradigm is a focus on the lives and experiences of marginalised individuals and groups of people, the recognition of power differences between researchers and co-researcher participants, and the ethical implications of such power imbalances. The aim of research within this paradigm is to develop “inclusive, democratic and context-based understandings of phenomena” (Egbo, 2005, p. 276) which privilege the views of those most affected by those phenomena and to use this knowledge to inform action towards social change (Cresswell, 2003; Mertens, 2009). In this paradigm, the relationship between researcher(s) and co-researcher participant(s) is central to the inquiry (Anderson & MacLachlan, 2015).

As described in Chapter Five, the Networks for Change recruited a group of 15 girls and young women in the rural community of *eMangweni* in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The girls, who

called their group the Social Ills Fighters (SIFs), were all aged between 15 and 19 at the time of recruitment. The study comprised three phases: gaining entry into the community and participant recruitment, PVM workshops, and girl-led community-based policy-making. Between April 2017 and August 2018, we held five PVM workshops during which we used a number of visual methods including cellphilms, digital story-telling, and policy posters and action briefs to co-produce knowledge and create visual products to be used as tools for advocacy and awareness-raising towards social and policy change. As discussed in Chapter Five, this thesis uses data mainly from the workshop sessions which I led or facilitated on my own. In our first workshop in April 2017 I asked the SIFs to identify the key issues affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in their community. From the list of six issues, it was EFM on which they chose to focus our work. Between February 2019 and March 2020, the project engaged in a number of community engagement meetings and a community dialogue in an effort to bring about social and policy change focussed on addressing EFM in *eMangweni*.

In addition to the visual products created by the SIFs, sources of data included transcripts of post-screening and participatory data analysis discussions, detailed meeting notes taken during community engagement meetings and community dialogues, and my field notes. I conducted an inductive thematic analysis of this data set engaging with three layers of textuality: primary texts, producer texts and audience texts in the middle of which, argues Fiske (1987; 1989 in Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 9) meaning can be found.

9.3 Reflections on the Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The feminist postcolonial theory adopted for analysis in this study informed my choice to locate the study within the critical and transformative paradigm (in which the larger project was

located), and to use participatory visual methodology to generate data. The synergy between theory, paradigm, and methodology made it easy for me to adhere to and realise the principles and commitments of feminist research and enhanced the potential of this approach to be collaborative, ethical and equitable. Situating the study within feminist postcolonial theory further enhanced the decolonising potential of the participatory approaches to research used to generate data and their potential to be more democratic and to offer novel ways of approaching research that has a transformative and/or social justice agenda (Darroch & Giles, 2014; Phillips, 2011). Informed by the principles of both feminist postcolonial research and PVM, including their emphasis on the influence of researcher positionality, throughout the research study, I remained mindful of the need for constant reflexivity. As a white, English-speaking adult woman who is a researcher from the university, there are many ways in which I have more power than the SIFs in our interactions. As the adult and the researcher, it was incumbent on me to stay mindful of the power relations between myself and my co-researcher participants and try to negotiate these with the SIFs in a considerate and respectful way. Reflexivity, including about my positionality, was an essential tool in my efforts to be aware of and lower the power gradient between me and the SIFs. I approached working with the SIFs respectful of their knowledge and skills and tried to make it clear that I valued them and their knowledge and input. I often deferred to their knowledge of the language and context of eMangweni and asked for their opinion and input about things. They were also involved in almost all of the decisions made about the study that related to or involved them. I also focussed on listening more than talking, and asking them questions about things more than telling them how they should think, feel, or behave.

A second aspect of my reflexivity in the study involved the issue of language, and particularly the hegemony of English in research and other settings. In South Africa, the relationship

between language and power is closely linked to the history of colonialism and apartheid in this country. As I discussed in detail in Chapter Five of this thesis, Indigenous languages, including isiZulu, were systematically devalued during the colonial and apartheid eras. There are still unacceptably large numbers of people in South Africa who do not have sufficient access to English (the language of power and prestige) to fully participate in critical structures and institutions in South Africa. Thus, language remains a barrier to access and success in education, and access to health care and the justice system. In research, language is implicated in power relations, voice, representation, and trustworthiness. Being a first-language speaker of English with shamefully poor knowledge of isiZulu and working with participants who struggled at times with English, meant that language presented me with challenges that I needed to negotiate with my co-researcher participants. In my interactions with them, the SIFs and I negotiated this issue together. I tried my best to speak isiZulu, to the great amusement of the SIFs, and they made an effort to teach me. In me and other members of the Networks for Change research team, the SIFs had rare access to a first-language speaker with whom to practice their English. They expressed a desire to do so not least because access to English is essential for success in secondary and higher education in South Africa. This kind of exchange of linguistic knowledge may have contributed to lowering the power gradient between the SIFs and me. They had access to knowledge that I needed (the language itself, and what they were communicating in it) and I provided a safe and non-judgemental space in which they could practice their English. From a research design perspective, I had to weigh up the pros and cons of the approach that we took to language in the study. On one hand, the SIFs wanted to practice their English and were entitled to choose to communicate in whichever language they wanted. On the other hand, it is possible that there were times when the SIFs speaking in isiZulu would have added more depth, complexity or nuance to the data. This issue is mediated to some extent by how very effective the SIFs' visual products were as vehicles for both communicating and

producing knowledge. I was also fortunate to be working within a multi-lingual team so that the SIFs had the option of expressing themselves in isiZulu, English or ‘Zunglish,’ a mixture of the two languages. I was also fortunate that I almost always had one or more of my colleagues from the Networks for Change with me who were able to interpret for me, the SIFs, or both.

Throughout the study, it became increasingly clear how central relationships are to participatory research, and in these relationships, listening. I was able to draw on feminist postcolonial theory, the tenets of the critical and transformative paradigm, and the principles of participatory research to guide my decisions in relation to relationships between me and the rest of the Networks for Change research team and the SIFs, Xoli, and the traditional leadership and other members of the community. Framed thus, the PVM process and long-term engagement, played a pivotal role in creating space for the building, maintaining, and negotiating of these relationships, and for meaningful, active listening.

9.4 Adolescent Girls’ Construction and Reimagining of Femininities in a Rural KwaZulu-Natal Community

In this section of the chapter, I provide a synthesis of the key findings in relation to the three sub-questions I asked in this study, and respond to the main research question. I responded to the first two sub-questions in Chapter Seven of this thesis. It became clear during my analysis of the data that the findings in relation to these two questions were closely and intricately linked. I responded to my third sub-question in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

9.4.1 How do a selected group of adolescent girls in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct their femininities? What influences these constructions?

The findings in this study suggest that the Social Ills Fighters (SIFs) constructed their femininities in relation to masculinities and patriarchy and in relation to other femininities, specifically, the idealised traditional ‘good girl’ femininity. In contrast to this traditional femininity, the femininity that the SIFs embody, the transitional ‘good girl’ in process femininity, challenges the gendered expectation of girls and young women that they be unquestioningly acquiescent and obedient even when this acquiescence and obedience puts them at risk. Key to enabling this challenge was the girls’ growing sense of their own worth and their ability to imagine alternative futures for themselves in which they can be more than wives and mothers.

In *eMangweni* (one of the research sites for the Networks for Change project and where for this study was located), where gender inequality is understood to be inherent to culture, both the traditional ‘good girl’ femininity and the ‘good girl’ in process femininity are heavily influenced by the convergence of poverty and ideas about tradition and culture. These intersecting factors shape and exacerbate each to other increase girls’ vulnerability to GBV, including EFM, HIV, and unplanned/unwanted pregnancy. Further, aligned with the findings of other research about agency with marginalised girls and women (see, for example, Campbell & Mannell, 2016, Kabeer, 1999; Willan et al., 2019 2020a, 2020b), the study found that these factors serve to constrain girls and young women’s agency and power in navigating this vulnerability, and their access to alternative options and/or recourse when their rights are violated and their health and well-being threatened.

9.4.2 How do the girls position themselves in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them?

Initially the SIFs positioned themselves as relatively powerless in relation to the risk factors to which issues of gender in context predispose them. They understood the precarity of girlhood and the impossible position in which girls and young women find themselves. My analysis suggests that they had internalised ideas about vulnerability/responsibility that place all of the responsibility for girls' 'success' or 'failure' squarely on the shoulders of girls alone and obscure the social and material constraints on their choices, options, and actions. As such, they still tended to frame girls and young women's actions as choices and held them accountable for the consequences of the things that more often than not happened to them. However, over the years that we worked together, the SIFs' displays of agency grew and strengthened and they began to imagine alternatives to lives and futures of risk and precarity and that they might play a meaningful role in addressing the issues that prevent these imagined alternatives from becoming reality. This kind of development or transformation is difficult to achieve. For example, Willan et al. (2020b) found that a key challenge in their work with the young women in the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures intervention was "supporting [them] to imagine new identities and shift towards, and sustain, these, partly as there were limited 'alternative identities' available to the women, and those available were difficult to achieve" (p. 8).

9.4.3 How might PVM be used to engage girls and young women in challenging normative gender roles that facilitate or constrain the choices available in their communities?

In this study, informed by the critical transformative paradigm, PVM was used to create a safe and collaborative space in which girls and young women felt comfortable to express themselves and critically engage with new ideas about gender relationality and femininities. The methodology was used to enable the participants to challenge what was previously thought of

as unassailable, and imagine alternative identities and futures in which the health and well-being is not always at risk. Through their visual products, the SIFs were able to express and communicate complex ideas and messages about the layered and nuanced gendered power dynamics and ideas about culture that underpin the practice of EFM in *eMangweni*. The visual products they created opened up space to discuss these difficult issues in a way that might have been difficult had I used another approach. By lowering the power gradient, PVM enabled the SIFs and me and the other members of the Networks for Change research team to develop respectful, trusting, more equitable relationships that allowed us to co-produce knowledge about gender, femininities, and EFM. These relationships allowed us to work together towards finding context-relevant approaches to addressing EFM. Further, it was through this approach that I got answers to questions I did not know to ask about EFM in *eMangweni*. The SIFs' visual products also acted as powerful tools for advocacy and awareness-raising, ensuring that their voices would be heard in all forums whether they could be physically present or not.

9.4.4 How might PVM be used to explore the construction and reimagining of femininities among girls and young women in a context of poverty, rurality & GBV?

The findings to these three sub-questions contribute to answering my main research question. The findings suggest that *context* plays a pivotal role in how adolescent girls in this rural community construct their femininities. Specifically, the girls are required to construct their gendered identities as they navigate the precarity of girlhoods shaped by rurality, poverty, gender inequality, and ideas about culture and tradition that silence, commodify, and devalue girls and young women. In combination, these factors form both the adverse social and material circumstances that influence girls' constructions of their femininities in relation to masculinities and idealised constructions of femininities, and shape the options available to them to cope with, manage, or respond to such adversity.

Importantly, however, as social constructionist theories of gender suggest, formed as they are in particular social and historical contexts locally, specific idealised constructions of gender and hegemonic gender relations can and do change over time (Budgeon, 2014; Connell, 1987, 1995, 2012; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Risman, 2004; Schippers, 2007). The transitional ‘good girl’ in progress femininity constructed and embodied by the SIFs shows promising evidence of challenge to the normative hegemonic gender relations in *eMangweni*. Similarly, the process of girl-led community-based policy-making shows encouraging signs of burgeoning change in these gender relations.

As illustrated in figure 9.1 below, the findings from this study suggest that girls and young women in the rural community of *eMangweni* constructed their femininities at the intersection of rurality, poverty, gender inequality, and ideas about culture, and, linked to this, gender-based violence.

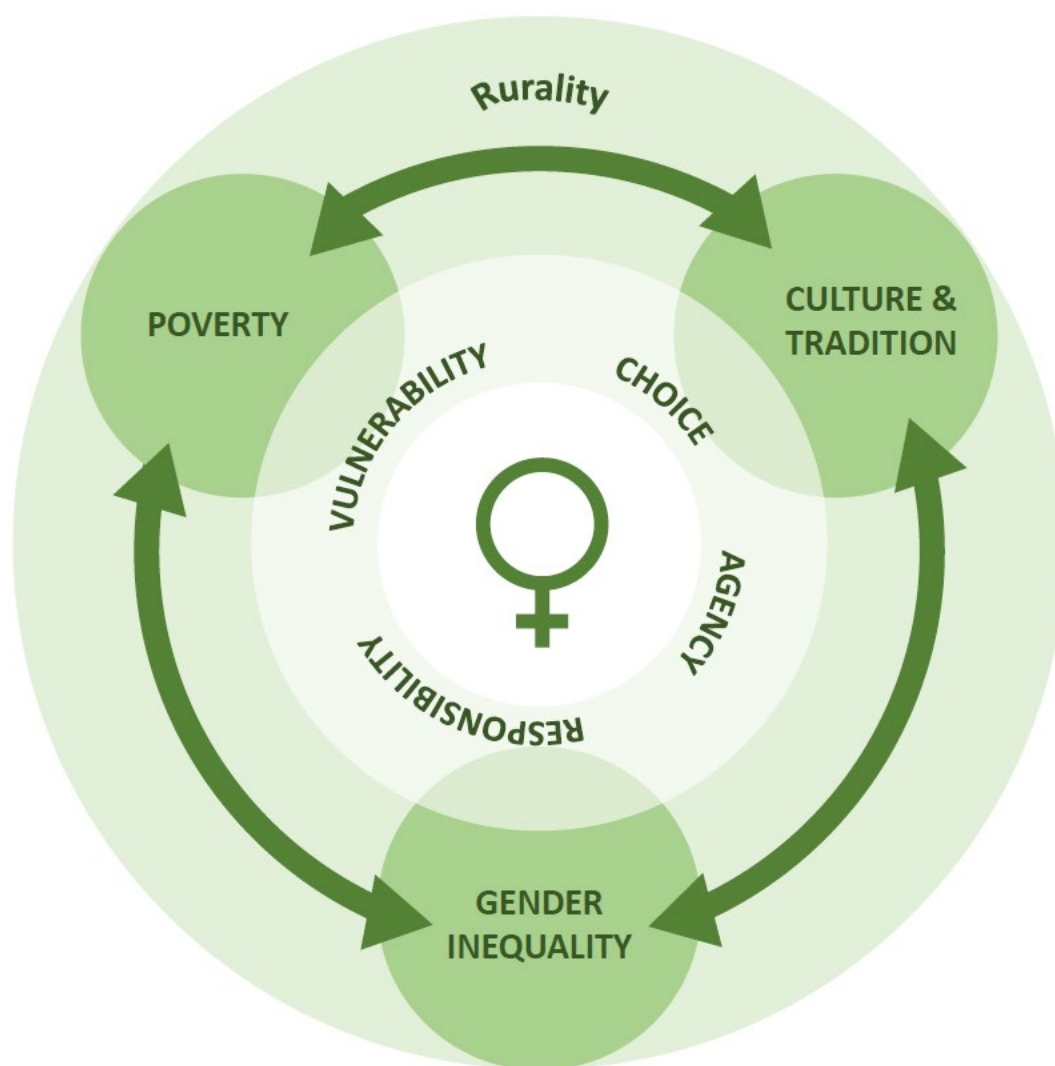


Figure 9.1 Girlhood at the Intersection of Rurality, Poverty, Gender Inequality, and Culture and Tradition¹⁴³

