

# **The Social Geographies of School-Related Gender-Based Violence on Children's School Journeys in Rural KwaZulu-Natal**

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## DECLARATION

I, **Ayanda Khumalo** declare that:

- i. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- ii. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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## SUPERVISOR STATEMENT

This thesis is submitted with our approval.



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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the social geographies of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) on children's journeys to and from school (hereafter, school journeys). In particular, the study explored the spaces and places identified by primary school children as the social geographies of SRGBV on their school journeys. Moreover, the study investigated how primary school children negotiated their spatial safety when navigating their school journeys. Twenty primary schoolchildren, aged between 10-12 years and attending Grades 5-7, were purposively recruited from one resource-poor rural community in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands, in South Africa (SA). The study recruited only primary schoolchildren who walked without adult supervision for at least five kilometres to and from school. Data was generated using participatory visual methodologies, which involved the use of photovoice and participatory mapping. These visual data were supplemented by four focus group discussions (FGD). Data analysis occurred in two layers. The first layer involved the analysis of visual artefacts and the explanations provided by the participants during the FGD. The second layer involved thematic and visual data analysis of all the data generated.

Conceptually, the study was guided by both the feminist geographies and the broadly conceived children's geographies frames of thinking. Feminist geographies provided a lens for understanding how gender shaped primary school children's understandings and experiences of SRGBV on their school journey. On the other hand, children's geographies provided a frame for understanding the sociocultural meanings children attached to their engagement with both their social geographies and the people they interacted with across space/place. Theoretically, the analysis was informed by the defensible space theory, which analysed how and why certain social geographies exposed primary school children to gender-based violence (GBV).

Data analysis revealed a plethora of social geographies that rendered participants vulnerable to GBV on their school journeys. These geographies included dense bushes, taverns, and other public and economic spaces such as tuckshops in and around the community. Moreover, since these children walked to school without adult supervision, they reported a sense of fear and terror in navigating unsafe social geographies in their community. Finally, while they feared walking to school, participants demonstrated agency in negotiating their spatial safety by drawing from the available community and interpersonal resources. The use of participatory

visual methods offered a unique opportunity to see how primary school children constructed and understood the social geographies of their school journeys, and how in these spaces, forms of GBV occurred.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my family (mother, two siblings, and my daughter). It was mainly for you that I stayed committed to this project. Making you proud is my priority. Konke engikwenzayo ngikwenzela nina.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CBD - Central Business District

CPSRU-Community Programmes and Stakeholder Relation Unit

DOE - Department of Education

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

GBV - Gender-Based Violence

IHRC - Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic

HSRC - Human Sciences Research Council

HSSREC - Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

KZN- KwaZulu-Natal

PMB - Pietermaritzburg

PVM - Participatory Visual Method

SA - South Africa

SAPS -South African Police Services

STATS SA- Statistics South Africa

SRGBV- School Related Gender Based Violence

UNAIDS- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNGEI- United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

WSB - Walking School Bus

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## CHAPTER ONE

### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

Schools in South Africa's resource-poor communities are reportedly generators of crime and gender-based violence (GBV) against children (Bhana, 2012; Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020; Morrel, 2002). School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is a term used to refer to threats or acts that include but are not limited to, physical, emotional, and sexual violence, including harassment and rape that is perpetrated in and around the schools as a result of gender inequalities (Arcigal & Resurreccion, 2022; Mingude & Dejene, 2021; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2019). A study in Khayelitsha township, near Cape Town, found that acts of GBV, including SRGBV, clustered around schools (Breektze et al., 2021). Thus, schools located in communities (i.e., those in the township and rural areas) characterised by chronic poverty, high unemployment rates, socio-economic distress, and fatal cases of contact crime and violence are generative sites for examining violence against children.

Within this context, South African children who walk to school in distressed communities without adult supervision are vulnerable to different forms of SRGBV (Bhana et al., 2021; Mahlaba, 2014; Mhlongo, 2017). Most of this violence is perpetrated against schoolgirls and is located within the system of heteropatriarchy that is rooted in norms and ideas about hegemonic masculinity (Beyene et al., 2021; Roy & Bailey, 2021). In this instance, while schoolboys are rendered at risk, the vulnerability of schoolgirls to SRGBV on the school journey continues to dominate scholarly discussions and debates (Mayeza, 2004; Mayeza & Bhana, 2016; Netshitangani, 2017; Parkes, 2015). Indeed, heteropatriarchy affirms the superiority of men and boys while normalizing women and girls' inferior positions in their households, communities, and schools (Duncanson, 2015; Jewkes et al., 2015). Thus, schoolgirls are at risk for violence, including SRGBV, because of their low social positions and socialisation into roles and behaviors requiring their obedience and passivity (Bhana, 2018). Literature on school violence is abundant in South Africa (Bhana et al., 2021; Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020; Mayeza & Bhana, 2017; Mayeza

& Bhana, 2021; Ngidi, Moletsane & Essack, 2021). More so, school violence has been analysed from a critical feminist perspective to suggest its gendered nature (Hall, 2015).

This study was conceptualised to examine the social geographies (i.e., social spaces and places) that primary school children in a resource-poor rural community identified as heightening their vulnerability to SRGBV while they walk the school journey. The study also explored the ways in which these children negotiated their safety against SRGBV on their school journeys. Participants lived in a context characterised by chronic poverty, high rates of crime and violence (including GBV), and age-based and gendered hierarchies that reflect the heteropatriarchal socio-cultural geographic setting in which they lived and attended school. To generate data, the study used photovoice, participatory mapping, and focus group discussions (FGD) with a group of twenty primary school children (girls and boys), enrolled at Nqubeko Primary School (a pseudonym) who lived in the resource-poor rural community of Taylor's Halt, in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa.

## **1.2 Study Background**

The ways and means in which South African children travel to school in rural communities is a neglected aspect of social geographic inquiry. Moreover, how children experience this journey has not received enough attention in South African research. Finally, the particular social geographies that place children at risk for violence as they journey to and from school has not been adequately discussed in the literature. What is known, however, is the fact that many children in rural communities' travel to school by foot (Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC), 2021; Simons et al., 2018; Statistics South Africa (Stats S.A), 2020). In these largely remote, marginalised, and resource-poor communities, access to affordable and reliable public transport is often limited and costly, resulting in parents and other caregivers being unable to afford the cost of both public and private transport for their children (Mahlaba, 2014).

In South Africa, about 15 million children are enrolled in school and over 10 million of these schoolchildren walk all the way to school (Stats SA., 2021). What is troubling is a finding by IHRC (2021), which reports that some children walk up to 20 kilometres roundtrip to access education. This suggests that on average, these children walk for approximately one hour to reach their schools (IHRC, 2021). In KZN, the province where this study was located, approximately 3.2 million children are enrolled in school, and 20.3 percent walk to school without adult supervision (Stats SA, 2021). This is the largest number of children walking to school in the nine South African provinces (Equal Education, 2017). Thus, there is a need to pay special attention to this province.

KZN is a predominately rural province that experiences resource poverty, including infrastructural shortages (KZN Department of Education [KZN DoE], 2017). Children's school journeys are, therefore, potentially dangerous since children must navigate treacherous terrains and, sometimes, inclement weather conditions (Van der Pol et al., 2020). Moreover, children face the threat of violence, including being kidnapped, physically attacked, mugged, and/or sexually victimised (Ngidi, Essack & Moletsane, 2021). The dangerous school journey has received considerable media attention in South Africa where schoolgirls reportedly fall victim to abductions and rape (Van der Pol et al., 2020). Moreover, in some of South Africa's poor communities, reports suggest that school children have been confronted and/or abducted by men who are often armed with weapons; these men then force children into their cars, rape and murder them (Mjekula, 2018; Mlamla, 2018).

Global South studies have been silent about the experiences of violence against children on their foot journeys to school. This is surprising given the fact that this journey exposes schoolchildren to multiple risks of abuse, maltreatment, harassment, and gendered violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2012; Reilly, 2014). Visual media has been key in creating awareness about schoolchildren's risks when they travel to school. For example, '*On our way to school*', a documentary produced and directed by Javoy, Plisson and Fougea (2015) showed the dangers faced by children when they walk to school in Kenya, Morocco, Argentina, and India. Another documentary, '*Long walk to school*', produced by a South African-based organisation, Equal Education (2017),

captured the sexual and physical victimisation of children who travel daily over 12 kilometres to school in KZN.

Available international research has also brought stark into focus, the dangers faced by children as they walk to school. This body of research reports that schoolchildren are exposed to forms of verbal, physical, and sexual assaults (Hinote & Webber, 2012; Krakowski, 2022). For example, Pells and Morrow's (2017) examination of violence experienced by children on their school journeys in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam found that schoolgirls experienced frequent sexual harassment and bullying. In Lesotho, Morojele's (2013) investigation of how gender shaped children's school journeys through treacherous routes found that men and older boys often harassed girls. In the same country, an early exploration of children's school journeys found that children attached complex emotions of fear in ways that indicated psychological trauma (Muthukrishna & Morojele, 2012). Likewise, an early international study that examined everyday child mobility in Malawi, South Africa, and Ghana, found that schoolgirls expressed fear of rape (Porter et al., 2010). Finally, in one resource-poor rural community in the KZN province of South Africa, schoolchildren reported sexual violence as an everyday concern that kept them constantly vigilant of the social geographies they navigated to reach school (Ngidi et al., 2018). A common finding among these studies is that the school journey created fear that is experienced as "psychologically taxing" by children (Ngidi et al., 2018). The experience of violence on the school journey infringes children's rights to safe access to education. It also creates an environment where children live and learn in fear. To negotiate safety, parents in countries like Rwanda, Indonesia, and China report that they have opted to walking with their children until they enter school premises (Lundon & Wesslund, 2016). Likewise, as a response to children's concerns about safety in a rural community in KZN (Ngidi et al., 2018), and the lack of efforts by the government to ensure safe and reliable scholar transport, researchers have developed interventions such as a Walking School Bus (WSB), providing adult chaperones for children who walk to and from school (Muchaka & Behrens, 2012, Essack & Ngidi, 2018, Riaz, 2019Van der Pol et al., 2020). The study reported in this dissertation formed part of the broader WSB project<sup>1</sup>, which evaluated the impact of children's chaperoned walks

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<sup>1</sup> The full name of the project was: An evaluation of a walking school bus intervention as a school related gender-based violence intervention in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

to and from school. The WSB project examined community and schoolchildren's perspectives of SRGBV on the school journey. Data analysed in this dissertation comes from the early phases of the WSB project, which examined children's experiences of SRGBV as they journeyed to school by foot. Moreover, the initial phases of the larger project explored the social geographies that heightened children's vulnerability to SRGBV when they walked to school.

### **1.3 The Context of Children's Foot Journeys to School**

There are several reasons why schoolchildren in South Africa's rural communities walk to school. First, rural communities are often unpaved, and road infrastructure does not inspire for the provision of private and public transportation in fear of navigating treacherous roads (Nyawo & Mashau, 2019). Further, since unemployment and poverty are rife in rural communities (Kingdon & Knight, 2007; Du Toit et al., 2018), households struggle to provide private transport fees for their children to access schools (Mahlaba, 2014; Simons et al., 2018). Available research has also lamented the distance between rural residential areas and their nearest schools. For example, schools in many rural South African communities are built far from residential areas (Department of Basic Education, 2015). This makes the school journey long and dangerous for children who often walk without adult supervision (Mahlaba, 2014).

Researchers have also begun to point to acts of maltreatment that schoolchildren are exposed to on the school journey (Breetzke et al., 2021; Mosavel et al., 2012). Such maltreatment manifests in the form of bullying (Motsa, 2017; UNESCO, 2019), exposure to crime and related muggings (Bhana et al., 2021), physical and sexual harassment (Ngidi, 2022a; Ngidi et al., 2018; Porter et al., 2010), gang-related violence (Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014), school-related fights (Ngidi & Moletsane, 2018), emotional threats (Ferrara et al., 2019), exposure to dangerous weapons such as guns and knives (Mhlongo, 2017), and unlawful drugs (Jamme et al., 2018).

The emerging scholarship also points to the phenomenon of *ukuthwala* – a cultural practice that involves the abduction of girls for customary marriage – as one of the ways that schoolchildren are made vulnerable to SRGBV on their school journeys (Maphalala, 2016; Nkosi, Rich & Morojele 2014; Rice, 2018). Other scholars and the

South African media report on spates of what is termed *jackrolling* – the abduction, sexual assault, and even murder of schoolchildren outside their school premises – that continues to put schoolchildren at risk (Karimakwenda, 2019; Van der Westhuizen, 2016). In relation to *jackrolling*, researchers are now focusing on the school journey within the context of sexual violence against schoolchildren. For example, Ngidi, Moletsane and Essack's (2021) investigation of sexual assault against schoolchildren in three South African resource-poor townships found that their participants had an amplified fear of being abducted or raped. The researchers concluded that SRGBV is an inescapable reality for children who walk to and from school. While Ngidi, Moletsane, and Essack's (2021) study was located in a township geographic setting, it has implications for schoolchildren who live in any of South Africa's resource-poor and violent communities, such as those living in rural areas. A remaining gap in the literature however, is an analysis and understanding of the particular spaces/places that render primary schoolchildren vulnerable to SRGBV on their walking journeys to and from school. Moreover, the literature has rarely established how primary schoolchildren negotiate their safety.

#### **1.4 The Rationale for the Study**

Since I became a human geography student, I have been constantly intrigued by the relationship between children and their social environments. Central to the conceptual tenets of human geography as a field of inquiry, is how people are shaped and affected by their relationship with the social and physical environment they live in, and how, in turn, this affects their attitudes, cultures, behaviours, and perceptions of space (Gregory et al., 2011). Thus, in this study, I was interested in how the rural geographic environment shapes and influences primary schoolchildren's lives at the community and school levels.

As I discuss in throughout this dissertation, schools located in resource-poor communities, such as those in rural and township neighbourhoods, have a higher propensity for violence, including GBV (Mhlongo, 2017; Ngcobo, 2016). Thus, children who walk to school, especially without adult supervision, run the risk of experiencing school-related violence (Parkes et al., 2016). To frame analysis in this study, I focused on two scholarly areas (i.e. SRGBV and rural neighbourhoods that

when brought together provided me with a socio-geographical understanding of primary schoolchildren's experiences of SRGBV on the school journey and the spaces/places that made them prone to this violence. Moreover, I used Oscar Newman's defensible space theory (1970) to understand why certain spaces on children's school journeys attracted violent forms of interpersonal interactions.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

Global South scholarship has begun to direct attention to children's school journeys (Bourke, 2017; Kingsly et al., 2020; Ngidi, Moletsane, & Essack, 2021; Ross, 2007; Su et al., 2013). For example, studies focusing on the walk to school report that children feel unsafe when passing by unmaintained paths and walking through busy and wider streets to reach school (Bourke, 2017). In the Global North, scholars have largely focused on the physical benefits of walking to school (Adminaité-Fodor & Jos, 2020; Wandera et al., 2017; Zavareh et al., 2020), although some attention has been given to the broader well-being and safety of schoolchildren, especially while navigating their neighbourhoods (Jamme, Bahl & Banerjee, 2018; Wandera et al., 2017). In poor South African communities, children fear walking to school because of reports that their peers get abducted, robbed, and raped (Mahlaba, 2014; Ngidi, Moletsane & Essack, 2021). Other studies report that parents are also concerned about their children's safety when walking to school (Francis et al., 2017). For example, parents from low socio-economic rural communities report a fear of strangers who might harass, harm or abduct their children (Motsa & Morojele, 2016).

Walking to school, especially without adult supervision, is problematic considering that violence in South Africa's resource-poor rural communities is ubiquitous (South African Police Services (SAPS), 2021). South African children generally experience one of the highest rates of violence, and are counted among the most bullied in the world (Ward et al., 2018). Sexual abuse and bullying are the most common forms of violence, with at least one in three children reporting an experience of sexual victimization in and around the school (Artz et al., 2018). Rural communities, and their schools by extension, are sites of violence, with primary schoolchildren being one of the most vulnerable population groups (Pells & Morrow, 2017).

However, very little is known about the SRGBV that primary schoolchildren experience as they journey by foot and without adult supervision to and from their schools in poor rural communities. The social geographies that make primary schoolchildren vulnerable to forms of SRGBV as they journey to school have not received adequate attention in research. Finally, the strategies that these children use to negotiate their safety against SRGBV as their school journey by foot have not been adequately examined in the Global South scholarship.

### **1.6 Study Aim and Research Questions**

The aim of this study was to examine the social geographies identified by rural primary schoolchildren as spaces/places that rendered them vulnerable to SRGBV on their school journeys. In particular, the study examined how primary schoolchildren from a resource-poor rural community identified, understood, and communicated about these dangerous geographies, and how SRGBV manifested in these sites. Finally, the study explored how the participants negotiated their safety when navigating these risky social geographies.

To address this broad aim, data generation was organised around two research questions:

- In what ways do primary schoolchildren from a resource-poor rural community identify, understand, and communicate about the social geographies that fuel their vulnerability to school-related gender-based violence on their walking journeys to school?
- What strategies do these primary schoolchildren employ to negotiate their spatial safety against school-related gender-based violence while navigating dangerous social geographies on their school journeys?

### **1.7 Conceptual Framework**

Conceptually, this study was framed within the broadly conceived feminist geographies and children's geography. I discuss these conceptual frames in the sections that follow.

### **1.7.1 Feminist Geography**

Feminist geography is a discipline within human geography that is occupied with understanding and analysing how gender shapes people's relationship with space/place, thus informing their experiences and knowledge of these spaces (Laliberte, Derickson, & Dowler, 2010; McDowell, 1999). Specifically, feminist geography seeks to investigate, challenge and, transform gendered divisions in societies that result in women/girls and men/boys having different spatial activities, perceptions, experiences, and behaviours (Castree, Kitchin & Rogers, 2013, Hiemstra & Billo, 2017). As a conceptual lens, it centres on gender to analyse differences in individuals' experiences of place and space (Mott, 2016). This implies that both boys/men and girls/women experience and understand the same space/place differently as influenced by their gender identities.

This study sought to understand social geographies that heightened schoolchildren's vulnerability to SRGBV on the school journey. As mentioned above, participants in this study lived in a heteropatriarchal sociocultural environment that was characterised by gender inequality. Thus, the feminist geography lens informed the knowledge production and data analysis by providing an understanding of the spaces/places that posed a risk to primary school children. Feminist geographers advocate for gender sensitive, engaging, and cultural appropriate methodologies for engaging children (Laliberte et al., 2010; Mott, 2016). Heeding this call, the study reported in this dissertation used participatory visual methodologies to engage school children.

### **1.7.2 Children's Geographies**

The Children's Geographies lens examines children's experiences of space/place (Yarwood & Tyrrell, 2012). This framework borrows from the fields of human geography and the sociology of childhood to understand the socio-cultural environment from the vantage point of children (Cole, 2008). This conceptual framework informs and contributes to decision-making and debates that can influence the future implementation of policies that protect children's wellbeing across space and place (Freeman, 2020). It also emphasises that childhood is a social construct with

different meanings across different spaces and times. Moreover, the children's geographies lens recognises children as active agents capable of constructing their own spatial knowledge (Cole, 2008; Rollo, 2016).