As Figure 9.1 illustrates, rurality, poverty, gender inequality, and culture and tradition shape, are shaped by, and exacerbate each other in a complex array of bi-directional relationships of power and inequality at the centre of which is the girl. The factors converge to make girls and young women highly vulnerable. In addition, they also place all of the responsibility for their ‘success’ or ‘failure’ on the shoulders of girls and young women. In this context, the way in which girls are positioned and position themselves in relation to risk is complex and reflects

¹⁴³ I would like to thank Dean Janse van Rensburg for his help with the development of this diagramme.

the precarity of girlhood (see Chapter Seven). Girls must carefully navigate the precarious social and material circumstances in which they find themselves in order to secure the best or least harmful outcome for themselves and, at times, their families.

Understanding these dynamics is essential to designing programmes or interventions to address the issues that affect the health and well-being of girls and young women in responsive, context-relevant, and sustainable ways that have greater chance of success. For example, programmes or interventions aimed at addressing EFM that do not include an understanding how poverty interacts with gender inequality and ideas about culture and tradition may spend a great deal of time, effort, and money to educate communities about the fact that EFM is illegal, but have only limited success because this approach has not addressed the economic motivations behind EFM. As discussed in Chapter Two this has been demonstrated in some microfinance interventions which have failed to improve the lives of the girls and women involved and have, at times, unintentionally increased their risk and vulnerability (see, for example, Bateman & Chang, 2012; Goetz & Gupta, 1996; Hunt & Kasynathan, 2001; Kabeer, 1998, 2001, 2005). Programmes or interventions that address all three of these factors based on an understanding of them and the ways in which they interact are likely to be more effective.

9.5 Contributions of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge and literature about girlhood emanating from the global South (for example, Haffejee et al., 2020; Moletsane, 2000, 2007, 2018; Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018; Wiebesiek & Treffry-Goatley, 2017). As such, it also contributes to broader dialogue about girlhood and femininities in the global South both within and outside of the academy. First, the complex, nuanced, multi-dimensional stories of girlhood told by the SIFs, their growing agency, and the process of girl-led community-based policy-

making described and discussed in this thesis challenge both the deficit perspective in which some studies of girlhood in the global South are located, and the one-dimensional single story of the girl-in-crisis produced, reproduced, and popularised by neoliberal, international development discourse (see for example, *The Girl Effect*¹⁴⁴ and *ZAZI*¹⁴⁵). This contribution of the study has important implications for policy, programming, and interventions that aim to support and promote the health and well-being of girls in the global South.

Second, with its focus on working with girls in a rural context, this study contributes to an under-researched area not only in girlhood studies, but also in other fields and disciplines. Rural contexts and rural communities are often under-researched for a number of reasons. For example, in South Africa, the long distances between urban centres and deep rural areas is prohibitive in terms of time and the cost of travel. Rural areas are also sometimes difficult to access because of the terrain, but also at times because of difficulties with gaining permission from the traditional leadership to conduct research. Further, to be candid, there is an extent to which rural areas and the people who live in them fall victim to the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ phenomenon. Urban or peri-urban communities are easier and less costly to reach, and they are much more visible. Linked to this, there is also the somewhat deliberate blindness, selective seeing, or what I call quaint-washing that happens as people drive through impoverished rural areas on their way to a holiday at a resort, in this case, the famous Drakensberg mountains. Quaint-washing is the process of looking at a rural community and projecting onto it ideas about a simpler, less stressful and encumbered way of life in contrast to the louder, faster-paced, more chaotic way of life in towns and cities. Quaint-washing enables people from cities and other middle-class context to fail to see some of the harsh realities and challenges that are

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.girleffect.org/>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.zazi.org.za>

associated with living in poorly resourced rural communities either because coming from privilege and urban areas, they are unaware of these realities, or because they choose instead to focus on the admittedly magnificent physical geography of the Drakensberg. This study provides insight into how a particularly marginalised group of girls and young women in a rural community construct their femininities. The study highlights how the participants position themselves in relation to risk, and the dynamics around girls' risk and vulnerability in relation to poverty, gender inequality, and ideas about culture and tradition from their own perspectives.

Third, the study also makes several methodological, conceptual, and theoretical contributions.

9.5.1 Methodological Contributions

This study makes several contributions to deepening understanding of how PVM might be used to work with co-researcher participants and their community to co-produce knowledge and facilitate and support social and/or policy change that draws on it.

9.5.1.1 Long-term Engagement and the Importance of Relationships in Participatory Visual Methodology

This study demonstrates that PVM requires long-term engagement and what can potentially be achieved over this relatively long period. Over the approximately three-and-a-half years of my study and the six years of the Networks for Change, we were able to co-produce in-depth and detailed knowledge about girlhood and femininities,. We also co-produced knowledge about EFM and the dynamics around it, and other issues affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in *eMangweni*. Through the relationships that we built with the SIFs, Xoli (our community partner), the ward councillor, and the SIFs' school principal, we were able to use this co-produced knowledge as well as the visual products created by the SIFs to engage

the traditional leadership in *eMangweni* and other members of the community in constructive dialogue about EFM and the need to address it. Ultimately this led to the development and signing of the *Reporting and Response Protocol on early and forced marriage in eMangweni*.

Linked to this, the study highlights the importance of respectful and ethical relationships between researcher(s) and co-researcher participants, and the unique nature of the relationships that develop during this kind of work. Over a period of time spanning approximately three-and-a-half-years, and as a result of the collaborative nature of the work we do, the relationships that develop between researcher(s) and co-researcher participants in PVM are inevitably both personal and ‘professional’. Over the years we (the university-based Networks for Change team) got to know the SIFs individually on a personal level. We met their parents and siblings, talked about their plans for the future, and listened when they were having trouble with friends or classmates. We learned that some of them have beautiful singing voices, others are spoken-word poets, and which of them have a wicked sense of humour. Nkonzo, Professor Moletsane (PI), and I had phone calls and exchanged text messages with them in between workshops when they wanted to share exciting news, advice, or just someone to listen. In studies using a more traditional qualitative approach in which contact between researcher(s) and participants is limited and the time-frame short, a greater distance can be and is often maintained between the parties. It is difficult to develop a close relationship in one or a few interactions. But, the relationship between researcher(s) and participants in participatory research adds to the ‘messiness’ of social research more generally. As discussed in Chapter Five, it also reinforces the crucial role of relational ethics in this approach to research. A relational approach to ethics emphasises the importance of “respect, dignity, and connectedness between the researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4) and stresses the importance of viewing participants as whole and complex subjects

rather than objects to be studied and from whom to extract data (Tracy, 2010). This study provides an example of how these kinds of relationships and the relational ethics involved can function in a real life situation.

9.5.1.2 Participatory Visual Methodology as a Tool for Community-based Policy-Making

The findings and outcomes of this study, particularly the signed community protocol to address EFM in *eMangweni* (see Chapter Eight), first, demonstrate the potential of PVM as process and product that can be used as a strategy to facilitate and/or support community-based policy-making. Through the long-term collaborative relationships that I and the rest of the Networks for Change research team developed in *eMangweni* with our community partner, Xoli, the ward councillor, and the SIFs' school principal among others, we were able to engage the traditional leadership and other members of the community in constructive dialogue and action around a contentious issue: EFM. Supported by the visual products and words of the girls themselves, even when they could not be physically present, it was more difficult for the traditional leadership and community to dismiss us and the case that we were trying to make against EFM in *eMangweni*. Further, as the adult members of the research team and with the help of our project partners, we were able to approach our engagements with the traditional leadership and the community with in-depth knowledge that we had co-produced with the SIFs during our PVM workshops and other engagements about the context, the practice of EFM, and the dynamics around it in *eMangweni*.

Second, this study has also demonstrated that while participation is crucial to attempts to facilitate and support social and/or policy change, it is not necessarily enough on its own and does not automatically or necessarily lead to such outcomes. As Williams (2009) observes, "social change does not roll in under the wheels of inevitability. On the contrary, we have to

organise for it, mobilise for it, struggle for it and indeed, plan for it” (p. 19). Had the study stopped at the co-production of knowledge about girlhood, femininities, and EFM and not actively pursued a strategy to stimulate and support social and policy change through the process of girl-led community-based policy-making, it is unlikely that the traditional leadership and community of *eMangweni* would have taken up the issue of EFM as something that needed to be addressed. After all, they had not done so before the Networks for Change and my study, nor had they expressed any interest or inclination to do so. Explicit and concerted effort must be directed towards achieving these outcomes. In the case of this study, this effort took the form of careful, patient, and deliberate engagement with the community about the issue on which the SIFs decided to focus their advocacy work (i.e., EFM) based on the foundation of the knowledge of this issue co-produced by the research team and co-researcher participants. In this process listening was pivotal – to the SIFs, our community partner and allies, but also to the traditional leadership and to members of the community who support EFM.

Third, this study contributes to the body of knowledge about participatory community-based policy-making (CBPM) and its potential to be a viable alternative to relying on government intervention and legislation to resolve unique, context-specific issues. In fact, the findings suggest that this kind of ‘from the ground up’ policy-making has the potential to be more effective in some circumstances than formal legislation (such as that related to the minimum legal age for marriage in South Africa), and other top-down approaches, including the delegation sent to *eMangweni* by His Majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu, King of the Zulu nation, to investigate and address EFM.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ See also Mwambene and Kruuse (2017) for a discussion of the tension between “communities’ lived realities and the constitutional imperatives of the right to practice one’s culture, as well as the rights to equality and dignity, specifically for women and the girl child in the context of ukuthwala” in relation to the landmark Jezile case discussed in Chapter Three.

9.5.2 Conceptual Contributions of the Study

The study makes several conceptual contributions to scholarship that deepen our understanding of girls' experiences of GBV, including EFM and their participation in identifying the strategies for addressing it.

9.5.2.1 Transitional 'Good Girl' in Process Femininity

The findings suggest that the girls in this study construct their femininities not simply in response to masculinities, but in relation to them and, perhaps even more importantly, in relation to other femininities. This transitional 'good girl' in process femininity is constructed very much in relation to the idealised traditional 'good girl' femininity. As the idealised construction of femininity in *eMangweni*, the traditional 'good girl' femininity is the form of femininity that comprises "the cultural expectations regarding the performance of 'proper' gender identities which shape everyday interactions" (Budgeon, 2014, p. 319). This 'proper' form of femininity is the form to which girls are expected to aspire, and against which girls are expected to measure themselves and be measured.

The SIFs' *'good girl' in process femininity* shares some of the characteristics of the idealised traditional femininity, but rejects others. For example, like successful traditional 'good girl' femininity, marriage and child-bearing are central to successful femininity for the SIFs' 'good girl' in progress femininity. Unlike the traditional 'good girl' femininity, however, the SIFs' 'good girl' in process femininity challenges the unquestioning and uncritical acceptance of, support for, and obedience to ideas about culture and tradition, including the practices like EFM. As I argued in Chapter Eight, this challenge is important evidence and site of agency for the SIFs. The SIFs' 'good girl' in process femininity also rejects the passive acceptance of the status quo that characterises the traditional 'good girl' femininity. Simply put, the SIFs do not

just accept their lot in life. Instead, they call into question girls' positioning in the lowest rungs of the hegemonic age- and gender- hierarchy in *eMangweni*. They challenge the commodification of girlhood and the idea that their value is determined only in terms of their potential for productive and reproductive labour. The 'good girl' in process femininity demonstrates a growing sense among the SIFs that they are entitled to challenge what they perceive and experience as harmful to them, and a growing recognition of their own value as human beings outside of what they might be able to do for their families and communities.

Linked to this, the SIFs' transitional 'good girl' in process femininity incorporates an ability to imagine a different life for themselves and other girls and young women, a life in which they have more options than only marriage and children, a life in which suffering is not inevitable. Importantly, too, the 'good girl' in process femininity creates space for the SIFs to see themselves as playing an integral role in the solution to the challenges faced by girls and young women, rather than just as helpless and vulnerable figures awaiting rescue. As part of the solution, the 'good girl' in process is not the girl-in-crisis, nor is she just the girl-as-saviour (see Chapter Three). The girl-as-saviour is based on constructions of 'good' girlhood that require girls to be hardworking, tireless, and selfless, even to their own detriment. Such constructions "are embedded in, rely on, and actively reinforce and extend, existing patriarchal structures and gendered relationships of power" (Wilson, 2015, p. 5). The girl-as-saviour is expected to take sole responsibility for not just her own (perceived) success or failure, but for saving her family and her community (Bent, 2013). The 'good girl' in process femininity not only challenges this idea, but incorporates an emergent sense that girls are entitled to hold their social ecology, particularly the adults in their community, accountable for the role they play in creating, re-creating, and/or supporting values, beliefs, and practices that make girls vulnerable to harm.

9.5.2.2 *Early and Forced Marriage and the Patriarchal Bargain*

The enthusiastic support of EFM from some of the women in *eMangweni*, including the women who organise *ukuphuma kwezintombi* (discussed in Chapters Six and Seven), mothers of girls and young women who coerce them into marriage or allow *ukuthwala ngenkani*, mothers of men who coerce girls and young women to marry their sons (or pressure their sons to marry), and even some girls and young women themselves can be seen as a kind of patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988). For Kandiyoti, the patriarchal bargain involves the different strategies that women use within the set of concrete constraints imposed by the local form of patriarchy to “maximise their security and optimise their life options” (1988, p. 274). Women and girls learn to ‘play’ within or manipulate the distinct ‘rules of the game’ that characterize different forms of patriarchy in order to derive the most favourable outcome (Kandiyoti, 1988). As I argue in Chapter Three, the intersection and interaction of different forms of inequality and oppression compound the marginalisation and vulnerability of women and girls, influencing both the form that patriarchy takes in particular contexts, and the patriarchal bargain(s) available to women and girls. In *eMangweni*, poverty and patriarchy seem to mutually exacerbate each other in a continuous bidirectional relationship that constrains girls and women’s power and agency and increases their vulnerability. In these circumstances, supporting, or at the very least not actively opposing EFM, can be seen as a way for girls and women to “maximise their security and optimise their life options” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274). In addition, the combination of the social rewards associated with the marriage of a daughter and the financial gains from *lobolo* that may relieve some of the burden of poverty are the benefits of this bargain with the patriarchy.

With *lobolo* (bride price) and *inhlawulo* (paying damages or retribution) involved, the bargain here is somewhat more literal than it may be in other cases. In their opposition to EFM, the SIFs are resisting the positioning of girls as commodities with which people can bargain.

9.5.2.3 Coerced Marriage as a Form of Forced Marriage

Accounts of EFM in South Africa tend to focus on *ukuthwala*, narrowly defined as the abduction of a girl or woman with the intention of forcing her into customary marriage. However, as discussed in Chapter Three, the distinction between *ukuthwala intombi* and *ukuthwala ngenkani* (Nkosi & Wasserman, 2014) is an important one. As defined by Nkosi and Wasserman (2014), *ukuthwala intombi* is characterised by traditional elements of Zulu culture, consensual, and does not involve any form of violence or sexual coercion. Unlike the historical practice of *ukuthwala*, according to Nkosi and Wasserman (2014), *ukuthwala ngenkani* involves violence, and a lack of consent. An exclusive focus on *ukuthwala* allows events like *ukuphuma kwezintombi* as a potential facilitator of EFM to continue unchecked and unaddressed.

Further, as the findings of this study suggest, marriages that are the result of any kind of coercion are a type of forced marriage and should receive more attention in attempts to understand, define, and address EFM. With the focus on *ukuthwala ngenkani*, coerced marriage is often overlooked as a form of forced marriage and, as a result, goes unaddressed. For the SIFs, coerced marriage is as serious a problem, if not more so, than *ukuthwala ngenkani*. Coerced marriages can be easily justified or defended as consensual because the girl or young woman (eventually) agreed to the marriage, did not refuse, or did not refuse vehemently enough. As the SIFs demonstrated in their visual products and explained during our discussions, in contexts like *eMangweni* where girls are expected to be passive, silent, and

acquiescent and where they have very little if any say in their own lives, even when girls do object, their objections are often ignored, silenced or dismissed. Coerced marriage is framed as a choice that girls and young women have made. However, as Kabeer points out, “*choice necessarily implies the possibility of alternatives*, the ability to have chosen otherwise” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437, emphasis in original). In addition to the social and material constraints on the choices available to them, coercion further restricts the possibility of alternatives and the ability of girls in *eMangweni* to make different choices.

The findings from my study also suggest that in *eMangweni*, poverty is often involved in coercion related to EFM through appeals to girls’ love for and sense of duty to their families. For example, the SIFs understand that *lobolo* would be a welcome windfall in families struggling with poverty and food insecurity, as would a reduction in the number of mouths to feed. Linked to this, the idealised construction of femininity in *eMangweni*, the traditional ‘good girl’ femininity, requires of girls that they demonstrate their successful femininity by being obedient, getting married, and selflessly doing what they can for their family and community. From this perspective, the SIFs experienced coerced marriage as a form of forced marriage.

9.5.2.4 Girls and Young Women as Knowers and Producers of Knowledge

Accounts of EFM appear regularly in the news media, and in reports from large development organisations or NGOs. These accounts are often framed within the girl-in-crisis discourse. In South Africa, responses from communities to criticism of EFM often begin and end with ‘it’s our culture’¹⁴⁷ and tend to be authored or at least heavily edited by adults. First, this study offers a unique understanding of the practice of EFM in a rural community in South Africa

¹⁴⁷ See footnote above

from the perspectives of girls and young women themselves. Through their visual products and the PVM process, the SIFs were able to tell their own stories, and communicate their own astute and insightful understandings of EFM in their community. The SIFs communicated unequivocally that, although they understand that the motivation behind these practices is sometimes protective in the circumstances, EFM is often harmful and increases girls and young women's risk of GBV, HIV, and being further entrenched in the poverty cycle. For the SIFs, EFM and related practices like *ukuhlonipha* are a symptom of and perpetuate the commodification of girls, violate their basic human rights (and various pieces of South African legislation), and are experienced by some girls as violent. The SIFs' accounts of EFM do not necessarily contradict those offered in the news media and/or reports or media content produced by development agencies or organisations, but they are their own experiences and understandings told in their own way. Importantly, although we cannot ever be sure, we (the university-based research team, Xoli, and the SIFs) believe that the fact that the objection to EFM and the call to end the practice in *eMangweni* came from the girls themselves played an important role in capturing the attention of the girls' parents, their community, and the traditional leadership and, eventually, led to action to address the issue.

Second, the findings of this study reinforce the understanding of children and young people as agentic social actors capable of understanding and analysing their own lives, experiences, and circumstances. From this perspective, they are capable of participating in the co-production of knowledge about their lives, experiences, and circumstances (James et al., 1998; Coyne & Carter, 2018; Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014). In this study, from the beginning, the SIFs were able to identify the key issues affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in *eMangweni*. Through the PVM processes, they were able to clearly articulate these issues, define the problem, and provide deep insights into, and astute analyses of the power

relations and dynamics in their community and the way they influence how they construct their femininities, and shape their risk.

Linked to the above, the findings also indicate that the PVM process was, if not central, then certainly important to facilitating the SIFs' communication about the issues affecting girls and young women in their community and the co-production of knowledge about those issues.

Treffry-Goatley et al. (2018, p. 58) have argued that

...without the, often complex, language of gender and rights required to explain the nuances and intricacies of this practice, how they view it, and what it reveals about their community, it would have been more difficult for the SIFs to communicate the same message through more conventional methods like interviews and focus group discussions.

Further, through the PVM process, the SIFs also became increasingly able to imagine strategies for addressing EFM, and their roles in these strategies. An important first step was the SIFs' own transformation (discussed in Chapter Eight), facilitated in and through the safe, non-judgemental spaces, both literal and figurative, created through the PVM process and the mutually respectful, trusting relationships that the SIFs and I (and the rest of the Networks for Change project team) built.¹⁴⁸ Building on this step, we then began the process of girl-led community-based policy-making discussed in detail in Chapter Eight. This process involved using the knowledge that was co-produced by the SIFs and me and the research of the Networks for Change research team as well as the visual products that the SIFs created to engage with the community in eMangweni and the tradition leadership about EFM. The process resulted in

¹⁴⁸ Importantly, also among the SIFs themselves, between the SIFs and Xoli (our community partner), and the SIFs and other members of the Networks for Change research team.

a community protocol to address EFM in eMangweni signed by the iNkosi on behalf of the Amangwe Nation in March 2020 (see Appendix E).

9.5.2.5 Distributed Agency and Intergenerational Partnerships

Distributed agency, as conceptualised by Campbell and Mannell (2016), allows for the smaller, covert, or less conventional strategies that girls and women use to exercise agency in contexts where their agency is heavily constrained to be recognised. This understanding of agency incorporates knowledge of the constraints on girls' and women's agency in particular contexts and calls for the inclusion of the perspectives of women themselves and their lived realities. In this way, the concept of distributed agency aligns more closely with the kind and degree of agency women can achieve in their day-to-day lives (Willan et al., 2019). Understanding the realities of their lives, the constraints on women's agency and varied ways in which they exercise their agency across diverse contexts is necessary for the development of context-relevant, responsive, and effective policies, programmes, and interventions designed to aid and/or support them. The findings in this study suggest that understanding the nuances of the SIFs' agency in relation to EFM is essential to successfully avoiding the 'poor fit' between the SIFs' lived realities, my analysis, and work towards addressing EFM in their community.

Moletsane (2018, p. 235) argues that

... in contexts that are hostile to girls and young women due to unequal gender norms, girls are often silenced, and activism is met with disapproval and even violence. Where activism does occur, the voices of girls and young women engaged therein are often ignored.

The SIFs have portrayed this silencing in their visual products, and have talked about it in post-screening and participatory data analysis workshops. Through their cellphilms and digital

stories and their discussions about and analyses of these visual products, the SIFs demonstrated that they recognized the constraints on their agency imposed by the intersecting issues of poverty, ideas about culture, and gender inequality. They also alluded to a feeling that they were unable to do much if anything about their circumstances. Indeed, prior to joining the Networks for Change project, in which this study was located, the SIFs had little or no opportunity for activism. Through their participation in the PVM process, however, and particularly through the partnership and collaboration with the university research team and our community partners, particularly Xoli, the SIFs were able to recognize and exercise their agency along a continuum of resistance (Campbell & Mannell, 2016). Evidence of this agency ranged from what might appear from the outside to be the simple act of identifying EFM as a key issue affecting the safety and well-being of girls and young women in their community to presenting their digital story about forced marriage at a community dialogue in front of members of the traditional leadership and hundreds of community members.

Through the partnership and collaboration between the SIFs, the university-based research team, and our community partners, the PVM process created a space in which each partner was able to leverage their knowledge and capital towards achieving a common goal. As researchers in the project, “we relied on the contextual and experiential knowledge of the [SIFs] to guide the project” (Haffejee et al., 2020, p. 29). Afterall, the SIFs brought to the partnership and collaboration their knowledge about and understanding of the community and the dynamics around EFM.

Edell et al. (2016) argue that the role of adults in girl-led work is to provide the “scaffolding or support, resources and infrastructure to ensure actions and campaigns run efficiently” (p. 294). In this project, the girl-led community-based policy-making process described and discussed

in this thesis is a good example of this. For example, as the adult members of the research team, we brought with us knowledge, resources, and skills to build capacity among the SIFs. Importantly also, we brought with us a kind of capital due to our ages, our status as outsiders, and, in the case of the PI, a senior professor at the university, also a level of prestige that we used to facilitate access to policy-makers and -implementers, including the traditional leadership, that they would otherwise not have had.

9.5.2.6 Creating Space for Reflective Nostalgia

As I argued in the previous chapter, unlike restorative nostalgia, reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001) may be a useful tool in discussions about culture, tradition, and potentially harmful practices linked thereto. Restorative nostalgia is a kind of ‘return to our roots’ remembering of what are thought of as the simpler, happier times of the past. It is, however, in reality “a longing for [a way of life] that no longer exists [and possibly] has never existed” (Boym, 2001, p. xiii in Moletsane, 2013, p. 20). Moletsane (2013) argues that restorative nostalgia is underpinned by two self-reinforcing narratives that together serve to produce and support the idea that culture is coherent, immutable, and unassailable. The first is a ‘going back to our roots’ and restoring ‘the good old days’ narrative; the second is that culture and tradition are under overt and covert attack and need to be protected and preserved (Moletsane, 2013). This kind of nostalgia is difficult to challenge for (at least) two reasons. First, it is based on the mistaken belief that ‘culture’ is intact, uniform, and immutable. The imagined better time in the past for which people long is assumed to be unreservedly ‘good’ or positive which allows ‘culture’ to become unassailable and precludes any possibility of critical engagement (Moletsane, 2011, 2013). Second, restorative nostalgia is a response to both real and imagined overt and covert attacks on peoples’ ways of life (Moletsane, 2011, 2013). In South Africa, with its history of colonialism and apartheid, this threat was very real. In present day South Africa, the real and/or

perceived threat of increasing modernisation and the influence of the West to ‘culture’ looms large. As a result, any critique or questioning of ‘culture’ or the practices associated with it is considered untraditional and is met with suspicion, even hostility. The initial response of the traditional leadership and some members of the community to our attempts to discuss EFM is an example of restorative nostalgia. Indeed, there were a number of *iziNduna* (headmen) and members of the community who seemed to continue to resent what they appeared to view as our interference with their culture. For example, as discussed in Chapter Eight a number of people spoke in support of EFM during community engagement meetings, stating that it was part of culture and not harmful, that they did not want to change their culture.

Reflective nostalgia, in contrast, acknowledges peoples’ desire to remember and honour the past, but allows them to “view that ‘past’ critically, and to make it ‘usable’” (Moletsane, 2013, p. 54). As discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter Eight), during one of our community engagement meetings in *eMangweni*, the ward councillor argued that it is necessary for the community of *eMangweni* to think about, even reconsider, some of the ideas and practices (like *ukuthwala ngenkani* and early marriage) that have become so normalised that they are allowed to continue without question. During this same meeting a member of the community observed that in *eMangweni*, EFM is a practice that was made into a tradition. These examples of reflective nostalgia contributed to the strength of the argument against EFM and thus to the eventual outcome of the protocol to address EFM in *eMangweni*. This suggests that using reflective nostalgia might be a useful tool for preventing or reducing suspicion and hostility in response to efforts to engage in critical discussions about culture and tradition. Importantly, however, to effectively use reflective nostalgia in this way, it must form part of a collaborative, participatory process. Excluding people from conversations about what they understand to be

their own culture, sacred and unassailable as many people believe it to be, is unlikely to have the desired effect.