This study involved rural primary schoolchildren in research about their perspectives of the social geographies that posed a threat to them as they navigate their rural communities on the school journey. Involving schoolchildren as 'knowers and actors' in their own lives was key to understanding the salient social geographies of their school journeys (Ansell, 2009). Researching with primary schoolchildren in the research process, rather than on them as objects to be studied, was significant in the context of this study and for the topic of child safety for several reasons. First, enlisting their insights was important for generating knowledge that is often silenced (Mahadev, 2015). Secondly, participating in this research allowed these children to present for themselves their realities, narratives, and explanations about how they experienced the walk to school. Thirdly, research with primary schoolchildren through participatory methods was aimed at shifting and minimizing the impact of the unequal power dynamics that are often observed in research (de Lange, 2012).

### **1.8 Overview of the Methodology**

This research was positioned within the humanistic geography paradigm (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three). Humanistic geography seeks to understand people in relation to their socio-geographic settings, and the feelings and ideas they might have regarding space and place (Tuan, 1976). As a paradigm, it centres human experiences, feelings, and emotions in relation to their socio-physical environments (Aitken & Valentine, 2006). Located within this paradigm, I sought to privilege primary schoolchildren's voices in the analysis of their experiences on their school journeys. Influenced by the humanistic geography paradigm, the study employed a participatory research design that recognised primary schoolchildren as active individuals capable of contributing to and informing research.

From the various data generating methods used in the Walking School Bus project, I specifically opted for two participatory visual approaches, which are participatory

mapping and photovoice. Visual data generated using these techniques was augmented by data generated through focus group discussions (FGD). A sample of 20 primary schoolchildren (boys and girls) who lived and attended school in the resource-poor communities of Taylor's Halt, located in the KZN midlands, northwest of the city Pietermaritzburg (PMB), were recruited as participants in this study. To address the first research sub-question: *In what ways do primary schoolchildren from a resource-poor rural community identify, understand, and communicate about the social geographies that fuel their vulnerability to school-related gender-based violence on their walking journeys to school?* I used data generated through participatory mapping, photovoice, and FGD. To address the second research sub-question: *What strategies do these primary schoolchildren employ to negotiate their spatial safety against school-related gender-based violence while navigating dangerous social geographies on their school journeys?* Data generated through photovoice and FGD were used.

Data generated using these approaches were analysed using a thematic analysis and visual content analysis methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using these analytical methods, I identified, organised, and then categorised emerging themes within the dataset (Braun et al., 2019). In Chapter Three, I discuss the study methodology in full detail.

### **1.8.1 Overview of Ethical Considerations**

Since this study focused on a sensitive issue (SRGBV on schoolchildren's walking school journey) and the participants involved primary schoolchildren, several ethical issues had to be considered. First, before the commencement of the research, permission to conduct the study was obtained from relevant institutions including the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Humanities Research Ethics Committee (Protocol number: HSSREC/00000919/2019) and the schools' management. The participants in this study were primary schoolchildren, which meant that they were minors. For this reason, written consent for their participation in the study was obtained from their parents and guardians as per the South African Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005). Moreover, the participants themselves provided written assent for their own

participation. Only those participants who provided written assent and whose parents/guardians had fully consented for their participation were recruited to participate in the study. Likewise, participants explicitly consented to use their visual artefacts (participatory maps and photographs) for data analysis purposes. In this thesis, I have included visual artefacts that participants allowed me to use for research purposes. In Chapter Three, I discuss in detail all ethical issues and how they were addressed in this study

## **1.9 Overview of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organised into six chapters. This chapter introduced the study by outlining the study's: rationale, statement of the problem, and the study's research questions used for the generation and analysis of data. Then, the remainder of the dissertation is organised as follows:

Chapter Two reviews literature on the experiences of schoolchildren to SRGBV, with a particular focus on schoolchildren's encounters with this violence on their daily walk between home and school. The chapter also outlines the theoretical framework informing the study. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the literature informing the study.

Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology applied by the study and the techniques used to generate data. This chapter provides a detailed description of the study location, the sample and sampling methods that were used in the study. It further provides a detailed discussion of the data generation methods. The chapter then provides a description of methods of data analysis that were used in the study. Chapter three is therefore concluded by discussing research ethics and the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter Four presents data in response to the first research sub-question: *In what ways do primary schoolchildren from a resource-poor rural community identify, understand, and communicate about the social geographies that fuel their vulnerability to school-related gender-based violence on their walking journeys to school?* Chapter Four presents findings on the spaces and places that increase

participants' vulnerability to SRGBV when they walk between their homes and schools. A discussion of the findings concludes the chapter.

Chapter Five analyses and presents findings that address the second research sub-question: *What strategies do these primary schoolchildren employ to negotiate their spatial safety against school-related gender-based violence while navigating dangerous social geographies on their school journeys?* This chapter discusses the strategies that the participants used to negotiate their safety against SRGBV on their walking journey between their homes and schools. A discussion of the findings concludes the chapter.

Chapter Six concludes the dissertation by providing a methodological and theoretical reflection. In the chapter, I also provide a summary of the findings. I then reflect on the study's contribution to existing literature. I conclude by discussing the implications of this study.

In the next chapter, I present a review of the literature related to the research questions posed in this study

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In South Africa, as is the case globally, GBV is a significant concern. The country has one of the highest reported prevalence rates of GBV globally, and schoolchildren are not exempt (Meyer & Chetty, 2017; Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020). In the previous chapter, I introduced the study by outlining the research background and rationale, the aim of the study, and the questions that guided data generation and analysis. Finally, I outlined the conceptual framework and the study methodology. This chapter reviews local and international literature on SRGBV on the school journey. It further discusses the impact of SRGBV on the school journey. Finally, I outline the theoretical framework that underpinned the study's data collection and analysis. The chapter ends with a synthesis of the reviewed literature.

#### **2.2 SRGBV and Children's School Journeys: The International Context**

As I argued in Chapter One, walking to school has been identified as dangerous for children in rural areas since this journey is often long and unsupervised (Simons et al., 2018; Equal Education, 2019). Walking to school without adult supervision heightens children's vulnerability to several challenges including violence, bullying, and harassment (Khalil, 2013). The perpetration of SRGBV inside and outside the school's premises is influenced by gender stereotypes (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014) that promote hegemonic masculinity by allowing men and boys the opportunity to use violence, aggression, and sexual power against women and children (Duncanson, 2015). Hegemonic masculinity reinforces practices and attitudes among men that result in gender inequality, male domination, and the overpowering of women and children (Jewkes et al., 2015).

Violence against schoolchildren is located largely within the social system of heteropatriarchy which promotes gender inequality and sustains hegemonic masculinity; thereby manifesting through power rather than consent. Heteropatriarchy promotes violent demonstrations of masculinity and sexual virility among boys and

men, while encouraging submission, respect, and silence among women and girls (Duncanson, 2015; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014). To demonstrate, Pells and Morrow's (2017) study which explored the vulnerability of schoolgirls to different forms of violence while they walk to school in India found that girls experienced sexual harassment and threats from boys during the school journey. The resultant effect of this victimisation led girls to not remain at school after hours to do their extramural activities and homework out of fear of experiencing victimisation when they walked alone to their homes (Pells & Morrow, 2017). Pells and Morrow argue that boys in this instance use their social power to limit girl's movements and freedom, which dissuades girls from participating fully in social and educational activities.

Other related studies report that living in high-risk poverty contexts increase schoolchildren's exposure to gang-related criminal activity during the daily school journey (Lieberman & Zimmerman, 2015). Gang-related criminal activity outside the premises of a school makes the learning experience difficult for children as they live in constant fear of leaving both their homes and their schools because doing so exposes them to antisocial criminal behaviour (Lieberman & Zimmerman, 2015; Krakowski, 2022). Lundon and Wesslund's (2016) study on gang activity in and around schools in China, Indonesia, and Rwanda found that more schoolchildren were victim to child trafficking due to increased gang-related crimes on the school journey. Thus, schoolchildren were reluctant to walk to and from school in fear of being trafficked (Lundon & Wesslund, 2016). According to these scholars, poverty and a lack of employment opportunities for young men is linked with involvement in gang and criminal activities that posed a serious threat to the lives of children who walked to school. It is noteworthy that very few Global North studies have examined economic factors as contributors to SRGBV on the school journey. In the largely affluent countries of the Global North more people are employed, and poverty is less severe when compared to countries in the Global South.

### **2.2.1 The Social Geographies of School-related Gender-Based Violence**

A number of social spaces/places have been identified as increasing children's vulnerability to SRGBV on the school journey (Jacobs & Lees, 2013). According to

Zen and Mohamad (2014), a certain building's architecture plays a significant role in either deterring or attracting criminal and violent activity. Buildings that are well maintained deter criminals and crime-related activities. On the other hand, abandoned and unkempt buildings attract criminals and perpetrators of violence. Some of the social geographies identified in the literature as posing significant risk of danger on schoolchildren's school journeys include public spaces. For example, Mitchell et al. (2007) report that schoolchildren in Auckland, New Zealand feared walking alone in public spaces because they had formulated ideas about stranger-danger that posed a threat during their school.

Scholars also report other dangerous social geographies such as taverns, debilitated houses, convenient shops, and dense bushes as a threat to the safety of children who walk to school (Ohmer & Owens, 2013). For example, taverns increase schoolchildren's vulnerability to SRGBV because these spaces are usually occupied by patrons who, under the influence of alcohol, might hurt or harass schoolchildren (Hinote & Webber, 2012). Wiebe et al's (2013) investigation of schoolchildren's safety from physical violence on the way to school in Philadelphia is an example. The authors report that schoolchildren felt unsafe while walking to school because of the taverns they passed, which children associated with criminal activities and alcohol consumption. Moreover, schoolchildren in Hinote and Webber's study reported being harassed by tavern patrons (Hinote & Webber, 2012). This suggests that the presence of taverns, and the patrons who use these geographies, rendered the school journey unpleasant for children. According to Shjarback (2014), spaces with increased and unmonitored access tend to promote antisocial behaviours such as violence. Taverns, as spaces with open and unrestricted adult access, therefore fuel schoolchildren's vulnerability to SRGBV (Boonzaier, 2018)

Other important spaces that place schoolchildren at risk while on the school journey included dilapidated, unmaintained, and unoccupied buildings. Scholars reports that dilapidated buildings attract criminal and gang activity, including drug dealing, alcohol consumption, and violence (Banerjee & Bahl, 2017; Jamme et al., 2018; Ross, 2007). For example, in one participatory study in City Heights, Banerjee and Bahl (2017) reported that schoolchildren feared walking pass old and unmaintained

buildings. Children lamented that fact that such buildings were usually occupied by criminals, gangsters, and people who used recreational drugs and alcohol. In turn, these people reportedly harassed children as they journeyed to school.

### **2.3 SRGBV and Children's School Journeys: The South African Context**

The school journey in South Africa's resource-poor rural communities is often long and treacherous (Mahlaba, 2014; Simons et al., 2018). The country reports that over ten million children walk this journey (Stats S.A., 2020). In 2020, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the province where this study was situated, reported the highest percentage (21 percent) of children who walk to school in the country (Stats S.A., 2020). As outlined above, walking to school, and without adult supervision, puts children at risk for adverse experiences such as bullying, harassment, name-calling, sexual violence, and abduction (Motsa, 2017; Ngidi, 2022a; Ngidi et al., 2018; Ngidi, Moletsane & Essack., 2021; UNESCO, 2019;). The resultant effect includes children skipping school or dropping out of school completely out of fear of victimisation and related trauma (Power, 2017). However, there is no existing reliable South African static of schoolchildren that dropped out of school due to SRGBV.

The experience of violence on children's school journeys is nothing new in South Africa. During the apartheid period, the country experienced a phenomenon known as *jackrolling* – the abduction, rape, and murder of schoolgirls as they make their way to and from school (Deane, 2018). This phenomenon was located exclusively in the country's chronically poor communities and targeted mainly adolescent schoolgirls (although boys were also targeted from time-to-time). The perpetrators were always male youths who were associated with a gang called the Jackrollers (Tlhabi, 2017; Wood, 2005). Early studies (see Mokwena, 1991) argued that *jackrolling* was used by male youths as a tool for punishing school-attending adolescent girls perceived as out of reach for these mostly poor and under-educated men. Girls were abducted primarily as they walked to and from their schools. They were then raped, killed and/or left to die in the open fields or dense bushes in and around their communities (Moffet, 2006).

### **2.4 The Impacts of SRGBV on Children's School Journeys**

SRGBV on the school journey has several negative ramifications on the lives of schoolchildren. First, this journey is associated with fear, thus interfering with the way schoolchildren attend school and interact with others (Porter et al., 2010). The literature does not necessarily distinguish between the impacts of SRGBV that occurs with the school premises and outside, as a result, similar impacts of SRGBV (whether occurring inside or outside the school premises) have been documented. Vulnerability to SRGBV during early childhood affects brain development, resulting in increasingly violent and anti-social behaviours (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014; Meng et al., 2022). Schoolchildren who are victims of psychological violence such as discrimination, nasty and destructive comments from their peers within and outside school premises develop a low self-esteem (Vertommen et al., 2018). They are most likely to suffer psychological challenges such as depression and anxiety (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020; Epprecht & Mngoma, 2022). All of these have a negative impact on schoolchildren's intellectual ability, thus hindering their academic excellence (Meng et al., 2022; UNGEI, 2015). Psychological violence is often unnoticed, especially on the school journey. Yet, its impact is detrimental to the extent that a child may fall into depression and struggle to create relationships with others (Vertommen et al., 2018). Psychological scars may not be visible to the naked eye; however, their impact can be intense that they are difficult to address (Ferrara et al., 2019).

Second, the physical impact of violence on the school journey includes schoolchildren having bruises, wounds, and bone fractures (Sungwa, Jackson & Kahembe, 2022). This form of violence sometimes leads to death or results in schoolchildren committing suicide (Ferrara et al., 2019). As mentioned above, experiencing or witnessing any form of violence can foster aggressive behaviours among children (Walters, 2021). Those schoolchildren that are most likely to face violence whether at home, school, or on the journey are likely to adopt that behaviour and end up physically violating their peers (UNESCO-UNGEI, 2014; Smiley et al., 2021).

Third, experiencing SRGBV on the school journey increases absenteeism and school bunking rates as children fear the victimisation they routinely experience on this journey (Chen & Chen, 2019; Smiley et al., 2021; Strassburg et al., 2010). For example, a study by Burdick-Will et al. (2019) sought to understand neighbourhood

factors that result in higher absenteeism rates among the schoolchildren of Baltimore City in the USA. Researchers found that walking to school doubled schoolchildren's vulnerability to SRGBV. Schoolchildren who had to walk to school in areas with high crime rates were vulnerable to SRGBV compared to those who used a bus to school, thus resulting in higher absenteeism rates for those who walked all the ways to as a strategy to avoid victimisation (Burdick-Will et al., 2019).

Fourth, the experience of SGRBV on the school journey may result in schoolchildren moving to new schools that are either closer to home or those whose routes are safer (Cabus et al., 2021). However, moving to a new school means schoolchildren need to adapt to a new environment, thus, increasing their vulnerability to bullying (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020). Schoolchildren who just joined new schools are at a higher risk for bullying than those who have been attending the same school for a longer period (Meng et al., 2022).

Finally, schoolchildren, and girls in particular, who experience SRGBV on the school journey drop out of school in fear of being abducted, raped, and robbed (Strassburg et al., 2010, Breetzke et al., 2021). Impacts of SRGBV on the school journey can result in schoolchildren losing their lives or changing their behaviour and schools all together so to protect themselves from being violated.

## **2.5 Using the Defensible Space Theory to Frame the Study**

Analysis in this study was guided by Oscar Newman's (1975) Defensible Space Theory. The theory considers strategies that individuals and communities apply to the physical layout of their social environments to make it safe. This is achieved by providing residents with resources and services that will aid them with defending and controlling their spaces (Newman, 1995; Reynald & Elffers, 2009). Newman's earliest research focused on urban public housing projects in Pruitt-Igoe, to examine how different spaces impacted the behaviour and attitudes of its occupants (Donnelly, 2010; Newman, 1975). His research led to the development of the defensible space idea, which is a concept targeting urban and rural architectures to understand crime, violence, and related negative social behaviour in order to restore safety and security

in poor residential areas (Jacobs & Lees, 2013). Newman (1996) used this concept to propose a set of strategies that poor communities can adopt to protect their surroundings instead of relying on government interventions for safety (Newman, 1996).

The defensible space theory consists of three central ideas which explain factors that contribute to either safe or unsafe neighbourhoods. These are *territoriality*, *surveillance*, and *image/lieu* (Reynald & Elffers, 2009). *Territoriality* refers to the redesigning of specific spaces so that they can be viewed as supervised and guarded to deter potential criminals from accessing those spaces (Zen & Mohamad, 2014). Strategies for increasing territoriality include installing physical and symbolic barriers. Physical barriers include installing proper fencing, gateways, burglar guards, security systems, and locks. On the other hand, Symbolic barriers include using signs and markings to convey a message of restricted access into a place/space (Reynald & Elffers, 2009). MacDonald and Gifford (1989) argue that marking or personalising an area prevents intrusion. Both physical and symbolic barriers can be applied simultaneously for improved security. For example, in the context of this study, schoolchildren walking to and from school can rely on adult chaperones to increase their territoriality. Adults in this instance are the physical barrier against perpetrators of SRGBV against children.

*Surveillance* refers to the ability of a physical design to provide a clear view of its surroundings for residents. According to Newman (1975), if there is increased and clear surveillance, then it will be easy to identify potential threat and/or criminals. A clear view of a residential environment helps residents to be aware of any unwanted events or behaviours in their community (Shjarback, 2014). Increased surveillance allows both the occupants and neighbours of residential areas to timeously supervise each other's spaces to prevent intrusion (Zen & Mohamad, 2014). According to Mair and Mair (2003), streets should consist of diverse spaces such as houses, churches, and parks that attract more people into an area, thus allowing for all-day surveillance. Unfortunately, houses in rural areas are densely populated and sparsely located, thus resulting in less natural surveillance amongst neighbours. However, if households were to frequently take turns walking around their neighbourhoods, then there could

be more natural surveillance; thus, providing schoolchildren with protection against SRGBV.

Finally, *Image/lieu* refers to techniques applied by communities to make a space appear less isolated and vulnerable (Reynald & Elffers, 2009). This can be achieved by building structures such as police stations that will make an area less vulnerable to intrusions and offer protection to its residents. Zen and Mohamad (2014) also attest that the *image/lieu* concept focuses on spaces that may be regarded as safe due to police visibility. Police visibility makes the community feel safe, knowing they will be provided with assistance should they approach the police stations. However, unresponsive and corrupted police personnel still make communities unsafe for residents, especially in South Africa (Faull, 2011). Notwithstanding that, communities can create their safety forums such as the neighbourhood watches as mentioned above, to improve security and make schoolchildren less vulnerable to violent and criminal activities.