9.5.3 Theoretical Contribution of the Study

As discussed above and in previous chapters, I used feminist postcolonial theory to frame my overall approach to the study. As a white, English-speaking researcher, and a feminist, working in the postcolonial and post-apartheid context of South Africa with Black African girls in a rural context, the attention to power relations and the historical, social, and economic context that feminist postcolonial theory requires of studies framed by it was indispensable in my efforts to do ethical, collaborative research with this marginalised group of people.

With this in mind, as I was reading the literature about girlhood(s), femininities, and international development, I realised that I was reading it from a particular perspective. Located in the global South, I could not help but notice how the global South in general and girls in the global South in particular were described and positioned in the literature. As I read, I began to ask: *Who is telling the story of girlhoods in the global South? What story are they telling and to whom? Why are they telling this particular story in this particular way?* Knowledge, constructed through and presented in literature, is not neutral, ahistorical, or apolitical; it encodes, produces and reproduces power relations. What questions are asked, how they are asked, how the data is interpreted and the findings presented are all value-laden and subjective decisions that are made by researchers, academics, politicians, and practitioners from a particular perspective with certain assumptions and, often, intentions. My reading of the literature highlighted how theory and knowledge produced in the global North continues to be privileged and considered to be legitimate and valuable (Connell, 2007; Piedalue & Rishi, 2017). This continued privileging reproduces the unequal power relations between the global

North and the global South established in and through the colonial project, contributing in no small way to epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988).

In an attempt to disrupt this, I drew on feminist postcolonial theory and its conceptual tools to help me to explore the power relations encoded in the literature. I also used this theory and its conceptual tools in my reading of the literature to confront colonialist and neoliberal discourse and ideology, explore voice and representation, and disrupt the idea that theory and knowledge produced in and/or by the global North is more legitimate and can and should always be imported into and applied in the global South. Importantly, using feminist postcolonial theory as a lens through which to engage with the literature also enabled me to trouble the “common pattern of extracting “raw data” ... from the South or from colonized peoples and feeding this data through the mill of social theory (always located in Northern institutions, intellectual histories, and/or geographies)” (Piedalue & Rishi, 2017, p. 553). It was for these reasons that I decided to present my theoretical framework in this thesis before the literature review, and reflecting on this decision now almost at the end of this thesis and of my PhD journey, I stand by it.

9.6 Implications

As I argued in Chapter One, and throughout this thesis, developing an understanding of how girls construct their femininities in contexts of rurality, poverty and GBV (including EFM), and how they position themselves in relation to risk, vulnerability, and agency, is key to problematising the incomplete and limiting girl-in-crisis discourse and the narratives arising from it. Problematising this discourse has important implications for the development of alternative narratives which reflect girls’ lived experiences, and acknowledge and make available to them, subject positions in which their agency is recognised in relation to the

material conditions in which they live their lives, and the social and structural constraints with which they contend. The development of such alternative narratives has implications for research and programming aimed at supporting girls' health and well-being in sustainable, holistic, responsive, and context-relevant ways.

Policies, programmes, and interventions that are designed based on one-dimensional and inaccurate knowledge about the lived realities of girls in the global South, fail to take into account contextual factors that shape and perpetuate girls and young women's vulnerability and constrain their agency in contexts of adversity. This failure results in a poor fit between such policies, programmes, and interventions, and the needs of the girls and young women they are purportedly designed to support and assist. They therefore have little to no chance of success. Moreover, these policies, interventions and programmes may, in fact, contribute to, even exacerbate, girls and young women's vulnerability and oppression. They do so by placing all of the responsibility of their success and failure on girls; failing to recognise and build on the kinds of agency that girls and young women do have and the ways in which they can and do exercise it. This approach fails to hold girls and young women's social ecologies and broader institutions and structures of power accountable for the role that they play in sustaining and perpetuating vulnerability; and offers solutions that are not realistic in the contexts in which they are intended to be applied. This study has demonstrated the importance of collaborating with girls and young women in meaningful ways in efforts to understand their lived realities and how they can be supported in holistic, sustainable, context-relevant ways.

9.7 Implications for Future Research

The study reported in this thesis has implications for future research. First, work that aims to work with the tensions around understandings of culture and tradition such that those practices,

like EFM, that are considered fundamental to culture and tradition but may no longer serve their original purpose and may, in fact, be harmful to those involved, is needed. For example, the findings, particularly those related to the process of girl-led community-based policy-making (see Chapter Eight) indicate that it is worth investigating how reflective nostalgia might be used as a tool to engage stakeholders in constructive dialogue about ideas about and understandings of culture which preclude critical engagement and contribute to the vulnerability and risk of girls and women.

Second, as discussed above, reflective nostalgia seems to offer opportunities for use as a tool to engage communities in constructive critical dialogue about ideas about culture and tradition, particularly in relation to beliefs and practices, like *ukuthwala ngenkani*, that may be harmful. Future research is needed to explore this potential. As discussed in Chapter Eight, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the study shortly after the protocol had been signed. We had intended to engage in activities to raise awareness about the protocol in the community and monitor its implementation. We had also begun discussions with other traditional leaders in KwaZulu-Natal and the provincial house of traditional leaders about taking a similar approach to community-based policy-making in other communities. In this work, we would explore ways to encourage reflective nostalgia and more and use it more deliberately and intentionally as a tool in our work with communities to stimulate social and policy change around practices like EFM which may be or are harmful to those involved.

Third, as discussed in Chapter Eight, COVID-19 and its lockdown restriction came just after the community of *eMangweni* had accepted the *Reporting and Response Protocol on early and forced marriage in eMangweni* and it was signed by the *iNkosi* on behalf of the community. The Networks for Change had planned for 2020 to be dedicated to the pilot implementation of

the protocol in this community and to document what works and what does not work. Such piloting and a study linked to it is crucial if we are to better understand community-based policy-making as a strategy for addressing context-specific challenges to the safety of girls and young women in communities. Such a study would investigate and document the use (or not) of the community protocol to address EFM and how effective it is or is not in reducing the incidence of EFM in eMangweni. The study would also explore how to work with the community to gain their support for the protocol and its effective implementation.

9.8 Positionality and Reflexivity: Situating myself after the study

My experiences in the Networks for Change project and this PhD study indicate that reflexivity, specifically focusing on positionality and power is fundamental to both feminist and participatory approaches to research. In Chapter One of this thesis, I provided an account of my positionality, aware that it could only ever be a partial and situated account of something that is inherently uncertain and shifting (Wiebesiek & Treffry-Goatley, forthcoming). I was also aware of how practicing reflexivity through strategies like peer debriefing and writing reflexive field notes was central to how I approached my study and the decisions made throughout it. Acknowledging my positionality and the kinds of power and privilege associated with it was necessary, but not sufficient. As Spivak (1988) has observed, “making positions transparent does not make them unproblematic” (p. 6). I therefore aimed to go beyond a kind of transparent reflexivity which assumes a “transparently knowable self” that is independent of a “transparently knowable context” (Rose, 1997, p. 316). To do so, I acknowledge the messiness of social research and try to recognise the ways in which I, as the researcher, am entangled in every part of the research process. Throughout the research process, I was reminded of the uncertain, shifting nature of positionality and identities. There were times when the rest of the university-based research team and I were positioned as more powerful than our

co-researcher participants. At these times it was incumbent upon us to ensure that we did not exploit this power even unintentionally. There were other times when we were positioned as less powerful and needed to recognise this and step back.

I also became aware that, whatever my intentions and hopes were for the relationships between me and the SIFs, and other members of the community including the traditional leadership, I had very little control over how I was positioned by them in our relationships and interactions. For example, I wanted to have trusting, respectful relationships with the SIFs in which they felt comfortable to discuss even taboo topics with me, ask questions that they might not be able to ask other adults in their lives, and challenge me and debate with me about things about which we did not necessarily agree. I was aware that there were barriers to developing this kind of relationship with the SIFs including our obvious and not insignificant differences (race and class) and the power differentials encoded in those differences, and the expectation of children and young people in the SIFs' community to remain silent around adults, to refrain from challenging or disagreeing with them, and to be unquestioningly obedient. Although over time I believe we did develop this kind of relationship with each other, it was apparent fairly early on in our work together that it would largely be the SIFs who would determine the nature of our relationships and the pace at which they developed. My role was to be consistently reliable, non-judgemental, and trustworthy, and to respect the pace at which the SIFs were comfortable for our relationship(s) to proceed.

From the beginning of my study, I was very concerned that my very obvious and visible outsider status as a white, urban-dwelling, English speaking adult would be a barrier to relationship building with the SIFs and efforts to facilitate and support social and/or policy change. I was also concerned that because of the differences between me and the SIFs and my

outsider status, and, aware of the need to be sensitive to power relations and avoid inadvertently reproducing these, I was perhaps not the most appropriate person to be doing the work that I was doing. Simultaneously, however, I also felt that there are ways in which excluding myself from working with people who are different from me in terms of age, race, class, gender, sexual orientation and myriad other social identity markers reinforces these power relations and exacerbates the divides that these differences create. To put it simply, suggesting that white South Africans and Black South Africans cannot work with and around their differences underestimates peoples' ability to find a way of communicating with each other across these divides, even bridging them, in constructive ways that are mutually beneficial, and precludes any hope of being able to build social cohesion and a less divided society. For example, there are ways in which my outsider status made it easier for the SIFs to feel comfortable to critically engage with and critique ideas about culture and tradition in their community, the practices and behaviours supported by the ideas, and how this made them feel. Fairly certain that I had no great personal investment in traditional practices like *lobolo*, *inhlawulo*, and *ukuthwala*, the SIFs did not seem to feel the need to be concerned that I might have a negative or judgement reaction to their critiques of these practices. Interestingly, our differences were often also a source of humour (usually at my expense) for me and the SIFs. We often laughed together at my poor isiZulu and my ignorance about Zulu 'culture' in a way that, I believe, contributed to lowering the power gradient between us and bridging the gaps in our very different life experiences. Although difficult and imperfect, that it is possible to work with, around, and in spite of our differences to co-produce knowledge and towards social and policy change is a source of great hope for me not only in the context of participatory research, but also in society more broadly.

Linked to this, a surprising outcome of my reflexivity throughout the study was how I came to understand (my) privilege as something that could be leveraged in efforts to secure a favourable outcome for the people with whom we work. The discomfort here is that doing so does not disrupt, but in some instances reinforces, the immediate power relations in which this privilege is produced. However, as this study demonstrates, it is possible to use one's "privilege, power, and access to resources to change the systems that keep people oppressed" (Kendall, 2013, p. 180). For example, as adults and researchers from the university, particularly the PI of the Networks for Change project, Professor Moletsane, we were able to use our positions to access stakeholders including the traditional leadership, the Commission for Gender Equality, and the National Prosecuting Authority during the girl-led community-based policy-making process. It is unlikely that the SIFs would have been able to access these structures (and individuals) on their own. Not only were we able to gain access to these stakeholders, they also listened to us where they may not have taken the time to listen to a group of adolescent girls. had access to stakeholders

It was not in the least surprising to me that the SIFs proved to be such astute and insightful observers and analysts of their own lives and contexts. Nor was it surprising that I learned a great deal from them not just in relation to answering my research questions, but also about uncompromising commitment to social justice, resilience, and the courage to be afraid and do what it is necessary anyway. As such, my PhD journey has been nothing less than transformative for me.

9.9 Conclusion

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power... How [stories] are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are

really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.

(Adichie, 2009, 09:37-10:15)

I began this thesis with the story of the moment that I realised what my PhD study would be about and to some extent, it has told the story of my PhD journey. It is a story about a study designed by an almost middle-aged white, urban-dwelling woman that aimed to work with Black African adolescent girls from a rural area in South Africa to understand from their perspectives how they construct and reimagine their femininities in a context of poverty, GBV, and rurality and to investigate how PVM might be used to engage girls and young women in challenging the hegemonic gender relations that constrain the choices available to them. It is a story that began, somewhat ironically, with the words of a middle-aged white man. Because this is my PhD thesis, the final decision about interpretation and how the story of this study that aimed to be participatory and collaborative is told is, ultimately, mine. With this power comes the responsibility to take heed of issues of voice and representation. Although flawed, I have made every effort to create space in this thesis for the SIFs' stories of girlhood to be told in their own words, with minimal editing from me. This was particularly important given my focus on challenging the colonialist, racialised, one-dimensional, incomplete single story of the girl-in-crisis.

Linked to this, using feminist postcolonial theory to frame my overall approach to the study and PVM to work with the SIFs aided me in my efforts. This theoretical and methodological framing also enabled to me to explore with the SIFs how gender converges with other social structures such as rurality, poverty, culture, historical context, and local and global relations of

power and co-produce with them nuanced, non-essentialist accounts of how adolescent girls in a rural community in South Africa construct their femininities.

Finally, this study has also demonstrated that girls are so much more complex and multi-faceted than the girl-in-crisis discourse would have us believe. To really support the health and well-being of girls and young women in the global South it is imperative that we collaborate with girls, and listen to girls' stories, told by girls themselves. Of programmes like the Girl Effect, Switzer (2013, p. 351) asks "what story do they tell about girls and girlhood [in the global South]?" I hope that the story that I have told in this thesis does justice to the girls and young women who shared theirs with me.

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Appendix A



11 April 2016

Prof R Moletsane
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Prof Moletsane

Protocol reference number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

Project Title: Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-led 'from the ground up' policy-making to address: Sexual violence in Canada and South Africa

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 3 November 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Prof R Moletsane & Dr Claudia Mitchell
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyser Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Funding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville



05 March 2020

Prof R Moletsane
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Prof Moletsane

Protocol reference number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

Project Title: Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-led 'from the ground up' policy-making to address: Sexual violence in Canada and South Africa

Approval Notification – Recertification Application

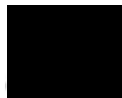
Your request for Recertification dated 28 February 2020 was received.

This letter confirms that you have been granted Recertification Approval for a period of one year from the date of this letter. This approval is based strictly on the research protocol submitted and approved in 2019.

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

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

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Urmilla Bob
University Dean of Research

/dd

Cc Supervisor: Prof R Moletsane & Dr Claudia Mitchell
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyser Khumalo

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Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

Appendix B



08 September 2016

Dear Madam/Sir

My name is Professor Relebohile Moletsane. I work at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My research team and I are working on a project with Xoli Msimanga and Thembaletu Care Organisation. The project is called the *Networks for Change and Well-being*, and focuses on the safety of girls and young women in rural communities in South Africa. We have already started working in Khetani in Winterton, and we would like to include Loskop in the research as well. With Mrs Msimanga, we held a meeting at the Amangwe Tribal Authority on Friday, 02 September. At the meeting we explained our research, and got input from the community on what we intend to do. We would like to start our research in the Loskop area at Phutini Secondary School.

I am writing to ask for permission to recruit participants from your school. We would like to recruit approximately 15 girls in grades 8-10 to participate in workshops using creative methods such as drawings, photographs and short films. We would like to first meet with girls at the school who are interested in participating in the project, then invite their parents or guardians to a meeting to explain the project and what participation in the project will entail. We will ask for consent from each parent or guardian and assent from each girl before they will be able to participate in the project.

We do not believe in disrupting teaching and learning time, so we would like to arrange the first meeting with the girls at the school during break time, before or after school. All of the workshops would take place in the school holidays at Thembaletu Care Organisation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or the project co-ordinator, Ms Lisa Wiebesiek, should you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely

Professor Relebohile Moletsane
Professor & John Langalibalele Dube Chair in Rural Education
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X03
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South Africa
Tel: 031 260 3023
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Director: Centre for Visual Methodologies for Social Change <http://cvmsc.co.za>

Lisa Wiebesiek

Project Co-ordinator: Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-led 'from the ground up' policy-making to address sexual violence in Canada and South Africa

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Appendix C



INFORMED ASSENT FORM *Networks for Change and Well-being Project*

Good day, my name is Relebohile Moletsane. I am a researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am doing with a team of researchers looking at girls' safety in rural communities in South Africa. One of the places that we are working in is Loskop.

Introduction

This form, called an Informed Assent Form, will explain what this study is about. Please read this form or have it read to you. Before you decide if you would like to join this study or not, I want to explain the study, its risks, its potential benefits, and what you will be asked to do. You may ask questions as we discuss the study, so that you understand what the study is about. It is important you know that:

- your participation in this study is entirely voluntary;
- you can ask questions now or at any time during the study; and
- if you join the study, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study at any time.

Before you decide if you would like to join this study, I will explain:

- the purpose of this study;
- how the study may help you or others;
- any risks you may face while participating in this study; and
- what is expected of you during the study

Once you understand the study, and if you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign this assent form, and you will be given a signed copy of it to keep. This process is called informed assent. We will also send an Informed Consent Form for you to take home for your parents or caregivers to sign.

Purpose of the study

This study will enroll learners at Phuthini Secondary School. The purpose of the study is to use visual participatory methods to understand girls' safety in Loskop, and how to make Loskop safer for girls and young learners.

Study procedures

There will be a maximum of twenty participants in this study. Participants should be learners between the ages of twelve and nineteen. They need to be interested in participating in using creative methods to discuss girls' safety during workshops in the school holidays in 2016. Participants need to have the consent of their parent or legal guardian to participate in the study, and to give assent.

All of the research activities will be conducted by me, or the research team that you have already met.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3587) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4557)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

Possible risks

The possible risks associated with participation in the study are minimal. There may be things that you are uncomfortable talking about. You will not be forced to discuss anything that you do not feel comfortable discussing. You will remain anonymous, and your confidentiality will be protected by the use of pseudonyms that will be known only to me and the research team that you have already met.

Reimbursement

No one will receive any form of payment for participating in the study.

Confidentiality

We will treat all data with the strictest confidentiality. All study information or material will be identified only by individual participant code numbers or pseudonyms and will be kept confidential in a locked file drawer at the researcher's residence. This information or material will be available only to the research team. Your name will never be used in any publication or presentation about this study. No photographs or video footage in which you are recognisable will be used in any publication or presentation about this study without the prior consent of your parent or legal guardian, and your assent.

In addition to the research team, the data may be reviewed by the ethics committee.

Digital Recording

You will be asked to allow the research team to digitally record the workshops, so that the research team can make sure that these activities are being carried out correctly and that the research team understands what is being said by participants. The digital recording may take the form of voice recording or video recording. Each digital recording will be transcribed, and all recordings will be erased within two years of publication of study findings, or if there is no publication, no later than six years after the study has ended. Information from the recordings may be presented at professional meetings or in written articles, in which case no names or other personal identifiers will be used.

Digital recording is a requirement for study participation. All study activities will be confidential; you will be identified only by a unique number or pseudonym assigned to you, and no individual names will appear on the audio file or the transcript of the interview. No one, except the research team, will have access to any of the audio files or the transcripts of study activities. You can decide to withdraw from the study at any time. If you do not want the study activities to be digitally recorded, you are not eligible to participate in the research study, since it is important that the research team is able to listen to the digital recordings so as to understand exactly what is being said.

Alternative to study participation

The alternative to participating in this study is simply not to participate. If you choose not to participate in the study or choose to withdraw from the study, this will not affect you in any way.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3587) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4557)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za.

Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

Please feel free to contact the research co-ordinator about the study in the future, or to ask for any updates. We appreciate the time that you may take to participate in this study.

If you have any questions about this study or study procedures now or in the future, please call Lisa Wiebesek, who is the researcher and student at UKZN on 071 679 3069.

You may also call me, Professor Lebo Moletsane, the lead researcher at UKZN, at

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel: 031 260 1024
Fax: 031 260 7594
email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3387) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4337)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

You now have an opportunity to ask me questions about the project.

Do you have any questions?

YES ☐ [Researcher to respond to any questions]

NO ☐ [Researcher, go to the next question]

Do you agree to take part in the study?

YES ☐ [Researcher, ask the respondent to sign the consent form]

NO ☐ [Researcher, thank the interviewee and leave him/her]

Declaration of the participant

I understand the purpose of this study. I have read the above information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and any questions that I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I assent voluntarily to participate in this study and understand that I have the right to stop my participation at any time.

_____	_____	_____
Participant Print Name and Surname	Participant Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Print Name and Surname	Signature	Date
Person obtaining consent		

Participant Assent to digital recording

I have been informed that the study activities will be digitally recorded. I know that I can refuse to participate if I do not want to be digitally recorded. I voluntarily give permission for the study activities to be digitally recorded.

_____	_____	_____
Participant	Signature	Date
Print Name		

_____	_____	_____
Print Name and Surname	Signature	Date
Person obtaining consent		

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3587) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4557)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP



29 October 2016

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Relebohile Moletsane. I am a researcher at the University of KwaZulu Natal. Today, I am approaching you to request your consent for your child to participate in the **NAME** project. This project is led by the University of KwaZulu Natal (South Africa) and McGill University (Canada). Over six years (2014-2020), we will work with universities, government agencies, community-based organizations and young people in the two countries. One of the communities that we are working in is Loskop.

PROJECT GOALS:

1. to study how researchers and communities can work together to better understand girls' and young women's safety; and
2. to examine how different kinds of art created by young people in the community, such as stories, drawings, short movies and photography, can be used to influence community leaders and policy-makers to take action to make girls and young women more safe..

PROJECT ACTIVITIES: This is a long-term project. This means that if the young person in your care is willing to participate, it could last up to 24 months (10-12 sessions). During this time we will run interactive workshops with youth in this community. At these sessions, we will focus on how art and technology can be used to tell a story or express ideas and messages about safety for girls and young women. We will do different kinds of fun activities including photography, participatory video through cellphones, digital storytelling (ordinary people telling stories with digital technology), drawing and other visual art making). Over the next 24 months, the young person in your care will participate in these activities many times. The young people will be given supplies to use for free and they will be able to keep some of the things they make. They will also be able to use different kinds of tools and materials and get the chance to share their creations, experiences, and ideas with others. If it is okay with you, we would like to take pictures of their artwork for us to keep.

The young people will have an opportunity to talk about their artistic productions and what messages they are trying to get across. Some of the visual material may be exhibited or screened in local communities. As a part of this project the young people will also work with key community officials and policy-makers. With the support of the research team, the young people will organize viewings and exhibitions of their films and artwork. This is a way to start community discussions about issues of safety and to help young people shape policies about girls' safety.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact:

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Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Ethics Board approval number: H55/1631/015BNAP

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Participation in the study is completely voluntary. This means that you and/or your child are free to refuse participation or to withdraw at any time during the course of the study. You do not have to give consent for your child to participate in any activity. If you choose for your child not to participate in a particular workshop, but would still like them to have a discussion with one of our team members, we can arrange for your child to have a separate interview at another time and place. Before the start of all the sessions, we will make sure that the young people know that it is possible to withdraw from participating in any aspect of the study at any time during the project.

AUDIO RECORDING: We will audio record what the group says about the images and these audio recordings will later be transcribed (words written down). No one but the research team members will have access to these audio recordings. The audio recordings will be transcribed and after five years, will be destroyed. The documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the offices of the research team and copies will be destroyed five years after the end of the project. We may share these transcriptions with other researchers and collaborators in this study or at community meetings, but will remove any information from the document(s) that could be used to identify your child (identifying information) before we share them. The young people will never be asked to disclose any personal information that they do not want to.

SUBJECT SENSITIVITY: We understand that discussing issues of safety may be upsetting for some people. If your child feels upset because of the discussion or looking at images as part of the project, we have identified someone who is a trained counsellor with whom they can speak afterwards if needed. This person will be present at all the sessions we will have with the young people.

PAYMENT: The young people will not receive any monetary compensation for participating but we will make sure that there are refreshments during the workshop. In addition, they will also be able to keep some of the artwork they will make in the project.

RISKS: There are no known risk factors for participating in this study. We will make sure that your child feels comfortable; however, if your child feels upset or feels that she would like to talk further to an adult, we will make sure that there is time for follow up after the workshop.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3587) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4557)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

CONSENT

Holiday workshops 2016:

I will allow my child to participate in a 2-day drawing and photo workshop in June

Yes ___ No ___

I will allow my child to participate in the 4-day storytelling and video workshop in October

Yes ___ No ___

I will allow my child to participate in the long-term project for up to 24 months:

Yes ___ No ___

Photographs:

I allow the photograph my child produces to be to be viewed in public during exhibitions.

Yes ___ No ___

I allow photographs of my child to be viewed in public during exhibitions.

Yes ___ No ___

Videos:

I allow the videos my child creates to be viewed in public during exhibitions.

Yes ___ No ___

I allow videos my child appears in to be viewed in public during exhibitions.

Yes ___ No ___

Visual Art:

I allow the visual art (drawings/photos) my child creates to be viewed in public during exhibitions. Yes ___ No ___

Audio-Recordings:

I allow my child's voice to be audio-recorded during focus groups and workshops.

Yes ___ No ___

If your child does not wish to have their audio recorded, we will have one of our team members talk with them separately and their words will be written down on paper.

I allow my child to be interviewed one-on-one with a researcher.

Yes ___ No ___

YOUR CHILD'S NAME _____

YOUR NAME (Parent/Guardian): _____

YOUR SIGNATURE: _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____

Contact Information of Principal Investigators and Project Leaders:

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University of KwaZulu Natal
moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: +27 (0)31 260 3023
Fax: +27 (0)31 260 1598

Claudia Mitchell

James McGill Professor
McGill University
claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca
Tel: +00 (1)514 398 1318
Fax: +00 (1)514 398 4529

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact:

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Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

29 Ncwaba 2016

Mzali/Mbheki

Igama lami nguRelebohile Moletsane. Ngingumncwaningi eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal. Namhlanje, ngiza nesicelo sokuthola imvume yokuthi umntwana wakho abambe iqhaza ocwaningweni engilwenzayo olubheka ukuphepha kwentsha emphakathini. Lolucwaningo lwenziwa ngaphansi kweNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal (eNingizimu Afrika) kanye neNyuvesi yaseMcGill (eCanada- pheshaya kwezilwandle). Esikhathini esingalinganiselwa eminyakeni eyisithupha(2014-2020) sizobe sisebenzisana namaNyuvesi, izikhungo zikahulumeni, izikhungo zomphakathi kanye nentsha ephuma kula mazwe amabili. Omunye wemiphakathi esizosebenzisana nawo ngowaseLoskop.

Izinjongo zocwaningo

1. Ukubheka ukuthi abacwaningi nomphakathi basebenzisana kanjani ukuze baqondise kahle ukuphepha kwentsha; Kanye;
2. Nokuhlola ukuthi ubuciko, obufana nezindaba ezibhaliwe, imidwebo, amafilimu amafushane kanye nokuthwetshulwa kwezithombe, obenziwe yintsha yasemphakathini, kungasetshenziswa kanjani ukuthonya abaholi bomphakathi kanye nabaqambi benqubomgomo ukuze benze isiqiniseko sokuthi abesifazane baphephile.