The Defensible Space Theory acknowledges that people are able to identify risky spaces/places in their communities, and thus are able to apply safety measures to protect themselves, their properties, and the broader community. In this regard, Newman (1975) advances avoidance and self-reliant strategies as some of the measures that communities use to guard and protect their social environments independently of government interventions. The research presented in this dissertation examined the social geographies that heightened children's vulnerability to SRGBV on their walking school journeys in their poor and resource-limited rural communities. Moreover, the study explored the ways and means in which schoolchildren used their agency to negotiate spatial and personal safety as they navigate dangerous social geographies on their daily school journeys. Thus, the Defensible Space theory was useful in analysing children's understandings of the spaces/places that rendered them vulnerable to forms of SRGBV, and the strategies they used or relied upon to negotiate their safety on the school journey.

## **2.6 Synthesis**

The aim of this chapter was twofold. First, the chapter reviewed global and local literature on SRGBV by paying a particular focus on children's school journeys. The review revealed that SRGBV is indeed a global concern that continues to be a challenge for children who walk to school. Children face several forms of victimisation as they take on this journey. What is more, their vulnerability to SRGBV is heightened in contexts that are characterised by chronic poverty, high rates of violence and crime, as well as the enduring system of heteropatriarchy which establishes gender and age-based hierarchies. Within this context, children occupy marginal roles defined by a sense of subordination, submission to violence, fear and victimisation. The literature revealed several psychosocial impacts that SRGBV on the school journey has on children. This includes fear, anxiety, anti-social behaviour, school avoidance, dropping out of school, and experiencing depression, among others. Finally, while the school journey is regarded as dangerous, the literature review revealed two key strategies that children employed for negotiating their safety. These are avoidance strategies and risk-confronting strategies. These strategies are heavily reliant on available community and individual resources.

Second, it outlined Newman's (1975) Defensible Space Theory the theoretical lens which guided analysis in the study. The theory argues that socio-geographic safety is possible when individuals feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for their immediate environment. Within this context, as Newman (1975) suggests, perpetrators of violence become isolated in their criminal acts because his hold on a specific space/place is removed through community safety initiatives. In other words, a defensible space is one where a buffer is created or established in and around an area/community to avert or dissuade criminal acts such as violence. In this regard, a defensible space works to curb or stop violence by applying specific mechanisms such as *territoriality*, *surveillance*, and *image/lieu*, which were details in length in a section above.

The next chapter outlines the study design and the research methodology used to collect and analyse data.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As detailed in Chapter One, this study was conceptualised to examine the social geographies that primary schoolchildren in a rural community identified as sites that increased their vulnerability to SRGBV on the school journey. The study also explored how these children negotiated their safety against SRGBV as they navigated their school journey. The previous chapter provided a review of relevant literature on the topic of SRGBV and children's school journeys. It also outlined the theoretical lens that informed analysis in the study. This chapter details the research methodology which guided the study.

#### **3.2 Methodological Paradigm**

Methodologically, this study was located within the humanistic geography paradigm. According to Tuan (1976), humanistic geography is the study of people's experiences and their understandings of space/place and the natural world. Building on Tuan's understanding, Seamon and Lundberg (2016) describe humanistic geography as a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between humans and their environment; a relationship that considers individual and group experiences and the meanings they attach to space/place and other related geographic phenomena. As a philosophy, it studies people's subjective geographical understandings and values (Gregory et al., 2011). In other words, it offers a humanistic perspective to geographic studies (Tani, 2017) by examining geographic knowledge in all manner of human forms (Gregory et al., 2011).

Tuan (1976) has long since argued that evidence and understandings of humanistic geography should emerge from knowledge grounded in individual experiences. Heeding this call, this study worked towards engaging with primary schoolchildren to understand their perspectives and experiences of social geographies they identified as fuelling their vulnerability to SRGBV on the school journey (Chabangu, 2014; Jamme et al., 2018). In so doing, this study relied on the richness and complexities of the

experiences of the participants to locate their understandings of the social geographies of SRGBV on the school journey (Mosavel et al., 2012; Ohmer & Owens, 2013). Seamon and Lundberg (2016, p.4) argue that the emphasis of humanistic geography is “on methodologies of engagement that allow researchers to encounter and understand the worlds and experiences of their participants carefully, accurately, and comprehensively. Located within humanistic geography, this study used a variety of participatory qualitative research methods to understand participants’ perceptions and experiences of SRGBV on the school journey to enrich analysis and reach triangulation.

### **3.3 Research Site and Study Context**

This study was located in a small rural area known as Taylor’s Halt northwest of the city of Pietermaritzburg, in the Vulindlela District. This district is located approximately 30 km from the Pietermaritzburg Central Business District (CBD) and consist of traditionalist residential areas (Mchunu, 2013). Traditionalist residential areas are often underdeveloped, thus resulting in residents experiencing chronic poverty. Also, the people in these areas are governed and should abide by traditional and customary law, thus limiting their growth and empowerment. This rural area is densely populated, resulting in restricted access to proper housing services, leading to people creating informal settlements on this area’s fringes (Nel, Epprecht & Haswell, 2021). Overcrowding result in increased competition for employment, education, and access to services. Indeed, Isikhungusethu (2016) affirms that this area is characterised by low educational attainments and high unemployment rates. Thus, residents are dependent on state-funded social grants and subsistence agricultural production. Social grants seldom cover all household expenses, and due to bad weather conditions and lack of adequate agricultural resources, subsistence agriculture tends to produce less yield.

The District under study is known for its high levels of violence and crime (SAPS Crime Stats, 2019). Violence dates back to the height of the apartheid era in the 1980’s, the area experienced several politically-motivated conflicts (Merret, 2013). Mchunu (2013); Mchunu (2021) affirms that the area’s history of violence has had negative

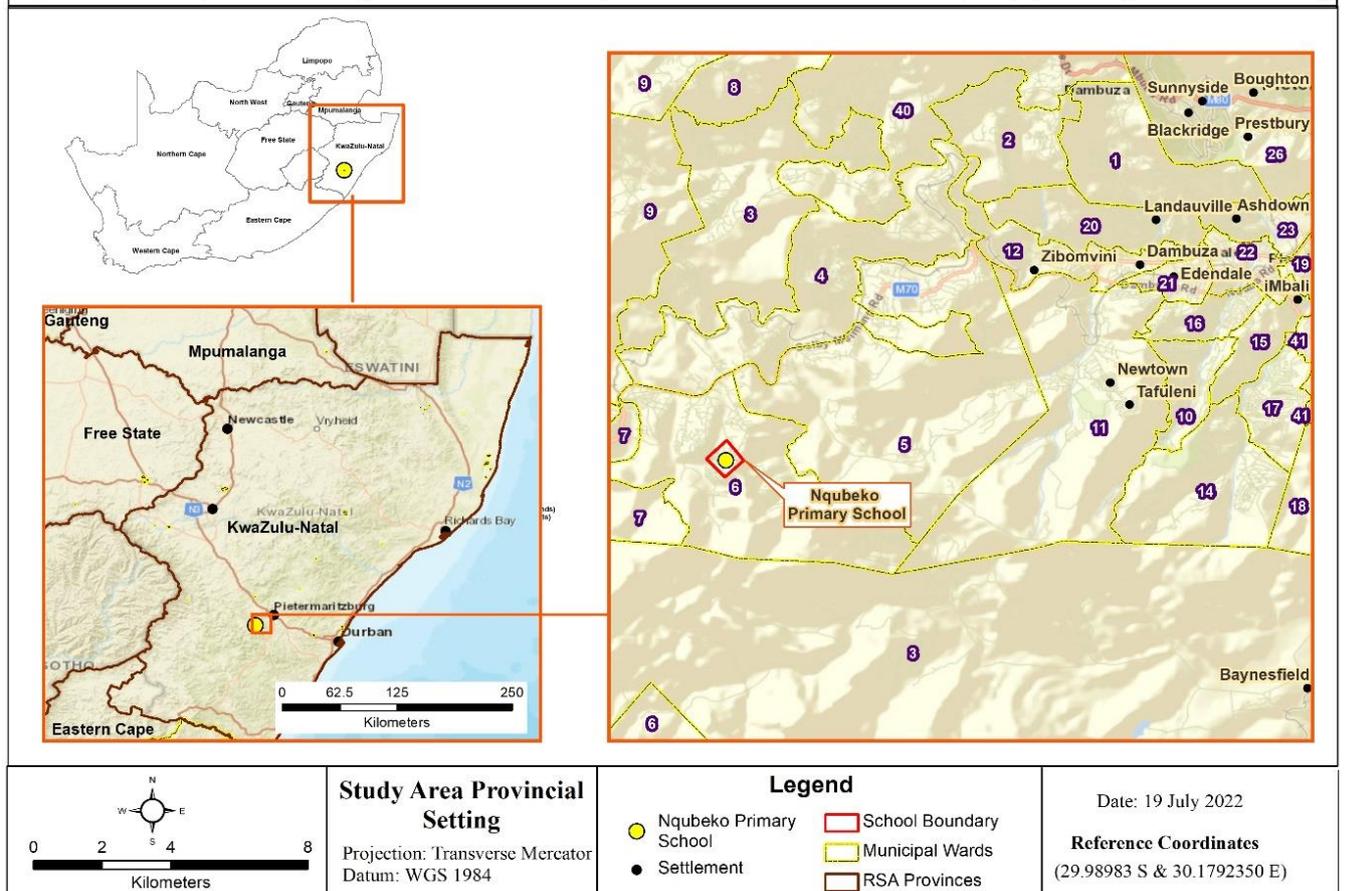
implications for residents; resulting in continuous violence in this area. However, there is no reliable static of violence in Taylors Halt in relation to neighbouring areas or the whole of KZN. In Taylors Halt, around 117 cases of assault, 23 cases of attempted murder, and 69 cases of sexual offenses were reported for this area in the period 2018-2019 (SAPS Crime Stats, 2019).

KZN is one of three poorest provinces in South Africa and has the largest number of children who walk to school (Stats SA, 2020), with more than two million secondary and primary school children walk to school. According to IHRC (2021), South African schoolchildren on average walk for over an hour to get to school. Literature suggests that the long and unsupervised school journey is laden with risk and danger (Mosavel et al., 2012). The school journey is thus likely to be marred with violence.

### **3.3.1 Selection of the school**

The selected school was Nqubeko Primary School (see Figure 3.1) located in Taylor's Halt, Vulindlela District, near PMB. This school was selected as part of the broader WSB project because of its location in a rural area characterised by unpaved roads; making it difficult for public and private transport to navigate the area.

**Nqubeko Primary School in Taylor's Halt community within Msunduzi Local Municipality (Ward 6), Pietermaritzburg**



**Figure 3: 1** Map of the study location.

Nqubeko is located in an area where the unemployment rate is high (Isikhungusethu, 2016; Nel, Epprecht & Haswell, 2021), and as a result, parents cannot afford transportation fees. Furthermore, the government has not provided learner transport for this school, resulting in schoolchildren walking long distance to and from school. Most importantly, the school enrolls children aged between 10 and 14 years, that were regarded a suitable sample to share insights of SRGBV on the school journey.

### 3.4 Participant Recruitment and Selection

This study used purposive sampling, which is regarded as a judgment sampling method because the selection of participants is influenced by their characteristics or qualities (Campbell et al., 2020). The researcher looks for and finds a sample that

meets the requirements of a study or those participants who might be able to provide information in response to the study’s objectives or research questions. These participants often provide information based on their views, experiences, and knowledge (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Purposive sampling was the most suitable method of recruiting participants because it provided a relevant sample to meet the objectives of this study (Marshall, 1996).

The sampling and recruitment for this study was done during the early phases of the WSB project by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) Community Programmes and Stakeholder Relations Unit (CPSRU). The researcher was not part of the recruitment team and process. The CPSRU recruited about 309 participants, including schoolchildren from other schools, parents, and relevant stakeholders. However, the study reported in this dissertation focused only on schoolchildren from Nqubeko Primary School. Before their recruitment into the WSB Project, the CPSRU conducted presentations in schools in the area detailing the project to both children and staff. The purpose of the presentations was to provide information about the research to help participants make informed decisions about their participation.

This study recruited 20 children who were between the ages of 10 and 14 years who walked at minimum, a five kilometre roundtrip to and from school, without adult supervision. Demographic information for each participant is presented in Table 3.1 below. Sampling these 20 participants is a limitation to this study, as this sample is too small, therefore, not a representation of the whole population, and since it was purposefully sampled, it can possibly yield biased results.

**Table 3:1 Participant's Biographical Information**

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Grade</i>
Zanele	Girl	12	5
Amanda	Girl	12	6
Andile	Boy	11	5
Lulama	Girl	13	7
Nosipho	Girl	11	5
Sisanda	Girl	12	5
Zama	Girl	13	7
Vuyile	Girl	12	6

Thandeka	Girl	12	6
Zinhle	Girl	14	7
Vusi	Boy	11	6
Zamani	Boy	13	7
Mxolisi	Boy	11	6
Sandile	Boy	11	5
Lungelo	Boy	11	5
Mando	Boy	12	6
Luckily	Boy	12	5
Zekhethelo	Girl	11	6
Bongani	Boy	12	5
Nothani	Girl	12	7

### 3.5 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative participatory research design. Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g., text, photos, drawings, audio-visual) to understand a particular phenomenon, experiences, and perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study's data gathering tools included participatory visual methods such as participatory mapping, and photovoice that were supplemented by focus group discussions. Participatory research methods were selected because they offer flexibility in investigating school-related issues (Ngidi & Moletsane, 2019; Ngidi, 2022b). These methods have been used in other studies that involve young people to investigate and understand their social and environmental issues (Trajber et al., 2019; McOmber, McNamara & McKune, 2022).

#### 3.5.1 Participatory Visual Methodologies

Participatory visual methodologies (PVM) refer to a set of methods that assist participants in finding a way to represent their knowledge and share their understanding or experience of the world (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2012; McCarthy & Muthuri, 2018). PVM give participants a platform to present their perspectives in artistic forms rather than descriptive text to make it easier for the participant to convey their views and for the audience to engage with the data (Richards, 2011). These methodologies constitute different creative techniques, including drawings, still and moving pictures (a series of pictures put together in a sequence to tell a story), maps,

and videos (Lomax, 2012, Reavey, 2020). For example, Ngidi (2020) employed a variety of PVM (drawings, collage, photovoice and storyboards) to understand orphan's vulnerability to sexual violence in a secondary school in Durban. These methods worked successfully together in engaging learners in communicating about their vulnerability to sexual violence.

These methods prioritise young people's daily experiences in conducting research. Thus, they capture meaningful child-generated and child-centred understandings and experiences of their daily lives (Barley & Russell, 2019; Schwab Cartas, Caldairou-Bessette & Mitchell, 2022.). PVM make children co-researchers, thus, removing any power imbalances between the researcher and participants (Clark, 2010; Packard, 2008). This study employed PVM because they remove any power imbalances between the researcher and the participants, allowing participants to freely express their views in relation to SRGBV on their school journey.

### **3.5.1.1 Participatory Mapping**

Participatory mapping is a map-making process that uses pen/pencil and paper to draw sketches to capture or represent the perspectives of the spatial relationships of individuals or groups (Lynam et al., 2007). This process uses local people's knowledge about their environments to produce maps (Perkins, 2007). Participatory mapping is a tool for identifying community needs and challenges and advocate for social change through the production of community maps that informs decision making (Duesa et al., 2022). It is a bottom-up approach in which local communities voice their concerns before implementing interventional strategies (Hossen, 2016). It is thus essential to get views from people from the grassroots, in this instance, schoolchildren, about their experiences of SRGBV on the journey to and from school before implementing interventional strategies such as the WSB to reduce SRGBV on this journey

Participatory mapping has been employed in studies that examined social spaces that rendered schoolchildren vulnerable to SRGBV (Preto et al., 2016; Morojele, Motsa & Hlophe, 2017; Duesa et al., 2022). For example, Ngidi and Essack (2022), used participatory mapping with a group of South African schoolchildren as a method to for them to map their school journey and identify spaces they perceived as unsafe on

this journey. maps produced by children pointed to several areas that posed a threat to children's safety as they journeyed to school. According to Cochrane and Corbett (2020) participatory mapping is useful when the study itself is related to the participant's experiences and revolves around their spaces such as home and school. This methodology allows participants to share their views and experiences about their surroundings. The current study employed participatory mapping to gain schoolchildren's understandings on their social geographies, and from this understanding, examine the spaces/places that made them vulnerable to SRGBV on the school journey.

#### **3.5.1.1.1 Using Participatory Mapping to Generate Data**

The participatory mapping process was conducted at the HSRC Research Offices, boardroom space. Details on the mapping activity were first explained to participants, including guidelines for naming places on maps. For example, they could not include specific places' names on the maps. Participants were also discouraged from writing their names on the maps; instead, they used their assigned pseudonyms. They were allowed to include anything they felt was related to SRGBV on their school journey on their maps. As an example, for the participants, the researcher produced a map of the journey I travelled to and from school. In that map I emphasised spaces that increased my vulnerability to SRGBV, this served as a prompt and a guide to participants on what was expected of them. After that, participants were then asked to produce maps of their own.

Participants were given stationery such as coloured pens, crayons, pencils, and A3 sheets to start their mapping process. After mapping out their journey to and from school, they were given stickers of different colours to mark spaces that they perceived as '*safe*', '*unsafe*' and '*partially safe*.' Red-coloured stickers were used for unsafe spaces, orange stickers for partially safe spaces, and green stickers for safe spaces. However, the focus of the study was on unsafe spaces that increased schoolchildren's vulnerability to SRBV on their journey to and from school. Spaces such as '*safe*' and '*partially safe*' allowed the researcher to fully understand the spaces that children interacted with on their journey to and from school. After labelling different spaces with stickers, participants were asked to write a short description of the marked spaces

elaborating factors that contributed to that space being labelled safe, unsafe, and partially safe. Participants were given 60 minutes for this activity. An additional 15 minutes was allocated to those participants who could not finish the activity in time.

### **3.5.1.2 Photovoice**

Photovoice is a participatory action research technique developed in the 1990s as a tool to involve community members in tackling community-specific issues (Liebenberg, 2018; Wang, 1999). It encourages community members to actively engage with issues through photography to advocate for change to improve their communities (Peabody, 2013). This method includes giving cameras to participants to take pictures of their surroundings and using those pictures to influence decision-making. It uses visual photos to serve as evidence, and it promotes an efficient technique of sharing knowledge and experiences (Nykiforuk, Vallianatos & Nieuwendyk, 2011; Suprpto et al., 2020; Wang & Burris, 1997). Photovoice has been previously used with much older children allowing them a platform to speak about sensitive issues such as sexual violence (see Clark, 2011; Ngidi & Moletsane, 2019).

Photovoice has three main aims, namely, to give people a platform to take note and reflect on the issues and challenges in their communities, to create debates and discussions around issues depicted by the photographs, and to inform decision making (Simmonds, Roux & Avest, 2015; Suprpto et al., 2020; Barry et al., 2021). This implies that photovoice enables participants to raise concerns about their communities, open discussions around those issues to gather different views, and then use the outcome from the photos and discussions to inform decision-making. This methodology aims to integrate, empower, and provide equality between participants and the researcher for efficient data collection (Nykiforuk Vallianatos & Nieuwendyk, 2011). Photovoice was employed in this study to allow schoolchildren to freely capture social spaces that increased their vulnerability to SRGBV to and from school, use these photos to engage with other participants with similar or different views and use the outcome of the engagements to inform decision on the implementation of the WSB in this community.

### **3.5.1.2.1 Using Photovoice to Generate Data**

The researcher together with the HSRC's qualitative data collection team met up with the participants at their school, after school to discuss the details of the photovoice process. Issues around ethics were laid out clearly for the participants to understand. They were asked not to take pictures with recognizable features such as people's faces and tuckshop names. Participants were assigned tablets to photograph spaces they perceived as unsafe on their journey to and from school. Participants were then divided into two groups, one group left with the researcher, whereas the others walked with an HSRC employee. Participants identified and agreed on one common route that interlinked the majority of them; that is the route that they walked with the researcher. Participants started embarking on their journey and began photographing different spaces that they walked across on their journey to and from school. They captured photographs in response to the prompts, "*Take photographs of the things that make you feel unsafe (for example using roads, people and places)*" and "*Take photographs of the things that you do to make you feel safe (for example using safe routes and places)*". Children were not restricted to taking a certain number of pictures, though only a few could be placed on their A3 sheets. They depicted to the researcher spaces that increased their vulnerability to SRGBV so that the researcher would have a clear picture of their experiences on their journey to and from school. The researcher walked children back to their homes to ensure their safety and engage with the spaces they were vulnerable to.

### **3.5.2 Focus Group Discussion**

FGD are a qualitative method of data collection that involves group discussions among people who share similar experiences and backgrounds to address specific issues (Nyumb et al., 2018). A FGD usually lasts for an hour or two, guided by a facilitator who ensures that all participants get a fair chance to share their opinions (Seal, Bogart & Ehrhardt, 1998). The aim of the FGD is not for all the participants to agree on something but to uncover each participant's experiences and views in detail in relation to shared group experiences. The facilitator asks questions to keep the discussion going to gain more information from the participants. These discussions must be held in a friendly environment for participants to feel comfortable enough to share their

views (Hennink, 2013). FGDs were employed in this study as they allowed me, the researcher, to understand schoolchildren's shared experiences of SRGBV on the journey to and from school.

### **3.5.2.1 Using FGD for Gathering Data**

An FGD followed the mapping and the photovoice activities to allow the participants an opportunity to give meaning to their maps and photos (See attached appendix A). Overall, four FGDs with five participants each were conducted for this study. Two FGDs were a combination of both girls and boys. While one was only for girls and the other one was only for boys. This approach was used to understand girls' experiences of SRGBV in relation to those of boys, vice versa. Also the researcher wanted to understand differences and or similarities of data collected amongst boys only, girls only and as a collective. Since this study formed part of a larger study, two FGDs were conducted by HSRC facilitators, while the other two were facilitated by the researcher together with an HSRC data collector who was taking notes. Each participant was given an opportunity to take the researcher and other participants through his/her map or photos. Other participants were allowed to add or ask questions regarding each participant's map/photo since all participants were walking almost the same routes to school. Participants were allowed to engage on incidents of SRGBV on the journey to and from school that they have seen, heard about, and experienced. They were also allowed to suggest techniques to negotiate safety on their journey to and from school. They also suggested strategies to minimise SRGV on their way to and from school. All the discussions were audio-recorded for transcription and translation purposes.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data analysis helps researcher to discover useful information through an analytical technique (Cui, 2019). Data collected from participants were analysed through visual data analysis techniques and the thematic analysis using guidelines stipulated by Braun and Clarke (2006). The thematic analysis method analysed data from FGD, maps, and photos and the accompanying descriptions. Data analysis for this study was done mostly by the researcher, however some transcripts from the FGDs were done by fellow HSRC colleagues, those transcripts were further analysed by the researcher.

### **3.6.1 Visual Data and Thematic Data Analysis**

This study employed visual data analysis to analyse visual data such as maps and photos, thematic data analysis was used for text data. These methods were used simultaneously because visual data was always accompanied by text data to give meaning to the artefacts. Visual data analysis is the process of interacting and reasoning with visual data resulting in the discovery of patterns and themes that make up information that can be used to influence decision making (Cui, 2019). Concurrently, thematic analysis is a process whereby the researcher identifies, organises then categorises themes within a dataset (Braun et al., 2019). Themes can be defined as elements drawn from patterns identified in the participants' views, feelings, and experiences (Aronson, 1995). Both methods allow the researcher to understand and make sense of the experiences or perspectives shared by participants (Braun et al., 2019). These methods were employed to help researchers explore, interact with, and understand different datasets (Battle et al., 2018). Steps used on visual and thematic data analysis overlap, as a result, the analyses of visual and thematic data in this study was carried out in six steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### **3.6.1.1 Step One: Familiarisation with the data**

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher must be familiar with the depth and content of the collected data so to fully get the meaning of the data. Familiarising with data involves repeatedly reading and reviewing the data, as well as actively searching for patterns and meanings. A researcher should be familiar with the data before generating codes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To familiarise myself with the data, I went back to study the maps and photographs taken by participants to seek meaning to the visuals comparing it to the text data. I then read descriptions accompanying maps and photos until I fully understood the meanings behind each map/photograph. Thereafter, I listened to the FGD recordings accompanying the mapping and photovoice activity and started transcribing in IsiZulu. I listened to the recordings for the second time while reading my transcripts.

After I was satisfied that the transcripts matched the recordings, I then translated the information to English. I then read the English transcripts while comparing it to the maps/photographs. I transcribed four recordings in total from the FGD. I thereafter, proceeded to the English transcript, comparing it to the IsiZulu transcripts and descriptions on photos and maps. After I was satisfied that I was familiar with the data, I then started producing codes.

### **3.6.1.2 Step Two: Producing initial codes**

The production of initial codes is the process of systematically working through the dataset to generate codes. Coding is done by identifying features from the raw data that are interesting and important to the researcher. Interesting codes are obtained from repeated patterns in the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To generate codes from the data as an analyst in this study, I started by producing ideas after familiarising with the data. I then looked for similarities from the ideas produced and then grouped similar ideas to form a code. Each code constituted of numerous ideas that were similar.

### **3.6.1.3 Step Three: Production of themes.**

After the data has been coded, it must be redefined; different codes are categorised into different themes (Aronson, 1995). This process includes analysing codes and considering how different codes can be integrated to form overarching themes. Plenty of collating codes can be put together to create main themes, whereas those fewer collating codes can be linked to form sub-themes. Other codes may not be integrated into major themes, and those codes can be discarded or saved as miscellaneous, so to use them separately from major themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After I coded the data, I revisited my codes and further analysed them to check for similarities or differences. Similar codes were grouped together to form significant codes. Those codes that were different were also linked to form overarching themes. Those codes which did not belong into any of the above categories were set aside to serve as unexpected minor themes.

#### **3.6.1.4 Step Four: Reviewing Themes**

This step is about redefining existing themes. This process exposes themes that were created through the integration of diverse data that further needed redefining. Separate themes that are supposed to be collated into one theme are integrated during this process. The fourth step also allows for the breaking down of major themes that are a collection of many and diverse codes. Themes should be distinguishable, while data within these themes should flow coherently (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To review themes in this study, I revised all the themes that I had already created to check if they did not need to be broken down into two or more themes. Themes that were an integration of plenty and diverse codes were then broken down into different codes. Similar themes that were previously separated were then integrated into a single theme.

#### **3.6.1.5 Step Five: Naming the themes**

This is the process of making sense of what each theme entails. The name given to each theme should represent the collated codes making up that theme to provide the reader with an idea of what the theme entails (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To name themes in this study, I went back to all the codes making up each theme, read out their names, and integrated them to develop a name that suits all the codes in the theme. The name of each theme was compared against its constituent codes to ensure it represents the codes and sub-themes that were used to make up that theme.

#### **3.6.1.6 Step Six: Producing a report**

This is the last step which is the final analysis of the themes and the write-up of the report. This step represents complex data in a form that is easier to understand yet detailed to the reader. The report or the write-up should provide enough detail of the themes representing the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To present the themes from this study; samples of maps and pictures together with their descriptions were used. This allowed for efficient reading and understanding of findings by the audience. All the major and sub-themes were visible in the final write-up as they represented the data that participants produced.

### **3.7 Assessing the Quality of the Research**

Assessing the quality of the research ensures that the study is reliable, yields accurate results, and is of high quality. It further looks at the researcher's confidence in the data collected, its interpretation, and all the data collection and analysis methods employed to ensure a high-quality study (Connelly, 2016). Assessing the quality of the research includes ensuring the validity and reliability of the study.

#### **3.7.1 Validity**

Validity in qualitative research is known as appropriateness. This ensures that a research project serves the purpose in which it was conducted by confirming that the findings respond to the research questions (Long & Johnson, 2000). This study ensured validity by first using the purposive sampling method to recruit participants. This sampling method ensured that participants with the qualities required by the study were recruited; thus, they could provide information that responded to the research questions. I frequently checked on the participants during data collection, ensuring that they were following researcher requests resulting in accurate findings. I also walked with the participants across through their communities to see for myself the spaces/places they navigated on their school journey. This allowed me to understand their visual artefacts.

#### **3.7.2 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the stability or consistency of the data collected (Houghton et al., 2013). I ensured the reliability of data collected by using a triangulation process. Triangulation is a process of gathering data using different methods and data sources (May & Pope, 1995). It allows the researcher to find similarities in the data collected through different methods. If different sources/methods yield the same results, then those results are most likely to be accurate. Data was collected from the participants in three datasets (i.e., maps, photos, and FGD). I then compared similarities in content from these three datasets to check if the findings were reliable. All three datasets yielded comparable findings, thus, proving that the data was reliable.

### **3.7.3 Rigour**

Rigour refers to the quality of the research (Given, 2008). Research can be of good or poor quality based on data collection methods and time spent collecting and analysing data, and compiling a report. To ensure rigor in this study, an appropriate sample was selected for this study to ensure. PVM were used to generate data. These methods removed any power differences between the researchers and the participants, thus allowing participants to voice their views freely. Also, adequate time was allocated for data gathering, analysis and writing this dissertation. Good quality research can also be a result of ensuring that the data collected is valid and reliable. As mentioned above, specific steps were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of results from this study.

### **3.8 Researcher Reflexivity**

Researcher reflexivity is a process whereby a researcher goes through a self-reflection process to create awareness about their feelings, experiences, and reasons for wanting to conduct a study (Sapkota, 2017). My lived experiences shaped my interest in pursuing a study of this nature. For example, I grew up in a resource-poor South African township, where I had to walk five kilometres to reach school (10 kilometres roundtrip). Living in a township and walking to and from school without adult supervision exposed me to several adverse experiences (see also, Mahlaba, 2014; Equal Education, 2019). Indeed, in South African townships, schools are much closer to residential areas compared to those in rural communities (Fataar, 2007); thus, schoolchildren do not have to walk long distances to access education. My case is always taken to be an exception in this context. However, both township and rural communities share a standard set of socio-economic challenges that include violence, crime, high unemployment, poorly-resourced public infrastructure and institutions, and a trend of low educational achievements (Department of Education, 2015, Meyer & Chetty, 2017). In the township in which I grew up, there remains competition to access the very few schools that remain high achieving and relatively better resourced (Hunter, 2015; Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019). For this reason, my parents enrolled me in a school over a one-hour walk from my home. The walk to school made me

vulnerable to different forms of SRGBV including sexual harassment, physical violence, bullying and mugging.

My interest in conducting a study of this nature was also sparked during briefing sessions when I participated in the WSB project in which my Honours Degree supervisor had recruited me to work as a Research Assistant. Learning about and understanding schoolchildren's vulnerability to SRGBV in resource-poor rural areas intrigued me and influenced me into further researching about this social issue. In engaging with the literature about SRGBV on the school journey, I realised that there was a paucity of literature focusing on violence outside the school's premises (Bhana, 2018; Sikhakhane, Muthukrishna & Martin, 2018; Gebru et al., 2022). The realisation that a study of this nature would contribute to the SRGBV body of literature encouraged me to conduct a study that extended the broader WSB intervention project. The broader WSB intervention project employed various participatory methods to generate data. This further heightened my interest and I wanted to explore other types of participatory methods such as photovoice.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

This study formed part of a larger study titled, *evaluating a walking school bus as a school-related gender-based violence intervention in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa* (also known as the Walking School Bus). A team of researchers, including my two supervisors for the dissertation, from the HSRC sought and received ethical approval from relevant gatekeepers. First, the KZN Department of Education granted permission to conduct the study (Appendix B). Thereafter, since participants were recruited from a school, permission to do research in an institution of education was sought and granted by the relevant school principal. Parents/caregivers gave written consent for their children to participate in the study (Appendix D), which the child participants gave written assent for their participation (Appendix E). All gatekeepers and participants were provided with written information about the study (Appendix C) prior to seeking their permission. Once I had received gatekeeper permission, I applied and was subsequently granted full ethical clearance to conduct the study as part of a Master's Degree research by the UKZN (HSSREC) (Ethics Number:

HSSREC/00000919/2019 (see Appendix A). It was only after the fulfilment of these processes that data gathering commenced.

Before each data gathering session, the participants were reminded of the consent forms they signed, including the fact that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any ramifications. Participants were also assured that their identities would be protected and kept anonymous throughout the study, including in any writings related to the study.

Regarding the production of visual artefact, and especially the photographs produced through photovoice activities, the participants were given a set of ethical practices they needed to adhere to for their own protection and those of others, including identifiable markers in and around their communities. An ethical guideline I emphasised was that the photographs they produced should not identify anyone, including community landmarks such as shops, schools, churches, etc. Moreover, to further negotiate good ethical practices in the study, I sought permission to use the participants' visual data for research purposes.

### **3.10 Synthesis**

This chapter outlined the methodology which guided data gathering in the study. First, the chapter presented the methodological paradigm which influenced the selected qualitative participatory visual approaches used to generate data. Thereafter, the chapter outlined the research approach, study site and context, participants and their recruitment, as well as data gathering steps. The chapter closed with a discussion on data analysis, trustworthiness of the data, and ethical practices followed throughout the study.

The following chapter discusses the findings from this study

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS: SOCIAL GEOGRAPHIES OF SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ON THE RURAL SCHOOL JOURNEY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research design and methodology for the study. This chapter presents findings in response to the first research question: *In what ways do primary schoolchildren from a resource-poor rural community identify, understand, and communicate about the social geographies that fuel their vulnerability to school-related gender-based violence on their walking school journeys?* The data analysed for this chapter was generated through photovoice and participatory mapping. Furthermore, FGD augmented the visual data. As discussed in Chapter One, the visual and thematic data analysis was informed by feminist geography, children's geographies, and the defensible space theory. In the following sections, I present findings that emerged from the analysis of data. Findings are organised around the following themes: social spaces as a source of danger for rural primary schoolchildren, dense bushes as geographies of sexual violence and the violent heteropatriarchal geographies of local taverns and socioeconomic public spaces that fuel SRGBV on the school journey.

#### 4.2 Social Spaces as a Source of Danger for Rural Primary Schoolchildren

Available scholarship affirms that schoolchildren who walk to school without adult supervision are at risk for several forms of violent experiences including harassment, abuse, and maltreatment (Lundon & Wesslund, 2016). My study extends the literature by examining the geographies of SRGBV on children's school journeys. As I discuss in the following sections, the participants identified several social spaces as unsafe, and, in which, forms of SRGBV occurred. To illustrate, 12-year-old Zanele produced a map (Figure 4.1) of her community with a particular focus on the social spaces that posed a threat to her safety. Using red-colored adhesive stickers, Zanele pointed to

four such spaces. These included a nearby bush, taverns, unmaintained houses, and a car wash.



**Figure 4: 1** Zanele's map of her school (Zanele, girl, 12 years, Participatory Mapping).

Describing her map and pointing to these unsafe spaces, Zanele had the following to say:

*(...) over here it is school, here it is home, here it is the tavern, over here is my neighbour, over here is the tuck shop, over here is the forest, this is the grounds which also have bushes around it, little pathways are here, these are houses that have not been finished and are still under construction where men sit and smoke. Sometimes, they smoke whoonga (an illegal street-drug containing various ingredients with the main ones being heroin and cannabis). Over here, it is the car wash; this is where cars cause traffic, at the car wash. When I leave home for school, I pass the tavern, and at the tavern, there are men who are usually drunk, and they shout at us and others get into altercations then they shoot at each other, and then we end up being hurt, over here in the bush, there are scary people that you walk pass and they might hurt you (Zanele, girl, 12 years).*

Available scholarship has been useful in locating school premises as dangerous geographies for schoolchildren (Fink et al., 2018; Ngidi, 2022a; Ngidi & Moletsane, 2018; Breekze et al., 2021). Within the school's premises, scholarship reports that it is mostly male teachers and schoolboys who perpetrate violence, with girls often positioned as targets (Bhana, 2018; Ngidi, 2022b). My dissertation extends this scholarship by focusing on violence against children in spaces outside the school premises, and as they journey by foot to and from their schools. As such, participants such as Zanele (cited above) noted, through their maps, the multiple social geographies that posed a risk for SRGBV in the lives of primary schoolchildren who walk the school journey. As I discuss in the sections that follow, there is an observable trend in the violence that primary schoolchildren are exposed to when they take the school journey. This trend is linked to the existing system of heteropatriarchy, toxic masculinity, as well as gender-and-age-based sociocultural hierarchies in the communities where the participants lived and attended school. This trend was demonstrated by 12-year-old Amanda in the extract below:

*Yes, it is over here (unoccupied house), it is just that I was not able to draw it, when you walk up here there is another man when I was walking, it was raining and he kept saying come here my niece, come here niece and then I said no because my mother said I should never enter that house no matter how much it is raining and then I walked passed and this one girl we were walking with who went inside that house, she was in grade 4, she went in and then after that, she came out crying and doing all those types of things and then when we asked her why she was crying when we got close to her home and she said that those men raped her (Amanda, girl, 12 years).*

Speaking about their school journey, participants, such as Amanda, demonstrated an awareness of the dangers of both public and private social geographies in their rural communities. Not only were the primary schoolchildren in this study able to provide visual artefacts of their communities, but they were also able to detail the nature, scope, and extent of the harm they faced on the unsafe geographies they traversed on their school journeys. For example, Amanda (cited above) spoke of a debilitated and unoccupied house she passed by on her walk to school where a man who referred to her as “*umshana*” (his niece in isiZulu) had once harassed her. This man was not her biological uncle, and according to Amanda, he had once raped a Grade Four primary



**Figure 4: 2** Thandeka's map of her school journey (Thandeka, girl, 12 years, Participatory Mapping).

According to Thandeka, the bush represented a place where the rape occurred.

*We continued walking [with my school peers] and I heard that at this place they rape people, and I told them (the school peers) that we should not go next to the bush. I told them we should not walk this side, and they did not believe me, they said that I am lying (Thandeka, girl, 12 years).*

Zekhethelo reported a similar sentiment by highlighting how she had warned her friends about walking near the bush.

*When we walk [to school] ...I warn them (school peers) after we have passed that a girl was kidnapped, I tell them, and they do not listen (Zekhethelo, girl, 11 years)*

The schoolgirls who participated in this study seemed to have been aware of their risk of experiencing sexual violence when they walked near or through dense bushes to get to their respective schools. Armed with this knowledge, Thandeka and Zekhethelo used the walk to school to warn their peers of the lurking dangers associated with dense bushes in their communities. Nonetheless, as the two girls reported, their friends did not take heed of these warnings.

Participants further described the dense bushes in their communities as spaces of male sexual tyranny, in which schoolchildren were overpowered and sexually assaulted by men and other male youths from the neighbourhoods (see also, Doan, 2010).