Okuzokwenziwa kwiphrojekthi

Lephrojekthi yinde kakhulu. Loku kusho ukuthi uma uvumela umntwana wakho abambe iqhaza kuzothatha izinyanga ezingamashumi amabili nane. Sizobabona amahlandla angalinganiselwa kwayishumi kuya kwayishumi nambili. Ngalesi sikhathi sizokwenza izifundo zokuhlomisana ngolwazi nentsha yalo mphakathi. Kulezi zifundo kuzobe kubhekwa ukuthi ubuciko kanye nezobuchwepheshe kungasetshenziswa kanjani ekuxoxeni indaba noma ekudluliseni umbono kanye nemiyalezo ngezokuphepha kwentsha. Sizokwenza imisebenzi eminingi ethokozisayo njengokuthwebula izithombe, ukuthwebula ama-video ngamaselela, ukuxoxa izindaba usebenzisa izinto zobuchwepheshe, kanye nokudweba. Ezinyangeni ezingamashumi amabili nane ezizayo, umntwana wakho uzobamba iqhaza kule misebenzi echazwe ngenhla izikhathi ezingana. Abantwana bazonikwa izinsizakusebenza ukuze benze imisebenzi okudingeka ukuba bayenze kulezi zifundo. Eminye yemisebenzi abayenzile bazoyigcina. Bazosebenza ngezinsizakusebenza ezahlukahlukeni ukwenza imisebenzi yabo, futhi bazonikwa ithuba lokutshengisa abanye imisebenzi yabo babuye babelana ngolwazi noma ngabakufundile ngesikhathi

Uma unombuzo mayelana namalungelo noma nenhlalakaze yakho njengomuhlanganyeli walolucwaningo sicela unthintane no:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3587) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4557)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za.

Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

benza le misebenzi. Uma ungenankinga naloku, sizothanda ukuthatha izithombe zemisebenzi yakhe yobuciko azoyenza ukuze siyigcine.

Intsha izonikwa ithuba lokuxoxa ngemisebenzi yabo yobuciko bachaze ngemiyalezo abazama ukuyidlulisa ngayo. Eminye yemisebenzi yabo kuzobukiswa ngayo ezikhungweni zomphakathi. Njengengxenywe yale phrojekthi amantombazane kanye nabesifazane abancane bazosebenzisana nabaholi abaqavile emphakathini kanye nezikhulu zikahulumeni. Ngokusizwa yithimba labacwaningi, intsha izotshengisa ngemisibenzi yabo abayenzile yobuciko. Loku kuyindlela yokuqala izingxoxo emphakathini ngezindaba ezithinta ukuphepha nokusiza intsha ukuthi imibono yayo ibe nomthelela ekushintsheni kwenqubomgomo.

Ukubamba iqhaza okungenampopo

Akuyona impopo ukuthi ubambe iqhaza kulolu cwaningo. Loku kusho ukuthi wena nomntwana wakho ninganqaba ukuba yingxenywe yalolu cwaningo futhi umntwana angahoxa noma inini uma engasafuni ukuba yingxenywe yocwaningo. Awuphoqiwe ukuvumela umntwana wakho abambe iqhaza kunoma imuphi umsebenzi. Uma ukhetha ukuthi umntwana wakho angabambi iqhaza emisebenzini, kodwa uthanda ukuba axoxisane nelinye lamalunga ethimba locwaningo, kungahlelwa isikhathi nosuku sokuthi kwenzeke lokho. Ngaphambi kokuba kuqale lezi zifundo, sizozinisekisa ukuthi amantombazane nabesifazane abasebancane bayazi ukuthi bangahoxa noma nini kulolu cwaningo.

Ukuqoshwa kwezingxoxo

Izingxoxo zamaqoqo ngemifanekiso ziziqoshwa bese zibuye zibhalwe phansi. Akekho omunye umuntu ongalalela lezi zingxoxo ngaphandle kwaleli thimba labacwaningi. Izingxoxo eziqoshiwe zizobhalwa phansi bese kuthi emuva kweminyaka emihlanu zishatshalaliswe. Imiqulu ebhaliwe izogcinwa ekhabetheni elikhiyiwe ehovisi lethimba locwaningo bese ishatshalaliswe emuva kweminyaka emihlanu luphelile ucwaningo. Imiqulu sizokwabelana ngayo nabanye abacwaningi kanye nabanye esisebenzisana nabo kulolu cwaningo noma siyethule emihlanganweni yemiphakathi, kodwa ngaphambi kokuba sabelane ngayo sizosusa yonke imininingwane engahle iveze imidanti ngomntwana wakho. Amantombazane nabesifazane abasebancane ngeke baphoqwe ukuveza imininingwane ephathelene nabo uma bengathandi.

Ubucayi ngesihloko socwaningo

Siyaqonda ukuthi izingxoxo mayelana nezinto ezithinta ukuphepha zithanda ukuvusa uhlevane kwabanye abantu. Uma umntwana wakho engaphatheki kahle ngokuxoxwa ngezokuphepha noma ebuka imifanekiso emayelana nocwaningo, sizihlinzeke ngosonhlalakahle oqeqeshiwe ukuba axoxisane nalabo abangadinga usizo lwakhe. Lo sonhlalakahle uzobe ekhona ngaso sonke isikhathi kwenziwa lezi zifundo esizoba nazo namantombazane.

Inkokhelo

Uma unombuzo mayelana namalungelo noma nenhlalakaze yakho njengomuhlanganyeli walolucwaningo sicela unthintane no:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3587) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4557)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za.

Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/0158NAP

Incwadi yemvume

Eduze kwempendulo yakho faka uphawu olunje:

Izifundo ngamaholide:

Ngizomvumela umntwana wami ukuba abambe iqhaza kwizifundo zokudweba nokuthatha izithombe ezizothatha izinsuku ezimbili.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Ngizomvumela umntwana wami ukuba abambe iqhaza kwizifundo zokuxoxa indaba kanye nozokuqopha ividiyo ezizothatha izinsuku ezine.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Ngizomvumela umntwana wami ukubamba iqhaza kule phrojekthi ezothatha izinyanga ezingamashumi amabili nane.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Izithombe

Ngiyavuma ukuthi izithombe esizokwenziwa umntwana wami sitshengiswe emibukisweni yomphakathi.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Ngiyavuma ukuba izithombe zomntwana wami zibukwe/ zivezwe emibukisweni yomphakathi.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Amavidiyo

Ngiyavuma ukuthi amavidiyo enziwe ngumntwana wami atshengiswe emibukisweni yomphakathi.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Ngiyavuma ukuthi amavidiyo anomntwana wami angatshengiswa emibukisweni yomphakathi.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Imidwebo

Ngiyavuma ukuthi imidwebo eyenziwe ngumntwana wami itshengiswe emibukisweni yomphakathi.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Ukuqopha izingxoxo

Ngiyavuma ukuba izwi lomntwana liqhoshwe kumaqoqo noma ezifundweni.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Uma umntwana wakho engathandi ukuba aqoshwe, sizocela omunye wamalunga ethimba labacwaningi ukuba akhulume naye bese ebhala phansi inkulumbo yakhe.

Ngiyavuma ukuba umntwana wami enze inhlokomvo nomcwaningi.

Yebo..... Cha.....

Igama lomntwana:.....

Igama lomzali/ lombheki:.....

Ukusayina :

Usuku:

Uma unombuzo mayelana namalungelo noma nenhlalakaze yakho njengomuhlanganyeli walolucwaningo sicela unthintane no:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3587) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4557)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za.

Ethics Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

Appendix D



RELEASE FORM

By ticking the boxes, please indicate how you would like to share your cellphilm called _____:

- 1) My cellphilm can be archived in the *restricted section* of the CVSM's Archive at UKZN where only the research team will have access through a password.

YES

NO

- 2) My cellphilm can be viewed at public at exhibitions in my community.

YES

NO

- 3) My cellphilm can be viewed at public at exhibitions outside of my community.

YES

NO

- 4) I would not like to share my cellphilm with anyone.

YES

NO

Name of participant

Signature

Date

Contact Information

Prof. Relebohile Moletsane

University of KwaZulu Natal

moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: +27 (0)31 260 3023, Fax: +00 (1)514 398 4529

RELEASE FORM

By ticking the boxes, please indicate how you would like to share your digital story.

- 1) My digital story can be archived in the *restricted section* of the CVSM's Archive at UKZN where only the research team will have access through a password.

YES

NO

- 2) My digital story can be shared on the Networks for Change website (www.networks4change.ca).

YES

NO

- 3) My digital story can be shared on the CVMSC YouTube Channel.

YES

NO

- 4) My digital story can be viewed at public at exhibitions in my community.

YES

NO

- 5) My digital story can be viewed at public at exhibitions outside of my community.

YES

NO

- 6) I would not like to share my digital story with anyone.

YES

NO

Name of participant

Signature

Date

Contact Information

Prof. Relebohile Moletsane

University of KwaZulu Natal

moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: +27 (0)31 260 3023, Fax: +00 (1)514 398 4529

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact:

Ms. Phumelele Ximba (031 260 3587) OR Mr. Prem Mohun (031 260 4557)

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Ethic Board approval number: HSS/1631/015BNAP

Appendix E

Reporting and Response Protocol on early and forced marriage in eMangweni

Preamble

We, the people of eMangweni, herein represented by (Full name of iNkosi), in order to end the practices of early and forced marriage in eMangweni, do establish this reporting and response protocol on early and forced marriage.

The findings of research undertaken by the University of KwaZulu-Natal in partnership with Themba lethu Care Organisation and the Social Ills Fighters since 2016 have established that girls and young women in eMangweni experience early and forced marriages. Further, the girls and young women who participated in the research reported these practices as a form of gender-based violence, and as a barrier to their education and well-being. It is in response to these findings that this protocol has been collaboratively developed by stakeholders including the traditional leadership of eMangweni, members of the community, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Themba lethu Care Organisation, the South African Police Service, the National Prosecuting Authority, and the Commission for Gender Equality.

We, the people of eMangweni, agree to end the practices of forced and early marriage in our communities. In committing to ending these practices, we recognise that they are not in the best interests of individuals, mostly girls, but also their families and the community. We recognise too, that forced marriage constitutes Trafficking in Persons as defined in the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013) and is, therefore, a crime.

This protocol is founded upon principles that recognise the supremacy of human rights as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), especially the Bill of Rights. The protocol is anchored in the Constitution of South Africa and the legislative framework related to marriage in this country.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this protocol is to:

- a) end the practice of forced and early marriage and any associated practices in eMangweni;
- b) establish a system for the reporting of and response to forced and early marriage and any associated practices in eMangweni; and
- c) protect the best interest of the child as stated in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996)

1.2 The protocol

- a) determines who, when and under what circumstances a person, particularly a girl or young woman, can and cannot enter into marriage whether civil or customary in eMangweni;
- b) outlines the processes and procedures for dealing with cases of early and forced marriage in eMangweni; and
- c) outlines the consequences for individuals, hereafter referred to as perpetrators, who breach this protocol.

2. DEFINITIONS

In this protocol, unless the context indicates otherwise

“abuse of vulnerability” means any abuse that leads a person to believe that they have no reasonable alternative but to submit to exploitation, and includes but is not limited to, taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of that person resulting from— (a) the person having entered or remained in the Republic illegally or without proper documentation; (b) pregnancy; (c) any disability of the person; (d) addiction to the use of any dependence-producing substance; (e) being a child; (f) social or cultural circumstances; or (g) economic circumstances; as defined in the Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013);

“Kidnapping” means unlawfully and intentionally depriving a person of their freedom of movement and/or, if such person is a child, the custodians of their control over the child;

“eMangweni” means the eMangweni traditional community recognised as such in terms of Section 2 of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003);

“Care giver” means any person other than a parent or guardian, who factually cares for a child recognised as such in terms of the Children’s Act (Act No. 38 of 2005), and includes a foster parent, a person who cares for a child with the implied or express consent of a parent or guardian of the child, a person who cares for a child whilst the child is in temporary safe care, the person at the head of a child and youth care centre where a child has been placed, the person at the head of a shelter, a child and youth care worker who cares for a child who is without appropriate family care in the community, and the child at the head of a child-headed household;

“Child” means a person under the age of eighteen years as defined in the Children’s Act (Act No. 38 of 2005);

“Consent” means voluntary or uncoerced agreement;

“Coercion” means the action or practice of persuading a person to do something by using physical, psychological, emotional or financial force, threats or intimidation and includes, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Where the person submits to the marriage as a result of (i) the use of force or intimidation by the prospective spouse or any other person (ii) a threat of harm by the prospective spouse against any person;
- (b) where there is an abuse of power or authority by any person to the extent that one of the spouses are inhibited from indicating his or her unwillingness or resistance to the marriage, or unwillingness to participate in the marriage;
- (c) the abuse of a position of vulnerability as defined;
- (d) kidnapping / abduction.

“Damages” means the slaughtering of a goat and/or cow or cows and/or payment in cash as a form of reparation or justice in terms of customary law, whether known as *inhlawulo*, *inkomo yaMama* or by any other name;

“Early marriage” means the marriage of persons younger than eighteen years of age;

“Forced marriage” means a marriage concluded without the consent of one or both of the parties to the marriage as defined in the Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013), and includes *ukuthwala* and *ukuganisela*, and any associated practices; forced marriage can include other harmful traditional practices such as *ukuphuma kwezintombi*, *ukugenwa*, and any associated practices;

“Inkosi” means the Senior traditional leader, a traditional leader of a specific traditional community who exercises authority over a number of headmen or headwomen in accordance with customary law, or within whose area of jurisdiction a number of headmen or headwomen exercise authority as defined in the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003);

“Lobolo” means the property in cash or in kind, whether known as *lobolo*, *bogadi*, *bohali*, *xuma*, *lumalo*, *thaka*, *magadi*, *emabheka* or by any other name, which a prospective husband or the head of his family undertakes to give to the head of the prospective wife’s family in consideration of a customary marriage;

“Marriage” means the lawful marriage or civil union of two consenting adults concluded in terms of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (No. 120 of 1998), the Marriage Act (No. 25 of 1961), and the Civil Union Act (No. 17 of 2006);

“Perpetrator(s)” means all and any person or persons involved in the planning and/or execution of an early or forced marriage including but not limited to the parents of one or both parties;

“Stakeholders” means the traditional leadership of eMangweni, the South African Police Service (the South African Police Service), the community of eMangweni, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the Department of Social Development, Non-Government Organisations, and other interested individuals and organisations;

“Traditional Council” means a council established in terms of section 3 of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003) and includes traditional leaders and members of the traditional community selected by the senior traditional leader concerned and other members of the traditional community who are democratically elected; a traditional council includes a traditional sub-council established in terms of section 4B of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003);

“ukuthwala” means to carry off a girl for the purpose of marriage and any associated practice as defined in the South African Law Reform Commission Revised Discussion Paper 138 on the practice of *ukuthwala*; *ukuthwala* can also mean

“Victim” means any person who experiences forced and/or early marriage.