*Over here (in the bushes), girls are grabbed. Those guys that smoke want to rape them; those guys that smoke do so in these bushes where schoolchildren pass and then they grab us and if you fight, they fight you back and might also shoot at you (Vuyile, girl, 12 years).*

Participants went as far as reporting cases of girls from their communities who had succumbed to sexual assaults as they walked through the bushes to reach their

respective schools. Relaying the experience of one Grade 11 girl who was assaulted in the bush (Figure 4.3), 13-year-old Lulama had the following to say:

*There is a girl that was passing here. She is older [than me], and I think she is in Grade 11, she was passing here, men were sitting around here then they abducted her. I do not know what happened after that, but her mother told my mother about this... and that we will be abducted just like how her child was abducted and raped by men in the bush (Lulama, girl, 13 years).*



**Figure 4: 3** A group of trees on the route to school (Lulama, girl, 13 years).

Affirming what Lulama had said, 13-year-old Zama asserted that,

*In the bush, there is a place called Room Eight. There are men who live there who take kids, rape them, cut up their bodies, and take them to a sangoma (traditional healer) (Zama, girl, 13 years)*

Zama's reference to a place called *Room Eight* is worth exploring a bit more. *Room Eight* is a colloquial term that young people in rural and township communities of South Africa use to describe male-dominated spaces (spaces that have been carved for male occupation and use). The term emerged in the late 1990s from a popular

television comedy series called *Emzini Wezinsizwa* (literally, male residence or male-occupied house). *Emzini Wezinsizwa* was a hostel-based sitcom that revolved around the lives of five adult men who had moved to the city of Johannesburg from their diverse rural communities to either work or look for employment. These five men shared a single hostel apartment which was identified as Room Eight. While the series was comedic in orientation and genre, it focused on important topics that revolved around toxic masculinity, unemployment, poverty, crime, and violence. In fact, the storyline seldom unfolded outside the premises of Room Eight; an apartment where the presence of women was only visible when negotiated with men. Historically, hostels in South Africa emerged in the early post-colonial period as low-cost settlements for rural men who sought employment in the mining sector around Johannesburg.

The participant's use of the term *Room Eight* in this study is read within this broader context. It suggests that the dense bushes in and around their communities were heteropatriarchal social geographies where the performance of toxic masculinities was endorsed. This, in turn, placed the lives of schoolchildren, and girls particularly, in harm's way. In this way, the findings demonstrate that primary schoolchildren in the rural neighbourhoods I studied, understood dense bushes as not only the geographies of SRGBV, but also as male-designated spaces

These findings illustrate the extent of restrictions on girls' mobility, space, and social behaviour. In other words, men and other male youths in these communities used dense bushes, resulting in schoolchildren feeling restricted and unsafe. Children feared these bushes. As such, dense bushes were cited as childhood geographies of fear and associated danger. These geographies were feared by children because they were known for undermining children's bodily autonomy. This was illustrated through such actions as grabbing and sexually harassing and assaulting children. Schoolchildren perceived bushes as controlling their spatial autonomy. Children's navigation of these spaces was dependent on the violence and often intrusive actions of men. While men had the freedom to navigate and use the bushes, schoolchildren were kept in check through gross sexual violations

Further alarming is the schoolchildren's fear of being killed and having their body parts mutilated for making *muti* (traditional medicine that is often associated with witchcraft). 13-year-old Zama said that "*there are men who live there who take kids, rape them, cut up their bodies, and take them to a sangoma (traditional healer)* (Zama, girl, 13 years). Children murders for *muti*-making are constantly on the rise and have been documented and reported in the South African media (Khanyile, 2018; Nkosi, 2022). The increasing number of young children being killed and mutilated (Sinovuyo & Sibanyoni, 2021) is because of the belief that their organs yield powerful and stronger *muti* than those of older children and adults (Søren Ventegodt & Kordova, 2016).

Johansson, Johansson and Andersson (2018) suggest that dense bushes that often mushroom around chronically poor neighbourhoods are a source of danger for children. According to these scholars, dense bushes are spaces that attract a number of criminal and violent activities that are often perpetrated by young men. Using their maps and photos and accompanying narratives from FGD, the participants in this study suggested that dense bushes in their rural neighbourhoods were spaces where multiple forms of GBV occurred. This is, however, not a new finding in South African studies. For example, in one study with schoolchildren from three resource-poor townships, Ngidi, Moletsane and Essack (2021) found that schoolchildren feared walking through or pass dense bushes in and around their neighbourhoods. Participants in that study further cited their concerns about forms of sexual violence, which included rape, abduction, and murder (see also, Ngidi, 2022a). Likewise, in another study based in Gauteng and Limpopo rural communities in South Africa, Strassburg and colleagues (2010) reported that girls feared abduction and rape when they travelled pass dense bushes. The authors concluded that cases of abduction, rape, and the removal of children's body parts (reported in the media) justified the fear reported by their participants.

#### **4.4 Local Taverns as Social Geographies of Heteropatriarchy**

Almost all the participants identified and agreed that local taverns in and around their rural communities were social geographies of harassment and violence. Taverns were, therefore, identified as heteropatriarchal spaces because they were dominated by men

who were patriarchal and regarded women and girls as weak and dominatable (Arvin et al., 2013; Ngidi, 2022b; Ngidi & Essack, 2022). As illustrated in Figure 4.4, below, participants marked taverns with red adhesive stickers to imply that these spaces were dangerous for children who walked to school.



**Figure 4: 4** Nosipho's map of her school journey (Nosipho, Girl, 11 years, Participatory Mapping).

In FGD, participants cited taverns as heteropatriarchal spaces that were occupied by intoxicated patrons (mostly adult and young men) who harassed and threatened schoolchildren. Moreover, the participants expressed distress and fear about walking pass taverns on their daily school journeys. A primary fear expressed by girls was concerned with the experience of physical and sexual victimisation. As a result, Nosipho said;

*Sometimes it is unsafe because at Zenzele you cannot go further down where people drink. You cannot go up; it is possible to pass by the toilets where people urinate, and someone might grab you and drag you into the toilet and then rape you; we were also told not to urinate in those toilets. At Sgubhu when you walk pass, there is a tavern and then there is a place where they sell things, when you are going pass, you first start at the tavern, then you go to where they are selling things, it is possible for someone to grab you (Nosipho, girl, 11 years).*

*A man usually drinks traditional beer here; when he is drunk, he calls us girls and offers us Two Rands. This man stopped one girl in the morning, and the girl came back crying, saying that he wanted to rape her. She went back home because she was scared, and she ended up changing to another school (Nothani, girl, 12 years).*

In contrast to girls' fear of sexual victimisation, the boys in this study spoke mostly of experiences related to emotional and verbal abuse they faced when they walked near taverns.

*On the route from Nyambose area, we pass by unsafe places. This route passes by a house that sells alcohol. When people are drunk, they swear at us with words that hurt us emotionally (Mxolisi, boy, 11 years).*

*We do not feel safe as we pass the place that sells beer as there are intoxicated people who insult us, calling us our mother's assholes (Sandile, boy, 11 years)*

The defensible space theory acknowledges that spaces with unrestricted access tend to be violent and infiltrated with crime. This was the case with taverns in this study, where participants revealed the violent and harassing nature of tavern male patrons that they interacted with on the school journey. Girls reported fear of passing by taverns as they perceived the male patrons as people who may increase their vulnerability to sexual violence such as rape. Another study reported similar findings. For example, in their study on children's school journeys in Ghana, Malawi, and South Africa, Porter et al. (2010), found that schoolgirls were harassed and forcefully proposed to by tavern patrons. Boys in this study, on the other hand, reported falling victim to verbal and emotional abuse from tavern patrons while walking the school journey. This is a new finding in South African literature and reveals that both girls and boys are vulnerable to forms of SRGBV on their school journeys. Taverns, therefore made the school journey unsafe and unpleasant for both girls and boys.

Available literature reveals that taverns are spaces that increase girls' vulnerability to sexual violence (Boonzaier, 2018; Hinote & Webber, 2012). Girls' vulnerability in this regard is associated with social attitudes that condone gender inequality and unequal sexual power (Rich et al., 2015). Amanda, a participant in this study, spoke

of her experience of sexual harassment by male tavern patrons who went as far as stalking her. She had the following to say:

*My name is Amanda, over here it is home, when you go to school this is the route you take, this is the shop, it is unsafe because there are people who drink here, and they would shout "hey baby come here". When walking in this direction, here is Zenzele and over there you find people drinking and some of them are fighting, one time a man chased us, and we don't know why he chased us, and we ran away. Over here is kaMavuka, people drink there, and people do all sorts of things. One day we were walking pass here with Nkule (Friend's pseudonym) and Lerato (Friend's pseudonym), and over here three men were following us. When we tried to run away when we entered over here and whilst we were running on the other side of the road another group appeared in front of us and we had to turn back. Over here, it is at Sgubhu. At Sgubhu it is not safe because there are people who drink, smoke, and do all types of things inside Sgubhu, and they used to touch my friend Nokuzola(pseudonym) bum (Amanda, Girl, 12 years).*

Amanda spoke of her experience of violence imposed by local taverns on their school journey. Initially, she mentioned being cat-called (*baby*) by tavern male patrons who were inviting her over to them. The term *baby* was upsetting for her as it carried a sexual connotation. Sexualised language in this scenario illustrates male gender power and the invasive nature of heteropatriarchy on girls' bodies. The men Amanda refers to erased the fact that she was a child (a primary school girl), and rather saw her as a sexual object worth harassing. Children's geographers have long argued that social spaces are not accommodative of children and their activities since these geographies are often infiltrated with sociocultural norms that favour mostly men (Spilsbury, 2005). Findings in this study affirm this argument. As such, the primary schoolchildren who participated in this study identified, understood, and communicated about taverns as social geographies that fuelled their vulnerability to SRGBV on the school journey.

In South Africa, studies reveal that heteropatriarchal violence is more pronounced in resource-limited peri-urban and rural communities (Joseph & Carpenter, 2017; Ngidi, 2022b). Within this context, findings in my study reveal that this violence also occurs in and around taverns in these communities and that primary schoolchildren are vulnerable to the threat and experience of victimisation.

#### **4.5 Socio-Economic Public Geographies of Heteropatriarchal Violence**

The participants identified some socio-economic public places in and around their rural communities as geographies that posed a threat and fuelled their everyday vulnerability to SRGBV on the school journey. The narratives shared by the child participants in this study underscored a sense of vulnerability to violence when they navigated these so-called public spaces. First, participants reported a sense of fear of being robbed, abducted and sexually harassed while navigating spaces such as bus shelters and car wash establishments. Participants used photos (see Figure 4.5, below for example) to illustrate these public spaces.



**Figure 4: 5** An empty and isolated road that children use to get to school (Mlando, boy, 12 years, Photovoice).

In the focus group discussions, the participants also noted instances of heteropatriarchal violence that they experienced while transiting those spaces.

*At home it is safe but when you get to the bus shelter, as you can see the red, the red indicates that the bus shelter is not safe because once it reaches a certain time of the day then they start robbing us [especially if] it was quiet and empty in the streets (Mlando, boy, 12 years).*

*We accompany [our friend] to catch the bus to school... some boys harass us here. They keep cat-calling us, touching us, and wanting us to come to them, and asking us out (sic) (Vuyile, girl, 12 years).*

*No, I am just saying, they call you to come and take sweets, and since you are still kids, you might say yes, you love sweets and get into the car, but it turns out they are kidnapping you (Thandeka, girl, 12 years).*

*At the carwash, it is also dangerous, there's a route you take and the people that wash cars there keep calling you, and there are those who come to wash their cars who lack common sense (Lulama, girl, 13 years).*

In one FGD, it was revealed that at car wash establishments, girls were harassed and abducted. In a chilling revelation, one participant reported a case of a young girl who was “*abducted*” near a carwash place, and her lifeless body was later found “*floating on a river*”.

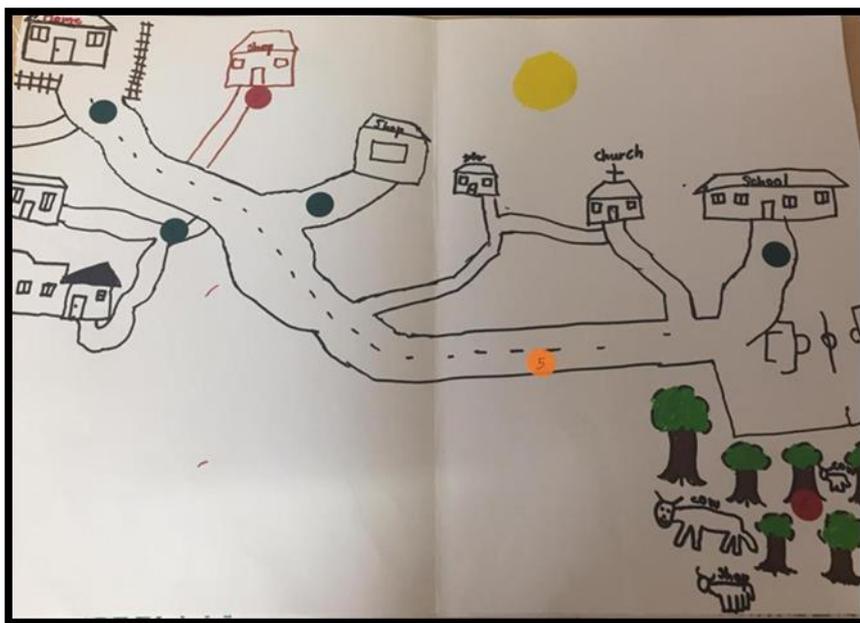
**Ayanda:** *The child you are talking about, you said she was abducted at the carwash and then what happened?*

**Zekhethelo:** *She was abducted and then taken to the grounds where the forests are nearby... they searched all over for her until she was found floating on the river (Zekhethelo, girl, 11 years).*

These findings point to primary schoolchildren’s fear of public spaces. They also illustrate how seemingly safe spaces such as bus shelters and taxi ranks are experienced and perceived as dangerous by schoolchildren. Moreover, the findings reveal that children have limited spatial agency as they face the threat of SRGBV when they traverse public areas on their school journeys. Thus, these so-called public spaces,

as the findings reveal, are experienced as not only dangerous, but also as anti-child social geographies that pose a serious threat to the lives of primary schoolchildren.

Participants also cited local tuckshops as sources of danger for children who walked to school. A tuckshop (also known as a spaza shop) is a South African colloquial term that refers to an informal convenience shop (Mosavel, 2012). Often established within or near households, these shops are generally found in resource-restricted rural and township communities, and they sell daily household items such as bread and milk. To demonstrate the lurking risk that schoolchildren faced when they walk pass tuckshops to reach school, 11-year-old Lungelo drew a map (Figure 4,6) of his community and particularly identified both a dense bush and a local tuckshop as geographies of SRGBV.



**Figure 4: 6** Lungelo's map of his school journey (Lungelo, boy, 11 years, Participatory Mapping).

Referring to his drawing, Lungelo said the following:

*I was going to the [...] shop to buy cakes, and a homeless boy demanded I give him my cakes. They ask for 50c from us. They want our money if we come to buy at the shop (Lungelo, boy, 11 years).*

Other participants shared similar sentiments,

*Here is the shop, there is homeless youth that usually drink there. They stab people; when they stab you, it is when you are on your way to the shop, then they shout voetsek (literally, fuck off in Afrikaans) (Mlando, boy, 12 years).*

*Schoolboys have been cursed at, and girls are grabbed and fondled forcefully (Andile, Male, 11 years).*

The participants' vulnerability was further heightened by the knowledge that homeless youths roamed and used public spaces to harass and even assault schoolchildren. For instance, while the homeless youths harassed children in and around tuckshops, as the excerpts above demonstrate, other favoured spaces for these unsocial behaviours occurred in and around taxi ranks. The child maps and photovoice artefacts produced by the participants pointed to taxi ranks (alongside tuckshops) as social geographies where homeless male youths instigated acts associated with SRGBV. While there is no scholarly evidence that homeless youths violated schoolchildren at taxi ranks literature has so far accounted for violence against vulnerable groups such as sexual and gender minorities in taxi ranks (Ngidi et al., 2020). The findings illustrate a form of daily psychological terror that followed these primary schoolchildren.

*For me, what I can say was dangerous was the walk from school to the rank in the afternoon when we came back from school because this route was quiet, street kids would appear from out of nowhere whilst you were unaware and attack you (Zamani, boy, 13 years).*

Other participants reported experiences of harassment that was perpetrated by homeless youth in and around the taxi rank. According to the participants, the homeless youth used taxi ranks to mug schoolchildren and threatened them with weapons such as knives. As the participant in the excerpt below reported, one of his friends had been stabbed by a homeless youth while walking pass the taxi rank to school. Moreover, girls faced unwanted sexual attention and harassment in these spaces.

*Here is home, when I leave here and walk down the road into the taxi rank, I run into 'amaphara' (homeless youth), when you walk down here they keep asking us for R1.00, and when you do not want to give him/her R1.00 they say they will stab you. They threaten you with the knife and take it out, they have*

*stabbed someone before. It is another boy called [friend's name]. They first asked him for R1.00 and he asked them why they do not go work for it. They said they will do it if he does not want to give them money, they said they will stab him, he said to do it and then they stabbed him. They also harass girls, [and] if the girls do not want to then they grab them forcefully and take the girls with them (Sandile, boy, 11 years).*

The primary schoolchildren in this study used a local derogatory colloquial term, *amaphara*, to refer to the homeless youth who harassed children on the school journey. According to Hunter (2021), the term *amaphara* (*iphara* in singular form) is derived from the term ‘parasites’ and refers mostly to male petty thieves who are addicted to a popular heroine-based drug known in local terms as *whoonga/nyaope* Hunter (2021, p. 59) argues that the growing use of *whoonga*, and *amaphara* by association, is “directed toward marginalised black men who have few prospects for social mobility”. In relation to the findings in this study, *amaphara* conjures a form of street-related performance of heteropatriarchal masculinities that are characterised by the use of threat and violence against schoolchildren. According to Bhana et al. (2021, p. 4) “poverty, unemployment and inequalities intersect in the performance of an *amaphara masculinity* that prioritises crime and violent masculinity”. Thus, within the context of this study, *amaphara* are understood to be unemployed and disadvantaged male youths who use crime and violence to access resources, power, and social dominance (Bhana et al., 2021). These findings illustrate not only male youths’ performance of toxic masculinities, but further draws attention to how social spaces are constructed as heteropatriarchal geographies for the surveillance, control and punishment of primary schoolchildren who journey to school by foot.

## 4.6 Discussion

This chapter discussed findings responding to this study's first research question: *In what ways do primary schoolchildren from a resource-poor rural community identify, understand, and communicate about the social geographies that fuel their vulnerability to school-related gender-based violence on their walking school journeys?* Findings revealed a number of socioeconomic geographies that posed a threat to the wellbeing of primary schoolchildren. As they journeyed to school, participants encountered forms of SRGBV which they associated with the presence of certain spaces and places in and around their rural communities. These included taverns, dense bushes, and other social spaces that they traversed to get to school.

Findings depict rural social geographies as indefensible spaces that pose a threat to the lives of primary schoolchildren who walk to school. This is because on this journey, schoolchildren (especially girls) traverse through heteropatriarchal spaces that heighten their vulnerability to SRGBV. These spaces were occupied by boys and men who targeted children in specific gendered ways. These men held hegemonic masculinity ideologies that manifested through sexual force rather than consent (Duncanson, 2015) thus, increasing girl's vulnerability to sexual violence and boys' vulnerability to verbal emotional abuse on these spaces.

Bushes were also identified as hotspots sexual violence against girls. According to defensible space theorists, spaces that has reduced surveillance such as bushes are most likely to attract criminals and perpetrators of violence because residents do not have a clear view of incidents occurring in that space (Shjarback, 2014; Zen & Mohamad, 2014). It was for this reason the offenders chose the hidden spaces like bushes to attack innocent children. Bushes have little to no territoriality. Spaces that have limited territoriality are more vulnerable to violence and crimes, as a result the bush reported by participants was a harbour for rape, kidnapping and harassment.

The defensible space theory emphasises the importance of physical and symbolic barriers in making a space safer from intrusions and perpetrators of violence (Reynald & Elffers, 2009). Spaces with no or less barriers are more accessible thus can be

occupied by perpetrators of violence, for example, taverns, tuckshops, taxi ranks, and bus shelters are highly accessible by people who tend to violate schoolchildren traversing around those taverns. Seeing that schoolchildren passed by several taverns on their school journey, they were vulnerable to SRGBV from tavern patrons on this journey. Tuckshops, taxi ranks, and bus stops attracted homeless male youths whom out of poverty and unemployment robbed participants of their belongings. Overall, the school journey in this community is concentrated with social geographies that make it unsafe for schoolchildren.

The next chapter discusses strategies that schoolchildren use to negotiate safety against SRGBV on the journey to and from school.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS: RURAL SCHOOL CHILDREN NEGOTIATING SAFETY ON DANGEROUS SCHOOL JOURNEYS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study engaged rural primary schoolchildren through participatory visual methodologies (PVM) to examine the spaces/places that facilitated their vulnerability to SRGBV on their walking journeys to and from school. The previous chapter presented findings that addressed the first critical research question posed in the study. In this chapter, I discuss findings in response to the second research question: *What strategies do these primary schoolchildren employ to negotiate their spatial safety against school-related gender-based violence while navigating dangerous social geographies on their school journeys?* To address the second research question, I used data generated through photovoice FGD with primary schoolchildren from one rural community in KZN. Findings are organised around the following five major themes: Individual self-reliant strategies for negotiating safety, walking in groups to counter SRGBV on the school journey; relying on the older male peer for protection and adult supervision in insulating schoolchildren from violence.

#### 5.2 Individual Self-Reliant Strategies for Negotiating Safety

Rural primary schoolchildren employed several self-reliant strategies for negotiating safety against SRGBV on their school journey. Given that participants lived in a poor rural community with limited to no services and resources (such as school buses and visible policing), self-reliant strategies were among the few options at their disposal for keeping safe. Self-reliant strategies included both risk avoidance and risk confrontation tactics (Muchaka & Behrens, 2012).

##### 5.2.1 Risk avoidance strategies

Risk avoidance strategies that the participants used to negotiate their safety was to avoid dangerous social spaces by carving their own alternative neighbourhood routes.

For example, the participants reported that they often avoided busy roads, taverns, bushy areas and other spaces they considered as dangerous. Instead, they ‘carved’ what they termed safer passages (i.e., alternative routes) that they walked to get to school safely. Strikingly, a number of these so-called ‘passages’ were narrow alleyway paths that ran in between households across their neighbourhood. In one FGD, 11-year-old Lulama explained:

*Here is where the homeless youth live, and they stop schoolchildren if they go to school, but they do not stop me because I usually use a shortcut when I go to school* (Lulama, girl, 11 years)

In instances where avoidance strategies were not a viable option, the participants reported that they ran past places they identified as unsafe instead of walking. For example, in an FGD, 12-year-old Zama reported that:

*When passing by the tavern, older men call us to come to them, and we **run** pass the tavern very quickly* (Zama, girl, 12 years; authors emphasis)

Running in this instance was identified as an important strategy for escaping the threat of violence on the school journey. Besides running past unsafe spaces as a safety measure to escape violence, other participants reported that they ran into nearby households that they identified as safe against violence on their daily walk to school. The participants reported that known and trusted significant adults lived in these households. As a result, participants found shelter from harm by accessing these households where adult occupants acted as insulators of schoolchildren from any harm. To illustrate, Zama produced a photo (Figure 5.1) showing a schoolgirl walking between a security fence of two households. Referring to the white house on the left side of the photo, she suggested that it was one of the homes she ran to whenever she encountered threats on her school journey.



**Figure 5: 1** A schoolgirl walking pass someone’s house (Zama, girl, 13 years, Photovoice).

Referring to her photo, Zama said:

*They (perpetrators of SRGBV) hide and wait for schoolchildren to come back from school so they will take our stuff. In this picture is an adult man’s home. So, if they (perpetrators) want to rob me, I can run to this house and ask for help (Zama, girl, 13 years)*

Zama’s insertion that she “*can run to this house and ask for help*” speaks to the long-standing idea of a sense of support provided by an extended network of people in rural communities that live under the notion that ‘*it takes a village to raise a child*’ thus, every member of the community is responsible for the wellbeing of the child (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; McPherson, 2022). Within this context, adults act as caregivers to all children. These extended networks of support and safety are not determined by kinship (Critchlow, 2007). Rather, they emerge as a response to living in the context of the community culture of *Ubuntu* and raising children as a community (McPherson, 2022). In other words, such adult-facilitated rural networks emerge as a useful resource in the protection of children against violence. Moreover, since violence against children in South Africa’s rural areas is commonplace (Chabangu, 2014), adults (even those who are not related to the schoolchildren) stood ready to offer a layer of protection against harm to any child who came running into their household. The constant expectation of danger in these communities pushed children to run into

the aid of non-kin households where they sought shelter from threats and where they (children) believed that the residents would be able to help.

Since violence against children was a daily reality, adults in these households did not turn away terrified schoolchildren. Instead, they offered their properties as a form of sanctuary from risk. These findings affirm research by Critchlow (2007), who reported that adults opened their homes to children who were not their own to ensure children's safety. Another photo (see Figure 5.2) showcased households in the neighbourhood, which the participants suggested they could run into when they encountered the threats on their walk to and from school. One such photo, produced by 12-year-old Vuyile, showed the community and the houses she ran into whenever she encountered a threat.

Describing her photo, Vuyile explained that:

*In this path, it is safe because if criminals want to kidnap me, I can seek assistance in the houses close to the path. It is also safe because it is in an open space, and adults can see when we are under threat (Vuyile, girl, 12 years)*



**Figure 5: 2** A unpaved road children use for walking to school (Vuyile, girl, 12 years, Photovoice)

In support of Vuyile's statement regarding this path, another participant said the following:

*If I walk on this path, I feel much safer because if criminals were to come, I would be able to scream for help from the neighbouring houses, it is even safer now that we are accompanied by an adult (Sandile, boy, 11 years).*

Using shortcuts, running past unsafe spaces, or running into the safety of houses in their neighbourhood as a form of risk avoidance seemed to have offered schoolchildren some ‘part-time’ escape from encountering SRGBV. These strategies were not necessarily intended to curb or end schoolchildren’s vulnerability to violence on their walk between home and school. Rather, they were employed to reduce or avoid risk exposure.

Early research that examined how schoolchildren negotiated safety in public spaces reported that children preferred self-carved spaces that were closer to neighbourhood households (Valentine, 1997). Moreover, according to Stodolska et al. (2013) schoolchildren felt safer in their communities when they walked in alleyways that were familiar to them. Affirming this early research, findings in my study suggest that schoolchildren felt safer when they created their own ‘child-friendly’ routes on their school journeys. The feeling of safety in this regard was facilitated by walking nearer people’s houses. Several photos the participants produced reflected these sentiments. One such picture was produced by 12-year-old Zanele.



**Figure 5: 3** A path between people's houses (Zanele, girl, 12 years).

Speaking about her picture, she said:

*At Deda, it is safe because there are so many houses, you can scream for help, and they will quickly come to your rescue, and no one can kidnap you; that is why I say it is safe (Zanele, girl, 12 years).*

As discussed early in this chapter, these houses are symbolic structures of safety that schoolchildren run to when they encounter a threat. Thus, creating their own alleyway paths that cut through neighbourhood households was important for the participants because, as 11-year old Mxolisi noted, “*it is safe because there are houses I know.*” Another participant added:

*The path that I walk on is safe because there are different houses that are close together. If a person wants to rape you, you can be lucky that people might see you and help you urgently. (Nosipho, girl, 11 years).*

The self-reliant strategies employed by the young participants in this study have been documented in previous studies (van der Burgt, 2015). For example, in one study, researchers reported that negotiating safety on the schoolchildren’s journey included collaboration with different people and their environment (Nansen, Gibbs, MacDougall, Vetere, Ross, & McKendrick, 2015). In this way, participants in this study collaborated with members of their extended community to negotiate safety against violence in the school journey.

In their thinking, and in line with the defensible space theory, these alternative routes provided a high level of territoriality that both deterred would-be offenders while providing a feeling of safety for schoolchildren (Shjarback, 2014). Moreover, in a number of pictures participants produced, the houses they passed through were well-maintained, fenced properly, and the grass cut. Defensible space theory suggests that well-kept spaces are an important deterrent to criminals and perpetrators of violence.

The children’s geographies framework suggests that children are active social agents who are able to manage their own social spaces (Ansell, 2009, Rollo, 2016). Indeed, the children who participated in this study managed not only their social spaces, but also used these alternative spaces to negotiate their safety. They exercised personal

agency by conjuring risk-avoidance strategies, which reduced their exposure to threats and potential harm.

### 5.2.2 Risk Confronting Strategies

As outlined above, participants also drew on risk-confronting strategies to negotiate their safety against the threat of SRGBV on the school journey. Risk-confronting strategies involved tackling perpetrators and the threat they posed head-on (Tucker & Matthews, 2001). One notable tactic the participants employed was to shout out the perpetrator's name. The participants suggested that calling out loud their perpetrator's name discouraged the perpetrator from harming them. The belief here was that if a perpetrator is called out and shamed, other adults in the community would hear and come to rescue the victim; thus, offering protection to the victim. To provide evidence, 11-year-old Nosipho related her experience by stating that:

*This person was following us; we would stop, and he would also stop, when we walked faster, he also walked faster. So, my friend and I decided to shout his name, and he stopped following us* (Nosipho, girl, 11 years)

Other participants who thought confronting a perpetrator was a protective measure had this to say;

*This hobo (homeless youth) wanted 50c from me. I said I do not have it. He pickpocketed me and took my R2, I shouted his name demanding he returns my money. He ran, only to find my older brother on the other side who beat him up and returned my money* (Bongani, boy, 12 years)

*The path that I walk feels safe because it is close to people's houses, and it is quite and if someone wants to hurt you or touch your private part, you can immediately shout for help* (Lulama, girl, 11 years)

Shouting out a perpetrator's name and calling out neighbours for assistance might be regarded as dangerous acts. However, given the limited options available for schoolchildren in resource-poor communities, these risk-confronting acts became an

option between negotiating their safety or when facing violence. As previously reported by Tucker & Matthews (2001), openly confronting perpetrators directs public attention to both the act of violence and the perpetrator. Aware that they (perpetrators) are seen, they stop themselves from continuing with their predatory acts. Therefore, confronting perpetrators through shouting out their names or calling community members for assistance makes both the act of violence and the initiator of this violence visible to the public eye. Participants' agency in this regard is activated. As young as they might have been, the participants were aware that violence in their public spaces was not acceptable and that those who witnessed it might come to their rescue if they employed risk-confronting strategies. In other words, risk-confronting strategies were employed to shame the perpetrator and to make visible their predacious acts.

Researchers who specialise in children's geographies emphasise children's competency in demonstrating sophistication and agency in monitoring the spaces that are violent (Valentine, 1997, Cole, 2008). This implies that children have a way of claiming their space and finding indirect strategies to protect themselves from actions imposed on them by perpetrators of violence. Nosipho showed great agency in monitoring her space that was violent by calling out the perpetrator's name to expose him and his intentions to the public in hope that she might receive assistance. Starkweather (2007) states that using these strategies is considered a skill that is informally taught to and learned by children in communities with high levels of poverty and violence. In this study, some participants employed this effective approach to confront their perpetrators in public to make them (the perpetrators) aware that other people were watching. Thus, by calling out the names of their perpetrators, the participants were inadvertently calling on the extended community for help and protection.

### **5.3 Walking in Groups to Counter SRGBV on the School journey**

Findings also revealed that schoolchildren walked in pairs or groups as a strategy to circumvent the threat of SRGBV on their school journeys. This was another risk-avoidance strategy used to avert the possibility of a violent encounter. The participants reported that they felt much safer when they walked to school as a group. According to 11-year-old Bongani, for example, walking as a group meant that there was always

someone available to run and report an incident of violence should they encounter it as they journeyed to school.

*It is better if we walk as a group because one of us can be able to run and report that one of us has been taken by hoboos while going to school (Bongani, boy, 11 years).*

Sandile spoke of an incident of rape that occurred on one of his school journeys. This incident was reported both to the school officials and the police. The school then urged schoolchildren to use a different route and encouraged them to walk in groups. This means that teachers and other school officials were aware of the risk of walking to school and were further cognisant of the fact that when children walked as a group, their risk of encountering harm was minimal.

*There was a girl, I think she was doing grade five, she was raped in this route. Older men waited for her here (pointing in the route), they grabbed her as she was walking to school and took her to the unfinished house and raped her (Sandile, boy, 11 years)*

*(...) They (her parents) reported it to the police and reported it at the school, at school they told us to change the route we used, and when we walk, we should do so as a group and not one by one or two, it is better if we walk together like three or five you see, as a group (Sandile, boy, 11 years)*

Moreover, as 11-year-old Andile (cited below) and other participants suggested, walking as a group helped them fight back against acts of violence. In other words, walking as a group further became a risk-confronting strategy. The group in this instance worked together to counter-attack the perpetrator. This form of confrontational approach worked to keep SRGBV predators at bay. Indeed, being part of a group also created a sense of bravery for schoolchildren to “*quickly hit (perpetrators)*” and “*run-away*”. Likewise, schoolchildren drew on the collective strength of their ‘walking-to-school’ groups to push back against perpetrators or pull-out victims that might be snared by assaulters.

*It is better if we walk as a group because if they try and abduct/catch you or try to do something to you, then you can quickly hit them or pull the person they caught, and all of you can run away (Andile, boy, 11 years)*

Walking as a group, instead of walking as individuals, was an important defence skill that rural children learn to use very early in their lives for navigating their violently charged neighbourhoods (Muchaka & Behrens, 2012). Available literature supports the notion that walking to school as a group is beneficial for children since it helps them to avoid or escape from violence (Lieberman & Zimmerman, 2015). Indeed, 12-year old Bongani affirmed this claim:

*I sometimes walk with another boy, we usually walk as a pair, they usually throw bottles at us, but we decided not to hit them back but report them to their parents (Bongani, boy, 12 years)*

There are notable gendered trends in how participants spoke about relying on the safety of a group in the context of vulnerability to SRGBV on the school journey. For example, as outlined above, participants in this study used walking as a group to fight back against or resist attempts by other learner perpetrators. In other words, boys drew on ideas about collective (or group) masculinity to charge against perpetrators of violence (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010). These findings suggest that boys in this study felt validated with using violence to address violence. Feminist geographers argue that dominant gender norms allow boys to address conflict with physical violence (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014). Culturally, boys are groomed to possess leadership skills and take control of situations around them. Also, they are taught to use their power to protect women in their lives (Perrin et al., 2019). Thus, in this study, boys reported that they fought back against perpetrators on the school journey to protect the group's most vulnerable members (such as girls).

Yet, as 12-year-old Thandeka (cited below) suggested, girls in the study walked in groups for different reasons than those suggested by the boys. Thandeka perceived walking in groups as a strategy to assist her in making wise decisions such as avoiding walking pass a group of men who might expose her to acts of SRGBV. According to the girls, walking as a group helped them to navigate the violent social geographies

they encountered on their school journeys. During an FGD, Thandeka discussed the benefits of walking in groups and said,

*When I pass here (pointing at a route between houses), I pass with a lot of men ... it is not like when you are walking alone, it is better to be walking with people than alone because if you are walking alone it is easy for you to make a bad decision but if you are in a group then it will not be as easy to do so (Thandeka, girl, 12 years).*

Thandeka spoke about how walking with ‘men’ on the school journey made her safer from violence and how it influenced her decision making. Age-wise, the ‘men’ that she referred to were boys, but because of their ability to protect her and inform her better choices, she referred to them as men (Sjöberg & Giritli Nygren, 2020). In support of Thandeka’s statement about walking in groups so as to make wise decisions and be safe from violence, another girl produced a picture (Figure 5.4, below) that illustrated two girls walking to school. She had the following to say:



**Figure 5: 4** Two girls walking to school (Nothani, girl, 12 years, Photovoice).

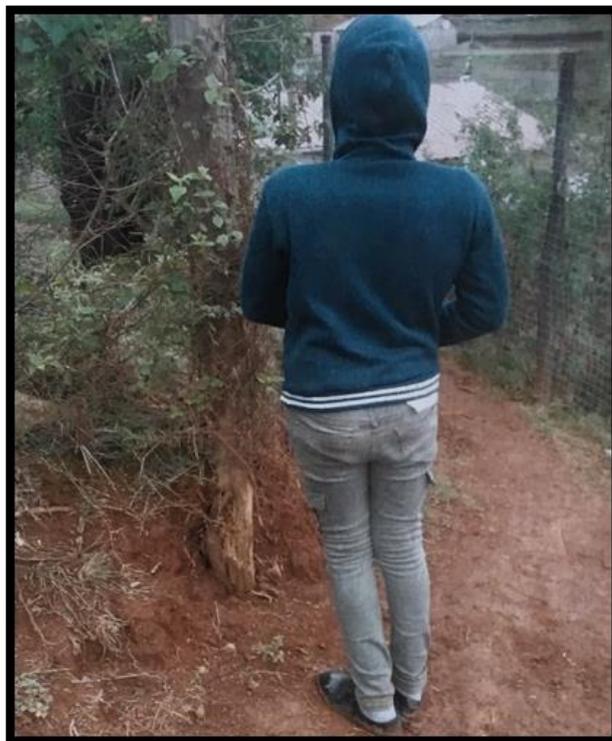
*Walking with my friend makes me to feel safe because if boys want to hurt us, we ask each other what we should do and then maybe end up running to ask for help. If the boys are young, we confront them but if they are old, we run because we are scared of them* (Nothani, girl, 12 years).

Literature that examines children's navigation of violent neighbourhoods supports the findings in this study. For example, Nansen et al. (2015) reports that the collaborative efforts of a group of children who navigate their neighbourhoods by walking together increase their prospect of safety against violence. Walking in pairs/groups also enhanced the schoolchildren's natural surveillance, an important tenet of the defensible space theory. According to this theory, natural (human-centred) surveillance helps potential victims of crime to navigate their social worlds easier, and further averts threats of harm (Zen & Mohamad, 2014). In the context of the findings presented in this chapter, the participants suggested that their natural surveillance was owed to the more eyes that could assess their neighbourhoods for potential threats or for suspicious individuals who might perpetrate violence against schoolchildren. Thus, as several participants suggested, it was easier to act swiftly to counter any threat when they walked in pairs or as a group.