3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This protocol is informed by the following laws:

- a) The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996)
- b) The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (No. 120 of 1998);
- c) The Marriage Act (No. 25 of 1961);
- d) The Civil Union Act (No. 17 of 2006);
- e) The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (No. 32 of 2007)
- f) The Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005)
- g) The Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013)

The protocol is also informed by the South African Law Reform Commission Revised Discussion Paper 138 on the Practice of Ukuthwala, and the South African Law Reform Commission Issue Paper 35 on the Single Marriage Statute.

4. PRINCIPLES

The protocol is based on the following principles:

- a) Customary processes, practices and traditions must not violate human rights;
- b) Early marriages are not in the best interest of the child(ren) involved, families, and the community;
- c) A marriage is considered early marriage if one or both of the individuals entering into the marriage are below the age of eighteen;
- d) Forced marriages are not in the best interest of individuals, families, and the community, and are unlawful;
- e) a marriage is considered forced where either both or one of the parties to the marriage do not consent thereto;
- f) A marriage is considered forced if it takes place under any form of coercion as defined in this protocol;
- g) A marriage is considered forced if it has been arranged by parties other than the two individuals entering into the marriage without both the knowledge and consent of those individuals entering into the marriage;
- h) The payment of damages and/or lobolo does not legitimise early or forced marriage.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is agreed that

- a)

6. POLICY ON EARLY MARRIAGE

It is agreed that

- a) a person may not enter into a marriage before they have reached the age of eighteen years;
- b) a person who enters into a marriage must consent to that marriage and must not be coerced into that marriage;
- c) the payment of damages does not legitimise early marriage;
- d) a criminal case involving early marriage cannot be withdrawn because the matter has been resolved in a customary manner;

- e) parents, guardians or care-givers will not accept payment in any form including damages or lobolo in exchange for the withdrawal of a criminal case;
- f) school principals and Learner Support Agents will undertake to raise awareness at schools and to educate parents and learners in eMangweni about the practice of early marriage and this protocol via regular parents' meetings, workshops and school assemblies.

7. RESPONSE PROTOCOL IN THE EVENT OF EARLY MARRIAGE OR ANY ASSOCIATED PRACTICES

It is agreed that

- a) any person who becomes aware of or witnesses an early marriage or any associated practice as defined in this protocol, or plans relating to the execution of an early marriage or any associated practice will report such information immediately to the Inkosi;
- b) the Inkosi or a person delegated by him will immediately investigate the circumstances of such a report.

In the event that an early marriage has taken place, it is agreed that

- c) the Inkosi must report the matter to the South African Police Service;
- d) the South African Police Services and Inkosi must investigate whether the parties are of legal marriageable age and if not what offences have been committed in terms of the Children's Act;
- e) the South African Police Service and the Inkosi or a person designated by him must investigate whether or not both parties gave valid, legal consent to the marriage;
- f) the South African Police Service and the Inkosi or a person designated by him must investigate whether or not both parties parents gave consent to the marriage where required by the relevant legislation;
- g) the South African Police Service must investigate whether or not the marriage has been registered in terms of the Marriages Act (Act No. 25 of 1961) or the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (Act No. 120 of 1998) with the Department of Home Affairs;
- h) where the marriage was concluded in terms of the Marriages Act and involves a boy under the age of eighteen years and/or a girl under the age of fifteen years, the South African Police Service must investigate whether or not permission for the marriage to take place was granted by Minister of Home Affairs;
- i) where the marriage was concluded in terms of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act and involves a child under the age of eighteen years, the South African Police Service must investigate whether or not permission for the marriage to take place was granted by Minister of Home Affairs;
- j) The South African Police Services must report the matter to the Department of Social Development where either of the parties is a child;
- k) the Department of Social Development must investigate whether or not the child is in need of care and protection in terms of the Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005), take necessary steps to ensure the safety of the child and render necessary counselling services to the child;
- l) if it is established that the marriage is, in fact, a forced marriage, individuals are obliged to comply with section 8 of this protocol.

8. POLICY ON FORCED MARRIAGE

It is agreed that

- a) no person, of any age, shall be forced by any form of coercion to enter into a marriage without their consent;
- b) any marriage into which one or both parties have entered without the consent of both parties is considered to be a forced marriage;
- c) no agreement, settlement or payment of lobolo will be considered to render lawful a marriage entered into without the consent of both parties;
- d) the payment of damages does not legitimise forced marriage;
- e) a criminal case involving a forced marriage cannot be withdrawn because it has been resolved in a customary manner;
- f) parents, guardians or care-givers will not accept payment in any form including damages or lobolo for the withdrawal of a criminal case involving forced marriage;
- g) school principals and Learner Support Agents will undertake to raise awareness at schools and to educate parents and learners in eMangweni about the practice of forced marriage and this protocol via regular parents' meetings, workshops and school assemblies.

9. RESPONSE PROTOCOL IN THE EVENT OF FORCED MARRIAGE OR ANY ASSOCIATED PRACTICES

It is agreed that

- a) any person who becomes aware of or witnesses a forced marriage or any associated practice as defined in this protocol, or plans relating to the execution of a forced marriage or any associated practice will report such information immediately to the Inkosi and the South African Police Service;
- b) the South African Police Service and the Inkosi or a person delegated by him will immediately investigate the circumstances of the report.

In the event that a forced marriage has taken place, it is agreed that

- c) where sufficient evidence exists, the South African Police Service will immediately open a criminal case against the perpetrator(s);
- d) the South African Police Service must report the matter to the KZN Rapid Response Team (084 264 4780) or to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (0800 222 777),
- e) the South African Police Service must refer the matter to the Department of Social Development;
- f) the Department of Social Development must investigate whether or not the child is in need of care and protection in terms of the Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005), take necessary steps to ensure the safety of the child and render necessary counselling services to the child;
- g) the South African Police Service must refer the victim to and facilitate their transport to the nearest Thuthuzela Care Centre at Edendale Hospital, or the Crisis Care Centre at Estcourt Hospital for a medical examination;
- h) the Traditional Council will ensure that no payment of damages and/or lobolo or any associated practices takes place;

- i) a social worker must be present during all encounters between the South African Police Service, the Traditional Council, and the victim to ensure that no further trauma is experienced by the victim.

10. REVIEW

This protocol may be reviewed whenever necessary, but must be reviewed by stakeholders at least every two years.

11. APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

I, the undersigned, as the representative of the eMangweni traditional community, hereby approve the Reporting and Response Protocol on early and forced marriage in eMangweni.

Name	Identity Number	Signature	Date

Umbiko Nokungenelela Kwezokuganiswa Ngempopo Kwabasha eMangweni

Isingeniso

Thina, zakhamuzi zaseMangweni, lapha esimelwe (Igama eligcwele leNkosi), ukuze siqede izenzo zokuganiswa ngempopo kwabasha, sisungula lolu hlelo lokubika nokungenelela ekuganisweni ngempopo kwabasha.

Okutholakale ocwaningweni olwenziwe yiNyuvesi YaKwaZulu-Natal ibambisene ne-Thembalethu Care Organisation ne-Social Ills Fighters kusukela ngonyaka wezi-2016 ukuthi abesifazane abasebasha eMangweni baganiswa ngempopo. Okunye, ukuthi amantombazane nabesifazane ababambe iqhaza kulolu cwaningo babike lezi zenzo njengengxenywe yokuhlukunyezwa ngokobulili, futhi njengezinto ezibaphazamisa ezifundweni nasekuphileni kwabo kahle. Kuyingxenywe yokubhekana nokutholakale kulolu cwaningo ukuba kubanjiswane njengababambe iqhaza ukuze kwakhiwe lolu hlelo lwendlelakwenza okuhlanganisa nobuholi bendabuko baseMangweni, umphakathi, iNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal, i-Thembalethu Care Organisation, i-South African Police Service, i-National Prosecuting Authority, kanye ne-Commission for Gender Equality.

Thina bantu baseMangweni, siyavuma ukuqeda emphakathini wethu umkhuba wokushadiswa kwabesifazane besabancane futhi ngempopo. Ekuzibophezeleni ukuqedwa kwalezi zenzo, siyakuqonda ukuba azibhekelelwa izidingo zabantu, ikakhulukazi amantombazane kanye nemindeni yawo nomphakathi. Siyakuqonda futhi nokuthi ukushadiswa ngempopo kuhlange nokuShushumbiswa Kwabantu njengoba kuchazwa umthetho i-Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013) futhi ngokunjalo kuyicala.

Lolu hlelo lwenqubokwenza lusungulwe ngaphansi kwendlelakucabanga ehlonipha ukubaluleka kwamalungelo abantu njengoba kubekiwe ku-Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), ikakhulukazi i-Bill of Rights. Lokhu kusekelwe uMthethosisekelo waseNingizimu Afrika kanye nohlaka lwemithetho ephathelene nemishado kuleli lizwe.

1. INHLOSO

1.1. Inhloso yalenqubokwenza:

- a) Ukuqeda izenzo zokuganiswa ngempopo kwabasha nazozonke izenzo eziphathelele nalokhu eMangweni;
- b) Ukusungula uhlelo lokubika nokungenelela ekuganisweni ngempopo kwabasha nakho konke ukwenza okuphathelele nalokhu eMangweni; kanye
- c) Nokuvikela izidingo zengane njengoba kushiwo ku-Chapter 2 we-Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996)

1.2. Inqubokwenza

- a) Inquma ukuthi ubani, nini futhi ngaphansi kwaziphi izimo umuntu, ikakhulukazi intombazane noma owesifazane osemusha engangena noma angangeni emshadweni noma ngabe owesilungu noma owesintu eMangweni;
- b) Ichaza izinhlelo nezinqubo zokubhekana namacala okuganiswa kwabasha ngempopo eMangweni; kanye
- c) Ichaza imiphumela yabantu, abagcina bebizwa ngabenzi bokubi, abangayilandeli lenqubo

2. IZINCAZELO

Kulenkubokwenza, ngaphandle uma isimo sisho okuhlukile,

“**ukuhlukunyezwa kokungavikeleki**” kusho ukuhlukunyezwa okuholela ekutheni umuntu akholwe ukuthi akukho okunye angakwenza ngaphandle kokuthi avume ukuhlukunyezwa, futhi kufaka kodwa kungapheleli lapho, ukusebenzisa ubuthaka bomuntu okubangwa- (a) ukungena noma ukuhlala komuntu eNingizimu ngokungemthetho noma ngaphandle kwamaphepha okuyiwona; (b) ukukhulelwa; (c) nanoma yikuphi ukukhubazeka komuntu; (d) ukuluthela ekusebenziseni nanoma yiziphi izidakamizwa; (e) ukuba ingane; (f) izimo zenhlalo noma zamasiko; noma (g) izimo zomnotho; njengoba kuchaziwe ku-Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013);

“**ukuthumba**” kusho ukuphuca ngokungemthetho nangamabomu umuntu ilungelo lakhe lokuhamba la athanda khona futhi/noma, uma kuyingane, abayikhulisayo ekulawuleni ingane;

“**eMangweni**” kusho umphakathi wendabuko waseMangweni owaziwa ngaleli gama ngokuka-Section 2 we-Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003);

“**Umnakekeli**” kusho noma yimuphi umuntu ngaphandle komzali noma umbheki, onakekela ingane owaziwa ngalokhu ngokwe-Children’s Act (Act No. 38 of 2005), futhi kufaka onakekela ingane angayizali, onakekela ingane ngokugunyazwa umzali noma umbheki wengane, umuntu onakekela ingane ngesikhathi isagadiwe okwesikhashana, umuntu oseSikhungweni sokunakekela izingane nentsha lapho ingane ibekwe khona, umuntu osendaweni yokukhosela, umsebenzi osesikhungweni sokunakekelwa kwezingane nentsha onakekela ingane engenawo umndeni emphakathini kanye nengane esekhaya eliphethwe ingane;

“**Ingane**” kusho umuntu ongaphansi kweminyaka eyishumi nesishiyagalombili njengoba kuchaziwe ku-Children’s Act (Act No. 38 wezi 2005);

“**Imvume**” kusho isivumelwano ngokuzithandela noma ungaphoqiwe;

“**ukuphoqa**” kusho isenzo noma ukwenza umuntu ukuthi enze okuthile ngokusebenzisa isandla, ngokwengqondo, ngokomuzwa noma ngokuphoqwa imali, ukusongelwa noma ukusatshiswa futhi kufaka, kodwa kungapheleli la, lokhu okulandelayo:

- (a) lapho umuntu ezinikela emshadweni ngenxa yokuphoqwa (i) ukusetshenziswa kwamandla noma ukusatshiswa yilo azoshada naye noma omunye umuntu (ii) ubungozi bokulinyazwa komunye umuntu yilo azoshada naye;
- (b) lapho kukhona ukusetshenziswa kabi kwamandla noma komthetho yinoma yimuphi umuntu kuze kufike la oyedwa ethamba khona anqatshelwe ukukhombisa ukungavumi noma ukunqaba ukugana, noma ukunqaba ukushada;
- (c) ukuhlukumeza olimazekile njengoba kuchaziwe;
- (d) ukuthumba/ ukuthwala.