The image/lieu tenet of the defensible theory also helps to explain these findings. For example, the image tenet emphasises techniques people use to make social spaces less isolated and threatening (Reynald & Elffers, 2009). In this instance, it is not the spaces whose perceived photo needed improving. Rather, it is how children made the effort to walk as a group that improved their photo of their social environment. This then helped them to be less isolated and vulnerable to SRGBV since they supported each other in wading off the possibility of a threat. The defensible space theory emphasises the importance of territoriality in providing safety. It argues that spaces that are guarded are less likely to attract predatory behaviours. Accordingly, walking as a group meant that the schoolchildren in this study helped each other in guarding their social environment, which in turn created a sense of safety.

#### **5.4 Relying on the Older Male Peers for Protection**

Relying on male peers for protection was another strategy that participants reported for reducing their vulnerability to SRGBV. These peers were often older male youths from participants' communities or male peers from their school. Participants reported that they felt safer when accompanied by older male youths while they walked the school journey. This was demonstrated in three related photographs produced by Mlando, Zamani, and Lumkile. These photographs captured a male youth that the participants identified as one of the people who accompanied schoolchildren and offered them protection while they walked to school. To illustrate, 12-year-old Mlando captured this older male peer in his photo (Figure 5.5) to show that he was an important resource for wading off threats on the school journey.



**Figure 5: 5** An older boy who accompanies children on the school journey (Mlando, boy, 12 years, Photovoice).

Describing this picture, Mlando highlighted how the boy in his photo:

*(...) protected me from a boy I was playing with at school. This boy (I was playing with) was accidentally hurt, so he said he would catch me after school. I then told Sanele (the older peer) he told me to walk with him after school so that the boy (I had accidentally hurt) would not beat me up. As we were*

*walking, the boy came and Sanele told him to stop threatening me, then he left (Mlando, boy, 12 years).*

Supporting Mlando's assertion, 11-year-old Andile had this to say:

*In the Gijima area, it is safe because there is a boy who protects us from bullies. I feel safe if I am walking with him (Andile, boy, 11 years).*

The older boy, Sanele (a pseudonym) that Mlando and Andile were referring to was considered an important ally for helping schoolchildren to negotiate their safety. Andile and Mlando were not the only participants in this study who sought refuge from Sanele. Lumkile, for example, spoke of an experience where Sanele had offered him protection.

*He protected me from the other guy who wanted to beat me outside the school. This guy grabbed me, then Sanele came and asked why he was hitting me. I told the guy to hit me because I knew he wouldn't hit me after seeing Sanele (Lumkile, boy, 12 years).*

The presence of an older male in the journey to and from school brought comfort and safety to schoolchildren. Research reports that men in rural neighbourhoods take on protective roles in spaces where women and children are most vulnerable. Such spaces include parks, schools, and dark streets (Day, 2001). In this study, Sanele and other older male youths inherited the role of protecting schoolchildren against SRGBV perpetrators on the school journey.

It is important to note that, while Sanele was a school peer, he was older than the primary schoolchildren who participated in this research. This suggests that safety was attached to ideas about age and gendered social norms for the young primary school participants in this study. For them, safety came from realising Sanele's age and gender (an older male peer). These are important findings, as they speak to the notion of age-based hierarchies that privilege older males in rural communities (Valentine, 1992). Since Sanele was older and a male, his presence (based on his masculine identity) acted as a buffer against harassment and violence of primary schoolchildren.

What is more, according to the participants, parents also leveraged this gendered and age-specific understanding to negotiate safety for their children. For example, participants reported that some of their parents approached other older male youths from the community and asked that they accompany children to school. In other instances, participants reported that their parents sent older boys to wait by the school to protect schoolchildren from potential sexual predators. Indeed, 12-year-old Nothani, Lungelo and Zekhethelo reported the following in relation to one older boy from their neighbourhood who watched over them as they traversed the unsafe spaces they walked to school:

*It is safe because when we get out of school, an older boy watches over us and protects us from people who might want to kidnap us (Nothani, girl, 12 years).*

*It is Mandla (a pseudonym). The boy who lives next door. He comes here and stands there by the school and watches over us because our parents send him to watch over us (Lungelo, boy, 11 years).*

*This is the place we walk on; we walk with someone we know, and our parents are proud of him. It is important to walk with someone you trust in unsafe spaces (Zekhethelo, girl, 11 years).*

This is an important strategy employed by both parents and children in rural settings, where resources were limited. According to Valentine (1992), parents in Global North rural areas instill a sense of vulnerability among their daughters, which affects their behaviour and use of space. However, parents also encourage their daughters to seek protection from at least one man from all other men in their communities. Both girls and boys in this study sought assistance from older male peers that they trusted and respected (see also, Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010). The notion of encouraging schoolchildren to rely on older male youths suggests that parents might be aware of the violence that their children were exposed to and knew that as parents they could not be fully present when their children walked to school.

The defensible space theory argues that spaces that have physical and symbolic barriers deter criminal and violent activity (Newman, 1996). Sanele and other male

youths in this instance acted as a “physical” barrier that reduced primary schoolchildren’s encounters with SRGBV. In presence of these trusted male youths, perpetrators could not accomplish their mission of harassing and assaulting schoolchildren. This is because Sanele (school peer) was known to fight off learner perpetrators who attacked or threatened schoolchildren. While Mandla (community member) was a known and trusted member of the community, his presence among schoolchildren deterred perpetrators.

### **5.5 Adult Supervision in Insulating Schoolchildren from Violence**

Tied to the findings in the section above, participants further reported that they felt safer when they walked to school under adult supervision compared to walking alone. In this context, adults were regarded as helpful insulators of children from experiences of SRGBV on the school journey. This was demonstrated in a set photo of a chaperone from a WSB that accompanied schoolchildren on the school journey. Adult chaperoned walks on the school journey were the intervention component of the larger study from which data for this dissertation was collected. The proposition was that adult supervision would reduce experiences to SRGBV on the school journey. This proposition proved true since children reported feeling safer when walking under adult supervision. One of the participants referring to a photo (Figure 5.6) of the WSB chaperone said,

*This is brother Sabelo (pointing to a picture he produced), I feel safe when I am walking with him because there can be people who want to harass me, and he can be able to protect me (Lungelo, boy, 11 years).*



**Figure 5: 6** An adult chaperone who accompanies children on the school journey (Amanda, girl, 12 years).

When I enquired about the role played by the WSB chaperone to help protect schoolchildren as they journeyed to school, the participants had the following to say:

*When travelling with an adult I trust or know [such] as brother Sabelo (pseudonym allocated to the WSB chaperone), I feel safe, together with other schoolchildren because no one can harass us because we are walking with an adult (Amanda, girl, 12 years).*

Walking with an adult to school is regarded as a sustainable mobility initiative that provides a fun, interactive, and dedicated form of mass walking on the trips to school (Muchaka & Behrens, 2012; Larouche et al., 2018). These trips, which are supervised by an adult chaperone, were cited as safe and beneficial for promoting walking as physical activity and exercise among schoolchildren (see also, Nikitas, Wang & Knamiller, 2019). The presence of a chaperone who dedicated time to supervise schoolchildren as they walked to school increased the natural surveillance that was useful for keeping prospective perpetrators at bay. These significant adults monitored possible incidents that might occur on the school journey (Essack & Ngidi, 2018). The participants emphasised how they felt safer against forms of SRGBV since adult supervision provided a human barrier against exposure to violence.

*Yes, it is safe here because there are adults who are guarding us on the road and there are cars present which means there are a lot of people present. So, it will not be easy for someone to do something bad (Zekhethelo, girl, 11 years).*

*Yes, because they (perpetrators) do not abuse us if there is someone older who walks with us (Bongani, boy, 11 years).*

Available scholarship on children's school journeys has noted with great concern the fact that schoolchildren fear walking to school (Aitken, 2018; Cole, 2008). This scholarship further advocates for adult supervised walks in order that schoolchildren might be protected not only from violence, but also from traffic-related accidents (Essack & Ngidi, 2018; Van der Pol et al., 2020). These adult supervised walks help to alleviate school journey-related fear among schoolchildren. Given that the rural community in which the participants lived and learned was poor, under-served, and had little to no resources to aid child safety, the significance of reliable adults in guiding children to safely reach their schools cannot be overstated. These findings suggest that in this resource-poor rural community that is characterised by violence and crime, significant adult supervision and guidance is an important resource for insulating children from SRGBV. In other words, reliable and trustworthy adults are important buffers of violence against schoolchildren.

## **5.6 Discussion**

Findings in this chapter reveal that schoolchildren are active agents who are able to identify and apply certain strategies to negotiate their safety as they traverse unsafe spaces on their walk to and from school. The participants identified several self-reliant strategies to negotiate personal safety on their school journeys. In other words, while acknowledging that their school journeys exposed schoolchildren to unsafe spaces that rendered them vulnerable to SRGBV, the participants demonstrated personal agency in not only identifying but further applying these protective strategies to maintain their safety. Such self-reliant protective strategies such as taking alternative routes, walking in groups and with an adult mediated/moderated the effect of exposure to risk, which resulted in reducing vulnerability to SRGBV.

Running, hiding in neighbours' houses, confronting perpetrators, walking in groups, relying on the aid of significant and trusted adults, and carving child-friendly routes on the school journey were strategies that the participants in this study used to negotiate their safety across the various unsafe spaces they identified on their school journey. While these strategies might seem far-fetched, they are nonetheless important solutions for the children in this study. Given that they live and attended school in a community that is resource-poor, highly distressed, and where the intersection of violence, poverty and gender shaped their experiences of space, the participants were agentic in finding ways of creating relatively safer spaces.

While the sustainability of these strategies remains in question, it is, however, an important finding that children are able to exercise their agency and apply themselves in providing safety in a sociocultural and geographic context that rendered children obsolete, voiceless and without agency. It is important to read these findings within the socioeconomic and geographical context that governs the lives of the children in this study. They drew on available community and interpersonal resources to negotiate their safety when navigating the dangerous school journey. I reflect on these findings and their implications in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REFLECTIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

The study reported in this dissertation was conceptualised to examine the social geographies that primary schoolchildren identified as areas that posed a risk for SRGBV on their rural school journey. Given their vulnerability to SRGBV on the school journey, the study also explored the ways in which these children negotiated their safety. The setting for this study was a resource-constrained rural community in KZN, characterised by chronic poverty, social distress, high rates of contact crimes and interpersonal violence, heteropatriarchy, and a culture which promoted gender and age-based hierarchies. As I argued throughout this dissertation, children who grow up, live, and attend school in such communities are vulnerable to multiple forms of socioeconomic risks, maltreatment, and victimisation. In addition, the literature reviewed for this study suggests that when these children walk to school without adult supervision, they become targeted in specific ways that threaten their physical and mental safety (Simons et al., 2018; Equal Education, 2019). While there is scholarship which highlights the school journey as unsafe for rural children in South Africa, and the Global South by extension, the particular geographies that attract, harbour, and sustain the enduring risk that these young people face are not well documented. Likewise, how rural children navigate these violent terrains remains under-researched across studies. It was within this broader context that the study presented in this dissertation was pursued.

In response to my curiosity about rural children and their school journeys, coupled with my reading of the literature, I was interested in children's perspectives and experiences of their rural social geographies (Yarwood & Tyrrell, 2012). Schoolchildren, and girls in particular, are undoubtedly vulnerable to SRGBV, such as sexual violence, sexual harassment, abduction, rape, bullying, and psychological abuse (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020; Deane, 2018; Ngidi, 2022a). On the other hand, while boys also do experience forms of sexual abuse, literature has largely reported on their vulnerability to physical violence and verbal abuse (Machisa et al.,

2021; UNGEI, 2019). Accordingly, the perpetrators of SRGBV range from community members, school staff, and other schoolchildren (Parkes et al., 2016). However, on the school journey, schoolchildren fall victim to SRGBV from community members and their school peers (Fink et al., 2018; Smiley et al., 2021). In particular, given the heteropatriarchal nature of rural communities, and males affinity towards hegemonic masculinity and violent interpersonal behaviours, literature points to both men and boys as instigators of SRGBV against children on the school journey (Bhana, 2016; Mayeza & Bhana, 2021).

To examine the social geographies that primary schoolchildren identified as areas that posed a risk for SRGBV on their rural school journey, and to explore how these children negotiated their safety on these routes, the study addressed the following two critical research questions:

- *In what ways do primary schoolchildren from a resource-poor rural community identify, understand, and communicate about the social geographies that fuel their vulnerability to school-related gender-based violence on their walking journeys to school?*
- *What strategies do these primary schoolchildren employ to negotiate their spatial safety against school-related gender-based violence while navigating dangerous social geographies on their school journeys?*

This study was located in Taylor's Halt, a resource-poor rural community situated southwest of the city of Pietermaritzburg in the KZN midlands. Violence in this area can be traced back to the height of the apartheid period when a political civil conflict known locally as '*the seven days' war*' destroyed homes and displaced many families (Mchunu, 2021). During this period, women and children were worse hit because they were targets of rape and femicide (Mchunu, 2021). This gendered violence persists firmly into the post-apartheid period, with the SAPS (2021) reporting alarmingly high numbers of sexual assault and murder. The 20 purposively sampled schoolchildren who participated in this research lived under the shadow of these threats. To engage these young participants, the methodology adopted in the study was grounded in the humanistic geography paradigm which puts emphasises on the importance of human

experience and meaning in order to understand individuals' relationships with their geographic environments (Tuan, 1976). To generate data, the study employed qualitative participatory visual methods (PVM) involving the use of both participatory mapping and photovoice. These methods were useful in engaging children in expressing their perspectives about the geographies of SRGBV on the school journey (see also, Duea et al., 2022). These visual data were augmented by data gathered through FGD. Both the feminist geographies and children's geographies provided conceptual frames that guided analysis in this study. Moreover, data analysis was grounded in Newman's (1975) Defensible Space Theory. In the following section, I reflect on the methodological approach and the theoretical underpinnings adopted in the study.

## **6.2 Methodological Reflection**

This study was premised on the notion that rural schoolchildren have a voice that deserves to be heard and acknowledged. To engage rural primary school children about their understandings and experiences of SRGBV on the school journey, I used participatory mapping and photovoice, supplemented by FGD. These visual approaches made it easy for the young participants to draw on their mental maps of their communities, and used this knowledge to both map and photograph spaces they identified as unsafe on their school journeys. These methods provided an easy approach for engaging young participants. Indeed, in the data gathering processes of this study, the participants were able to use their visual artefacts to show and communicate about the spaces that rendered them vulnerable. Visual approaches proved resourceful because they did not require any set of skills or previous experience from the participants. Rather, their resourcefulness emerged in the ways in which the children in this study managed to articulate their vulnerabilities, agency, and safe-seeking practices on the school journey. Both photovoice and mapping gave schoolchildren a platform for communicating about their concerns. The data collected from PVMs was supported by descriptions that were discussed during the FGD session. FGD gave participants a platform to verbally express themselves and give meaning to their artefacts. The friendly nature of the discussions allowed each participant to share their knowledge in ways that were safe and accommodating. The discussion opened a platform for rich discussions among the participants. Moreover,

the visual approaches combined with the FGD allowed me to gather in-depth contextual data that became useful for analysis in the study. The small number of participants (n=20) recruited in the study provided me with rich data that reflected their understandings, perspectives, and experiences about the geographies of SRGBV on the school journey. In this way, I wanted to understand the context of these children's vulnerability on this journey.

While the methodology adopted in this study provided rich contextual data, and proved useful for engaging children, there were notable limitations in the study. For example, even though the research did not ask for perfect maps from the participants, several of the children in the study expressed a sense of anxiety about producing and sharing maps they felt were not perfect. Consequently, some participants took longer to draw their maps because they wanted to produce flawless artefacts. To remedy this limitation, I re-emphasised to the participants that the aesthetics were not important in their mapping. Rather, I wanted them to produce maps that illustrated the routes they navigated on the school journey, and from those routes, they needed to identify unsafe spaces/places. Through a negotiated process of verbal exchange with the participants, we all agreed that the research was more interested on issues of safety and danger on the school journey. Thus, participants heeded the invitation to produce maps they felt best represented their social environment.

Another challenge that emerged during the data gathering process was that some participants struggled to provide written descriptions about their visual artefacts. This is not surprising given that over 80 percent of senior primary school children (Grade 4-7) in South Africa have not mastered reading and writing (Meiklejohn, Westway, Westway & Long, 2020). Even when I encouraged participants to write in isiZulu (their local language), they still experienced difficulties. Other participants struggled to understand my requests, such as asking them to photograph unsafe spaces on their school journeys. To assist in this process, I allowed those that struggled with writing to describe their artefacts verbally. I thus, wrote down these descriptions. Moreover, I used the FGD phase of the study to solicit responses regarding the participants' visual products for meaning making. Likewise, I repeated requests several times until I was

satisfied that all the participants understood me. I also allocated extra time for participants who were slower during data gathering.

Despite these limitations, this study succeeded in producing contextual knowledge about the social geographies that posed a risk on children's school journeys in the rural community I studied. As such, the study contributes to social geographic and education research by spotlighting the issue of risk and danger on children's school journeys. I discuss the implications of the study later in this chapter.

### **6.3 Reflecting on the Findings**

Findings in this study suggest that primary school children were aware of, imagined, feared and experienced SRGBV on their school journeys. Participants used their visual artefacts and related discussions to communicate their shared experiences of violence, and the threat of harm, on this journey. Their visuals illustrated the school journey as unsafe, with several spaces/places identified as a threatening. Taverns, dense bushes, public spaces, and economic places were among the rural social geographies that participants identified as unsafe and problematic. In resonance with other studies (Hampshire et al., 2011), boys and men (including those identified as homeless or *amaphara*) were cited as the perpetrators of SRGBV against schoolchildren on the school journey. These findings point to men and boys' performance of toxic hegemonic masculinities through the use of threat and violence against children. Moreover, these findings point to how spaces in this particular rural community are constructed as heteropatriarchal, and where children are spatially oppressed, surveilled, controlled, and punished through violence. The social geographies that children navigate on the school journey are therefore a product of heteropatriarchy. These unsafe geographies are further reproduced in everyday harmful practices that target schoolchildren. This has health, education, and development implications for schoolchildren in this rural community such as psychological disorders that result in schoolchildren underperforming academically and failing to build relationships with others. The experiences that participants communicated suggest that a form of spatial trauma that was part of their everyday school journeys. This means that children experienced trauma, anxiety, and fear even before they enter school premises in the

morning, and before they reach their homes in the afternoons. This means that the children in this study live and learn in fear.

There were notable gendered trends in the experiences the participants reported. Indeed, both girls and boys were vulnerable to, and experienced SRGBV. However, boys reported that their experiences and fears centred primarily on contact crimes such as mugging, bullying, and physical assaults. On the other hand, girls shared similar experiences as those shared by the boys, however, they (girls) further experienced forms of sexual violence, including sexual harassment and rape. It was also mostly girls in the study who reported experiences where children were abducted, raped, and sometimes murdered while navigating the school journey. The experiences reported by both girls and boys are traumatic and illustrate the extent of children's vulnerability when they walk to school without significant adult supervision. Yet, it is the experiences of girls in this study that warrant extended attention insofar as they relate to sexual victimisation. While girls are mugged and bullied (just like the boys), they are further prone to unwanted sexual attention, including rape and femicide. This reemphasises the finding that the rural community under study is heteropatriarchal. Such communities do not provide a safe space for girls to learn and grow, thus, community based programmes to ensure children's safety are required. Generally, as evidenced by the girls' experiences and fears in this study, heteropatriarchal communities are characterised by male-centred power relations and hegemonic gender norms that work together in systematic ways to reinforce male privilege and masculinity (Ngidi, Moletsane & Essack, 2021). In this context, the male perpetrators identified in this study had access to power and control not only of girls' bodies, but the social spaces in and around the community. This power is highlighted here in the experiences and fears that girls shared about abduction, rape and femicide. Thus, male privilege and power is linked to men and boys' violence behaviours and practices against girls, and other school children.

Notwithstanding the violence so endemic in the lives of children who walk to school in this rural setting, findings revealed that schoolchildren exercised their agency in negotiating their spatial and personal safety. While children are often constructed unidimensional as non-agentic and without voice, this study found that they were active individuals who could identify and adopted certain strategies to negotiate safety. Thus, while they noted with great concern the dangers posed by the school journey,

they also demonstrated agency in assessing risk and applying protective strategies to enforce their safety. Strategies such as walking in groups or pairs, relying on significant adults as chaperones, running to the shelter and security of neighbourhood households, etc., were some of the ways the participants mediated their vulnerability to SRGBV. Their agentic knowledge allowed the young participants to not only anticipate risk, but further found ways to reduce this risk. These findings indicate that children are active individuals who possess knowledge about their social environments, and use this knowledge to inform safe-seeking practices. While the sustainability of these risk-averting strategies remains in question, it is important to recognise that primary school children in this study were able to use their agency in providing safety in an environment that exposed them to multiple risks and harm.

#### **6.4 Contributions of the Study**

Addressing the two research questions posed, this dissertation makes key scholarly contributions. The study opens new avenues into thinking about how rural primary schoolchildren understand, experience, and communicate about their walk to and from school, as well as the social geographies they navigate during this journey. As argued throughout this dissertation, schoolchildren face several obstacles even before they reach their institutions of learning. Thus, this study proposes that we start to think spatially about schoolchildren's vulnerability to SRGBV on their school journeys. I add that space and place are important aspects for understanding childhood experiences. Moreover, childhood social geographies are significant in shaping children's socio-educational experiences. This dissertation, and the findings thereof, draws attention to an area of research which seeks to fully integrate children's social, developmental, and educational geographies by highlighting how issues of risk and danger come to be. Using visual artefacts in this study offered a unique opportunity to see how rural children constructed their socio-educational spaces, including highlighting the heteropatriarchal geographies they encounter of their school journeys.

The study provides a map which delineates the harmful encounters that young children face on their school journeys. Thus, emerging from this study is a framework for understanding why children are vulnerable to SRGBV on the school journey. As Figure 6.1 illustrates, at the core of children's vulnerability is rural poverty. As argued throughout this dissertation, children's risk for SRGBV is particularly acute in

resource-constrained and chronically poor rural areas, like the one that featured in this study. In these settings, children lack the necessary resources to negotiate their safety. What is more, in cases where public transport is available, families cannot afford to pay transportation fees for their children to get to school. Combined with a lack of reliable scholar transport, and tied to poverty, the only available option for children is to walk to school. In a community rooted in the system of heteropatriarchy, where spaces are dominated by men, and where men use their gender power to reinforce their domination over children, the school journey becomes unsafe. Likewise, the rural area in this study was characterised by high levels of crime and violence. Living and studying in such a context heightens children’s exposure to SRGBV. Given their young age, and the oppressive system of heteropatriarchy they lived under, children have little prospects for escaping violence. Thus, living in a poor community that experiences high rates of violence rendered schoolchildren vulnerable to SRGBV on the school journey. All these factors combined create indefensible spaces for children. As Newman (1975) argues, impoverished rural areas are fertile ground for indefensible spaces because they lack the natural surveillance and residents’ control over their environments. Moreover, rural communities are often marginalised and isolated, which creates several treacherous routes. These routes further pose a risk to children who walk to school.

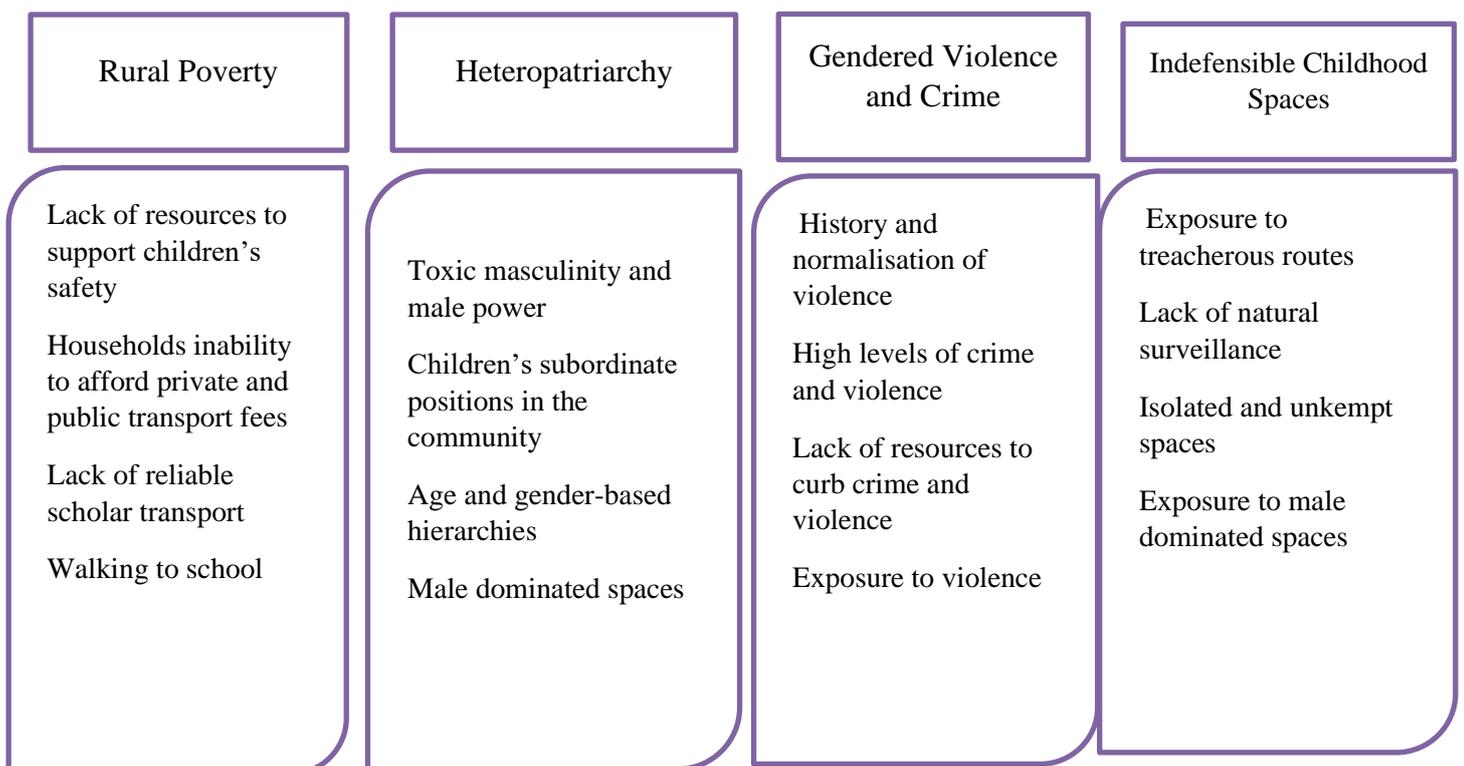


Figure 6: 1 framework for understanding children's vulnerability to SRGBV on the rural geographies of school journeys.

The study also makes a methodological contribution to scholarship on the use of participatory mapping and photovoice in engaging children in identifying and communicating about the social geographies of SRGBV on the school journey. The use of these methods not only assisted the participants to identify unsafe spaces, but also communicate about the particular risks they attached to these spaces. This study shows the ways in which visual artefacts can be important mediums of communicating about difficult topics.

### **6.5 Implications of the Study**

The study has the following implications. First, since children face several risks on the school journey, it is evident that there is a need for sustainable interventions to provide safety. An urgent intervention that is needed is the provision of a universal scholar transport system that is subsidised by the government. Since a majority of rural residents are working-class, the provision of free scholar transport can be a progressive move toward creating safety for children and enabling the human right of access to education. Other cost-effect safety measure could be the policing of spaces identified as dangerous, such as taverns and taxi ranks. Spaces such as dense bushes can be made safe through constant cutting and maintenance.

The study therefore has implications for adult facilitated neighbourhood watches. This will enable increased surveillance of the neighbourhood, which may mitigate children's concerns about some unsafe spaces. Trusted adult presence at such spaces, especially when children walk to and from school may support children's safe walking experiences.

Second, findings suggested that the voices and experiences of children are often ignored. Thus, there is a need to use child-friendly approaches such as PVM to engage children as experts of the issues they face. For this to happen, safe spaces in the community and school need to be created that will facilitate child-led dialogues of issues of risk and safety. Such interventions need to be facilitated by the children under

the guidance of adult community members and key stakeholders such as community leaders, parents, and educators.

Third, the findings suggested that children felt safer when they walked to school with adult chaperones. This approach may be usefully adopted in low-resourced communities where reliable and trustworthy adults can chaperone children on their school journeys. Moreover, the findings showed that there were still some men that children can trust and rely upon for protection. This means that communities need to invest in such men, and use them as champions for social change.

The study has implications for future research that will focus on SRGBV on the school journey broadly. Moreover, this research should employ various types of PVM so to gather diverse and meaningful data about SRGBV on this journey. Hopefully, such studies would inform decision making (regarding improving learner safety and the provision of free and accessible learner transport) at the regional, provincial and national level.

Finally, the study has implications for future research to focus on safety interventions that poor rural communities can adopt to protect children from SRGBV. Furthermore, there is a need for research-driven policies e.g. government funded WSBs to ensure safe school journeys. Thus, relevant policies that are responsive to social and psychological risks of walking to school need to be developed and implemented for the overall wellbeing of school children.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This research questions posed in this study were shaped by my experiences as a girl who walked the long journey to and from school. Based on my experiences of gender-based violence while navigating this journey as a primary school girl, I wanted to understand how primary school children experienced their school journeys. With a particular focus on rural contexts, I set out to examine the social geographies of SRGBV on rural children's school journeys. The children in this study, just like me in my childhood, identified several unsafe spaces and unwanted encounters on this

journey. It is surprising that these experiences are still a reality for the children in this study. My schooling experiences occurred some 20-years ago. Thus, the findings in this study suggest that not much has changed in the 20-year period between my school days and those of the children I researched for this dissertation. In my engagement with the literature and the children in this study, I have come to conclude that rural schoolchildren face marginalisation which opens them up as targets for antisocial behaviours at the hands of members of their respective communities.

As I conclude this study, I now understand that the cumulative rural geographies coupled with the system of heteropatriarchy, poverty, and violence puts children in harm's way. This is demonstrated in spectacular ways on the school journey as children have to continuously negotiate their safety under oppressive and harsh conditions. Thus, the geographies of SRGBV emerge in this study as a product of socioeconomic and cultural systems that marginalise children even as they pursue an education.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Letter of Ethical Clearance



08 January 2020

Ms Ayanda Cynthia Khumalo (215046416)  
School Of Agri Earth & Env Sc  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Khumalo,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00000919/2019

**Project title:** Primary school learners' knowledge of gender-based violence on the route between home and school: A participatory visual methods study of rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

#### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 11 December 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) 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.

This approval is valid for one year from 08 January 2020.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Urmilla Bob  
University Dean of Research

/dd

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## APPENDIX B

### Letter of Permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education



education

Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1063

Ref.:2/4/8/1655

Dr Z Essack  
Private Bag X07  
Dalbridge  
4014

Dear Dr Essack

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

Your application to conduct research entitled: **“EVALUATING A WALKING SCHOOL BUS AS A SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION IN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA”**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 05 October 2018 to 01 March 2021.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMgungundlovu District

  
Dr. EV Nzama  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 10 October 2018

## APPENDIX C

### Letter of Information

#### INFORMATION SHEET

##### Who we are

Good morning/afternoon, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). Today, we are asking if you would assent to participate in our research study. The study is called *Evaluating a walking school bus as a school-related gender-based violence intervention in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. This study is being conducted by the HSRC, based in Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg.

##### What we are doing

We are conducting this study to learn about the school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) experiences of young adolescents who walk to and from school. Our goal is to test whether walking to school in a group with two adults reduces the SRGBV for young adolescents. We will use what we find to write research proposals to help motivate for better learner safety programmes like this. We will publish what we find in reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and present at local and international conferences.

##### Your participation and study procedures

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to join. If you decide not to take part in the study there will be no consequences or penalties for you. Even if you decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time. You have the right to say no to any study activities or to decide not to answer any of the researcher's questions asked at any time.

If you decide to participate in this study, a research staff member will invite you to take part in focus group discussion with six to eight other young people aged 10-14 years like you. The discussion will explore what you think about SRGBV. For example, the researcher may ask you questions about seeing or hearing about harassment/bullying/physical or sexual violence towards learners who walk to school or home from school. The discussion will take about 45 to 60 minutes to complete. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

##### Confidentiality

During the discussion you will be encouraged to use a fake name (pseudonym) so that the other participants are less likely to know who you are. Participants will be asked to keep everything that is shared in the group a secret and not to share anything you heard about the other people in your discussion group.

We will not record your name with the discussion and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be linked to a number or pseudonym and we will refer to you in this way in publications. Your answers will be stored electronically in a secure environment and used for research or academic purposes now or at a later date in ways that will not reveal who you are. Your name will not be used on any documents that are shared with our co-investigators.

Your study records may be reviewed by the study team and representatives of:

- HSRC Sweetwaters Research Site
- HSRC Research Ethics Committee (REC)

### **Limits to confidentiality**

Although participants will be asked not to share any information that they hear during the discussion it is possible that participants may share information that you have shared. Please be aware of this limit to confidentiality when you are sharing information about yourself and your experiences.

In order to participate in this study, the researchers are required to get permission (consent) from your parent to allow you to be part of the study. Your parent will be given a form similar to this assent form with information about the study. The researchers **will not** tell your parent anything that **you** share with the researcher. At the end of the study the researchers may provide general information about the results of the study to your parent, no specific information specific about **your answers** will be shared.

Please note: If you share information about neglect/abuse/crime/rape the researcher may have to report this to the authorities, for instance the HSRC REC, Child Welfare, or the South African Police Services.

### **Funding source**

The study team is being funded by the World Bank through a Hannah Graham Foundation grant.

### **Risks**

Some of the questions in the interview may make you feel embarrassed, worried or anxious. There may be other risks and stresses of participating in this study that we do not know about now. If you feel embarrassed, worried or anxious please **do not answer that question** and please tell the researcher that a question has made you feel uncomfortable. The researcher will try to address your feelings. If the researcher is unable to address your feelings, they will refer the matter to the principal investigator.

### **Benefits**

There may be no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. However, it is possible that you or others may benefit from the information learned in this study. You may also get some personal satisfaction from being a part of a research study.

### **Alternatives to study participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decide not to participate in this study at any time.

### **Costs/reimbursements**

There is no cost to you for participating in this study. You will receive R100 for participating in the study. This amount is the standard HSRC time/inconvenience/travel reimbursement allocation for interview participants.

### **Further information**

I can answer any questions you have now. If you ever have questions or concerns about this study, or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by participating in the study, please contact Dr. Zaynab Essack (zessack@hsrc.ac.za) who is the principal investigator on this study. You can call Dr. Essack on 033-324 5000.

This research has been approved by the HSRC REC. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please call the HSRC's toll free ethics hotline 0800 212 123 (when phoned from a landline from within South Africa) or the REC Administrator at the HSRC on 012 302 2012 from 08:00 -16:00, e-mail research.ethics@hsrc.ac.za. If you feel as though you need emotional support after you participate in the study, please contact Ms. Bazamile Magubane at the Centre for Community Justice and Development (Victim Support) on 033 398 0194. You have been given a copy of the information sheet to keep. The information sheet includes contact details of available resources for additional support should you require it. I will give you a copy of this form today.

**APPENDIX D**  
**Participant Consent Form**

I hereby agree to allow my child to participate in research on *Evaluating a walking school bus as a school-related gender-based violence intervention in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa*. I understand that my child is participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop my child participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me or my child negatively. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me or my child personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my child's participation will remain confidential.

.....

**Signature of parent Date:**.....

I understand that there will be photovoice training session and group walk before the focus group discussion.

.....

**Signature of parent Date:**.....

I assent to the focus group discussion being audio recorded                      Yes/No

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

.....

**Signature of parent Date:**.....

## APPENDIX E

### Participant Statement of Assent

I have read this form or had it read to me. I have discussed the information with study researcher. My questions have been answered.

I understand that my decision whether or not to take part in the study is voluntary. I understand that if I decide to join the study I may withdraw at any time.

I understand that if I decide to participate, the researcher will have to ask my parent/guardian to provide consent for me to participate.

I understand that the researcher will not tell my parent/guardian anything I share but may provide general information about the results of the study once the study has ended.

I understand that my parent/guardian will not be present during the discussion

I understand that the information I share with you will be archived and used for research now or in the future in ways that will not reveal who I am.

I would like to receive feedback about the study findings at the end of the study  
Yes/No

Participant email address (print): \_\_\_\_\_

(Only provide an email address if you have opted to receive feedback)

I assent to the focus group discussion being audio recorded Yes/No

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher

Researcher's signature

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name (print)

Participant signature/thumbprint

Date

## APPENDIX F

### Photovoice Guide

Thank you for participating in our Walking School Bus project. You have been walking to and from school with the walking school bus over the past two terms. Please could you take a few photographs of the route that you and your walking school bus use every day. Here are a few examples of the photographs that you could take:

1. The road or path you walk along.
2. Areas along the route that make you feel (for example: safe, happy, unsafe, scared, afraid) or any other way.
3. Things along the route that make you safe or unsafe (for example: roads, people, places).
4. Things that you do to make you safe.
5. Any other photograph that you think would be important for you to share.



Try not to take photographs of people's faces or things that would show identifiable information of the person or places (for example, the name of a person's tavern or shop). Please remember that if you take a photograph of someone you will have to get their permission. Your walking school bus supervisor or the researcher can help you get this permission by completing an informed consent form with the person you would like to take a photograph of. Thank you and have fun. If you are unsure about anything during the photovoice activity, remember that the researcher is there to help you and he/she will be able to answer any questions you have.

**APPENDIX G**  
**Turnitin Similarity Report**

Thesis

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**3**

Ndumiso Daluxolo Ngidi, Relebohile Moletsane, Zaynab Essack. "“They abduct us and rape us”: Adolescents’ participatory visual reflections of their vulnerability to sexual violence in South African townships", Social Science & Medicine, 2021

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