“Inhlawulo” kusho ukuhlathiswa kwembuzi kanye/ noma inkomo kanye/noma ukukhokhelwa imali njengesinxephezelo noma ubulungiswa ngokomthetho wosiko noma ngabe kwaziwa njengenhlawulo, *inkomo kaMama* noma elinye igama;

“Umshado wabasha” kusho ukuganiswa kwentsha eneminyaka engaphansi kweyishumi nesishiyagalombili;

“Ukugana okuphoqiwe” kusho ukugana okwenziwe ngaphandle kwesivumelwano soyedwa noma sababili sokungena emshadweni njengoba kuchaziwe ku-Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013), futhi kufaka *ukuthwala nokuganisela* kanye nanoma yini ephathelene nalokhu kwenza; ukuganiswa ngempoko kungafaka nokunye okuyisiko okunobungozi okufana *nokuphuma kwezintombi* kanye nokuphathelene nakho;

“Inkosi” kusho umholi wendabuko oMkhulu, umholi wendabuko womphakathi othize ophethe abaholi besilisa nabesifazane ngokomthetho wendabuko, noma ondawo yakhe inabaholi besilisa nabesifazane abaphethe njengoba kuchaziwe ku-Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003);

“Lobolo” kusho imali noma okunye onakho, noma ngabe kwaziwa njengelobolo, bogadi, xuma, lumalo, thaka, magadi, emabheka noma ngelinye igama, lapho ozoba umyeni noma inhloko yekhaya enikeza inhloko yekhaya lalapho ezothatha khona umakoti ngokwesintu;

“Ukugana” kusho ukugana okusemthethweni noma ohlanganise ngokusemthethweni abantu ababili asebekhulile ngokuthanda kwabo wenziwa ngokwe-Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (No. 120 of 1998), the Marriage Act (No. 25 of 1961), kanye ne-Civil Union Act (No. 17 of 2006);

“Umenziwo(abanzibo)bubi” kusho bonke abantu nanoma ubani obandakanyekayo ekuhleleni kanye/noma ekuganiseni intsha ngempoko okufaka kodwa kungapheleli lapho abazali boyedwa noma babo bababili.

“Ababambiqhaza” kusho ubuholi bendabuko baseMangweni, Umbutho Wamaphoyisa aseNingizimu Afrika, umphakathi waseMangweni, uMnyango WezokuBusa Ngokubambisana Nezindaba Zomdabu, uMnyango Wezokuthuthukiswa koMphakathi, Izinhlangano ezizimele, nabantu nezinhlangano ezinentshisekelo.

“UMkhandlu Wabaholi Bendabuko” kusho umkhandlu owasungulwa ngokuka Section 3 we-Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003) ofaka abaholi bendabuko namalungu omphakathi wendabuko abakhethwe umholi wendabuko omkhulu namanye amalungu omphakathi wendabuko abakhethwe ngokwentando yeningi; umkhandlu wendabuko ofaka umkhandlu omncane wendabuko ngokuka Section 4B we-Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003)

“ukuthwala” kusho ukuthwala intombazane ngenhloso yomshado nakho konke ukwenza kwesintu njengoba kuchaziwe ku- South African Law Reform Commission Revised Discussion Paper 138 ngokuthwala; ukuthwala kuphinde kusho...

“ISisulu” kusho noma yimuphi umuntu oseke waphoqwa futhi/ noma waganiswa esemusha

3. UHLAKA LWEZOMTHETHO

Lenqubokwenza yaziwa ngaphansi kwalemithetho elandelayo:

- a) The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996)
- b) The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (No. 120 of 1998);
- c) The Marriage Act (No. 25 of 1961);
- d) The Civil Union Act (No. 17 of 2006);
- e) The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (No. 32 of 2007)
- f) The Children’s Act (Act No. 38 of 2005)
- g) The Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act No. 7 of 2013)

Lenqubokwenza iphinde ilandele i-South African Law Reform Commission Revised Discussion Paper 138 kwezokuthwala, kanye ne-South African Law Reform Commission Issue Paper 35 ku-Single Marriage Statute.

4. IZIMISO

Lenqubokwenza isuselwa kulezimiso ezilandelayo:

- a) Inqubo yoSiko, imisebenzi namasiko akufanele ahlukumeze amalungelo abantu;
- b) Ukuganiswa usemusha akuyicabangeli ingane/ izingane ezithintekayo, imindeni kanye nomphakathi;
- c) Ukugana kubukwa njengokuganiswa kwabasha uma umuntu oyedwa noma bobabili abengena emshadweni bengaphansi kweminyaka eyishumi nesishiyagalombili;
- d) Ukuganiswa ngempopo akubacabangeli abantu, imindeni kanye nemiphakathi, futhi akukho emthethweni
- e) Ukugana kuthathwa njengempopo uma ababili noma oyedwa kulaba ababili eshadiswa engavumanga;
- f) Ukugana kuthathwa njengempopo uma kwenzeka ngenkani ethize njengoba kuchaziwe kuhlelo lokubika;
- g) Ukugana kuthathwa njengempopo uma kuyinto exoxwe abathize kodwa kungabafaki abantu ababili abazoshada futhi ngaphandle kolwazi nokuvuma kwabo bobabili ukushada;
- h) Ukukhishwa kwenhlawulo kanye/ noma ilobolo akukwenzi ukuganiswa ngempopo kwabasha kube semthethweni.

5. Okuzokwenziwa

Kuvunyelwene ukuthi

- a)

6. INQUBOMGOMO YOKUGANA KWABASHA

Kuvunyelwene ukuthi

- a) Umuntu akufanele agane ngaphambi kokuba afike eminyakeni eyishumi nesishiyagalombili;

- b) Umuntu oganayo kufanele avume ukugana futhi akufanele aphoqwe;
- c) Ukukhishwa kwenhlawulo akukwenzi kube semthethweni ukuganiswa kwabasha;
- d) Icala lobugebengu elifaka ukuganana kwabasha alikwazi ukuhoxiswa ngenxa yokuthi indaba isixazululiwe ngokosiko;
- e) Abazali, abaqaphi, abanakekeli angeke bamukele ukukhokhelwa nanoma yanoma yiluphi uhlobo okufaka inhlawulo noma ilobolo ukuze kuhoxiswe icala lobugebengu;
- f) Othishanhloko bezikole nabaSeka Abafundi bazoqwashisa izikole bafundise nabazali nabafundi eMangweni ngokugana besebasha nalenqubokwenza emihlanganweni yabazali, imihlangano yokufundisana nasemithandazweni yesikole.

7. INQUBO YOKUNGENELELA UMA KUBANOKUGANA KWABASHA NOMA YIKUPHI UKWENZA OKUPHATHELENE NALOKHU

Kuvunyelwene ukuthi

- a) Noma yimuphi umuntu owazi noma obona ukuganana kwabasha noma ukwenza okuphathelelene nalokhu njengoba kuchaziwe kunqubokwenza noma izinhlelo eziphathelelene nokuganisa noma yikuphi ukwenza okuphathelelene nalokhu kufanele abike lolu lwazi ngokushesha eNkosini;
- b) Inkosi noma umuntu obekwe Inkosi kufanele ngokushesha aphenye okubikiwe.

Uma kwenzekile kwagana izingane, kuvunyelwene ngokuthi

- c) Inkosi kufanele ibike udaba ku- South African Police Services;
- d) I-South African Police Services neNkosi kufanele baphenye noma ngabe abathintekayo baneminyaka ebavumelayo ukuba bashade futhi uma kungenjalo babheke ukuthi yimaphi amacala enziwe ngokwe-Children's Act;
- e) I-South African Police Service neNkosi noma umuntu obekwe Inkosi kufanele baphenye ukuthi laba ababili bavume ngokusemethethweni ukugana noma cha;
- f) I-South African Police Service neNkosi noma umuntu obekwe Inkosi kufanele aphenye ukuthi abazali balaba ababili banikeze imvume yokuthi baganane lapho kudingeka khona ngokomthetho noma cha;
- g) I-South African Police Service kufanele iphenye ukuthi umshado ubhalisiwe ngokwe-Marriages Act (Act No. 25 of 1961) noma ngokwe-Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (Act No. 120 of 1998) noMnyango Wezasekhaya noma cha;
- h) Lapho ukugana kwenziwe ngokwe-Marriages Act futhi kufaka umfana ongaphansi kweminyaka eyishumi nesishiyagalombili kanye/ noma intombazane engaphansi kweminyaka eyishumi nanhlano, i-South African Police Service kufanele iphenye ukuthi uNgqongqoshe weZasekhaya uyinikezele imvume yokuthi kwenzeke noma cha;
- i) Noma ngabe ukugana kwenzeka ngokwe-Recognition of Customary Marriages Act futhi kufaka ingane engaphansi kweminyaka eyishumi nesishiyagalombili, i-South African Police Service kufanele iphenye ukuthi uNgqongqoshe Wezasekhaya wayinikeze imvume yokuthi kwenzeke noma cha;
- j) I-South African Police Services kufanele ibike udaba eMnyangweni Wezokuthuthukiswa koMphakathi noma ngabe oyedwa wabo ingane;

- k) UMnyango Wezokuthuthukiswa koMphakathi kufanele uphenye ukuthi ngabe ingane iyadinga ukunakekelwa nokuvikelwa ngokwe-Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005) noma cha, bathathe izinyathelo ezizoqinisekisa ukuphepha kwengane banikeze ingane nokwelulekwa ekudingayo;
- l) Uma kutholakala ukuthi ukugana okuphoqiwe, abantu baphoqelekele ukuthi benze okubhalwe ku-Section 8 wohlelo lokubika.

8. INQUBOMGOMO YOKUGANISWA NGEMPOQO

Kuvunyelwene ukuthi

- a) Akekho umuntu noma ngabe uneminyaka emingaki okufanele aphoqwe ukuthi agane ngaphandle kwemvume;
- b) Nanoma yiluphi uhlobo lomshado oyedwa noma ababili abangena kuwona ngaphandle kwemvume lowo mshado uthathwa njengomshado oyimpogo;
- c) Asikho isivumelwano, ukukhokhelana noma ukukhipha ilobolo kuzothathwa njengomshado osemthethweni ngaphandle kwemvume yababili;
- d) Ukukhipha inhlawulo akukwenzi ukuganiswa ngempogo kube semthethweni;
- e) Icala lobugebengu elifaka ukuganiswa ngempogo alikwazi ukuhoxiswa ngenxa yokuthi selilungisiwe ngendlela yesintu;
- f) Abazali, abaqaphi noma abanakekeli angeke bakwamukele ukukhokhelwa nanoma ngabe iyiphi indlela okufaka inhlawulo noma ilobolo ukuze kuhoxiswe icala lobugebengu elifaka ukuganiswa ngempogo;
- g) Othishanhlolo bezikole nabaluleka abafundi bazofundisa ezikoleni bafundise abazali nabafundi baseMangweni ngomshado oyimpogo nalolu hlelo lokubika emihlanganweni yabazali, imihlangano yokufundisana nasemthandazweni wesikolo.

9. INQUBO YOKUNGENELELA UMA KWENZEKA UGANISWA NGEMPOQO NOMA NGABE YIKUPHI OKUPHATHELENE NAKHO

Kuvunyelwene ukuthi

- a) Noma ngabe yimuphi umuntu owaziyo noma obona ukuganiswa ngempogo noma okuphathelele nalesenzo njengoba kuchaziwe kulolu hlelo lokubika noma izinhlelo eziphathelele nokushada okuphoqiwe noma ukwenza okuphathelele nakho uzobika lolu lwazi eNkosini naku-South African Police Service;
- b) I-South African Police Service neNkosi noma umuntu obekwe Inkosi bazophenya ngokushesha okushiwo umbiko.

Uma ukuganiswa ngempogo sekwenzekile, kuvunyelwene ngokuthi

- c) Uma bukhona ubufakazi obanele, i-South African Police Service izovula ngokushesha icala lobugebengu kowenze/ kwabenza isenzo sobubi;
- d) I-South African Police Service kufanele ibike udaba kwiThimba le-KZN Rapid Response (084 264 4780) noma ku-National Human Trafficking Hotline (0800 222 777),
- e) I-South African Police Service kufanele idlulise udaba eMnyangweni Wezokuthuthukiswa koMphakathi;

- f) UMnyango Wezokuthuthukiswa koMphakathi kufanele uphenye ukuthi ngabe ingane idinga ukunakekelwa noma ukuvikelwa ngokwe-Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005) noma cha, bathathe izinyathelo ezidingekayo ukuqinisekisa ukuphepha kwengane bese baluleka ingane ngendlela;
- g) I-South African Police Service kufanele idlulisele umgilwa futhi bamsize ngokuthi akwazi ukufika e-Thuthuzela Care Centre eSibhedlela i-Edendale, noma i-Crisis Care Centre eSibhedlela i-Estcourt bezohlololwa ukwelashwa;
- h) Umkhandlu weNdabuko uzoqinisekisa ukuthi akukhishwa nhlawulo futhi/ noma lobolo noma ukwenza okuphathelene nalokhu kwenzeka;
- i) Usonhlalakahle kufanele abekhona uma kubakhona ukuxhumana phakathi kwe-South African Police Service, uMkhandlu weNdabuko, kanye nomgilwa ukuqinisekisa ukuthi umgilwa akatholi okunye ukuhlukumezeka.

10. UKUBUYEKEZWA

Le nqubokwenza ingabuyekwezwa uma isidingo sikhona, kodwa kufanele ibuyekwezwe ababambiqhaza okungenani njalo eminyakeni emibili.

11. UKUVUNYWA KWENQUBOKWENZA

Mina, obhalwe ngaphansi, njengomele iMangweni traditional community, ngiyayivuma lenqubokwenza nokungenelela ekuganisweni ngempopo kwabasha eMangweni.

Igama	Inombolo kaMazisi	Sayina	Usuku



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