

YOUNG WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF  
INTERGENERATIONAL AND TRANSACTIONAL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN  
DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL

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## **Abstract**

Transactional sexual relationships are argued to be a potent driver of the HIV epidemic among young women in South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal bears the heaviest burden of the epidemic. The practice has roots in South Africa's social and political history of oppression, as well as the tides of post-apartheid globalization. Through a combination of individual interviews and focus groups discussions (FGDs), this study explores 21 young women's perceptions and narratives of transactional sex from an 'othered' perspective. Individual interviews were conducted in the township community of Cato Manor; FGDs were conducted with the assistance of OneVoice South Africa (OVSA) in KwaMashu township. Motivations and dynamics of transactional sexual relationships were found to be incredibly nuanced depending on context, including socioeconomic status and geographical location. Women's agency and active participation in seeking benefits from transactional sex was highlighted as a key concept in findings. Finally, the 'othering' of transactional sex revealed perceptions of the practice in a moralistic lens, closely linked to Zulu culture and dominant discourses on female sexuality and gender.

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## Introduction

*“Listen, listen. I think, I think that we both know why they do it. As we all know, it is the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So as we are young now, we are doing things because we like it, not because we are forced.”*

The “it” in question above, as stated by a 15-year-old female Zulu student from KwaMashu township, KwaZulu-Natal, refers to the trend of young South African girls entering “sugar daddy” relationships. The phenomenon has deep roots throughout sub-Saharan Africa, but has taken on new meaning in the tide of globalization and neo-liberal economic policy in South Africa.

“Sugar daddy” relationships are one manifestation of a wider social pattern in both sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa called transactional sex. The practice has crucial implications for sexual and reproductive health, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. South Africa carries the greatest burden of HIV-infected individuals in the world; KwaZulu-Natal is the epicenter of the HIV epidemic in South Africa, with an estimated 1.2 million infected individuals (UNAIDS, 2008).

As the burden of health risk from transactional sexual relationships often falls on the female, it is crucial to recognize and explore the active role and agency of young women. This paper investigates the motivations, agency, priorities, and health implications for young women entering transactional sexual relationships from an ‘othered’ perspective of their peers.

## Background and Sociohistorical Context

### *Transactional Sex in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Across sub-Saharan Africa, researchers have documented the practice of exchanging sex for money or gifts in relationships. The phenomenon exists beyond the realm of prostitution. While many studies have recognized transactional sex as a consequence of women’s poverty and economic dependence on men, literature has increasingly proposed that material exchange for sex is not necessarily linked to urgent food and shelter needs (Wamoyi et al, 2010, p.1). For example, in southern Uganda, a

study found that half of secondary school girls studied would not have sex for free, no matter their socio-economic status (Nyanzi et al, 2001). Furthermore, in rural Tanzania, intensive participant observation discovered that material exchange for sex was very common, regardless of affluence (Wamoyi et al, 2010, pp.14). To the women in this study, “to have sex and *not* to seek material exchange would have had serious symbolic implications for them, suggesting they were sexually available to anyone and did not value themselves” (Wamoyi et al, 2010, p.14).

The term “transactional sex” is often used in public health literature as a neatly defined term, but the concept is very complicated and highly contested (Jewkes et al, 2012). Transactional sex seems to be open to many interpretations; it is highly dependent on the social, cultural, and personal context of a relationship. The practice lies on a continuum of sexual behavior that exists universally. On one end of the spectrum lies prostitution; on the other end of the spectrum lies the common practice of the exchange of gifts in sexual relationships (Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010; Kaufman & Stavrou, 2004). As a result, the exact definition of transactional sex can be very difficult to ascertain.

As wealth accumulates with age, many transactional relationships are also intergenerational. Various literature defines intergenerational relationships as those that exist across an age disparity of 10 or more years (p. S18, Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). An age-disparate relationship, on the other hand, refers to a separation of 5 years or more (p. S18, Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). Besides this,

“Throughout sub-Saharan Africa studies have revealed that young women’s power to negotiate condom use is often compromised by age disparities and economic dependence. Young women have reported that they often cannot insist of safe sex practices, and doing so would jeopardize their economic goals in the relationship” (p. S18, Leclerc-Madlala, 2008).

Despite this, young women cannot be viewed as simple victims in the transactional, cross-generational relationship. Age-disparate relationships are meaningful for both men and women involved; they are perceived as socially, physically, psychologically, economically, and symbolically beneficial by participants (p. S17, Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). Studies have shown that risk perception by both partners is often low. Young women may view the older man as a safer sexual partner; the older man is

often perceived as less risk-taking, more stable, and more responsible (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008).

It is of great significance to note that the exchange of sex for material goods, economic benefit, or other gains is a universal concept, specifically located and augmented in a consumerist, global context. Placing the practice in strictly an African context may imply a Western ‘othering’ and racist discourse on African sexuality that previously pervaded popular discourses on HIV and AIDS (Shefer, Clowes, & Vergnani, 2012; Jungar and Olinas 2004; Patton 1990; Seidel 1993).

### South Africa

The phenomenon of and norms associated with transactional sex have evolved and fluxed with South Africa’s historical and political processes, including colonization, apartheid, and the waves of globalization that accompanied the post-apartheid era (Leclerc-Madlala, 2004; Hunter, 2007; Zembe et al, 2013). Colonization and the apartheid system created lasting effects on the dynamics of sexual relations amongst black South Africans. The migrant labor system and apartheid restriction laws confined black women to urban areas; this forced men to live in geographically separate areas from their partners for extensive lengths of time (Zembe et al, 2013). The result of such laws set in place many new sexual behaviors, such as increased demand for commercial sex work, infidelity in marriage, and multiple concurrent partners, that have evolved to affect modern day South African sexual activity (Hunter, 2007; Mah & Halperin, 2010). These behavioral factors have been cited as key factors in driving transactional sex patterns today (Zembe et al, 2013). During the era of apartheid, premarital sexual relations were not believed to be significant motivators of sexual behavior. Rather, men and women in relationships demonstrated reciprocal gift-giving (Levin, 1947). Men demonstrated their masculine identities and success through the ability to save for *lobola* (brideprice), construct a rural home, and pass down their family heritage through offspring (Hunter, 2007).

In modern-day South Africa, the country is plagued by high rates of unemployment; this has greatly reduced the ability of men to afford *lobola* (Zembe et al, 2013). In this context, new definitions of masculinity have arisen for men, including

maintaining multiple concurrent partners and engaging in transactional sex (Leclerc-Madlala, 2004; Hunter, 2007; Selikow, Zulu, & Cedras, 2002). Jewkes et al (p. 2, 2012) state that, "... the commodification and instrumental use of sex is culturally normative in modern day South Africa." The same authors conducted a study which found that 66% of the men they surveyed had engaged in a transactional relationship, in which the relationship or sex act was predicated on a provider expectation (p. 7 Jewkes et al, 2012). The data was collected from three districts in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces of South Africa. 1645 sexually active men provided information on transactional sex and having sex with women in prostitution for the study. Interestingly, the authors found that

"rather than viewing themselves comfortably as 'transacting sex', many men perceive an expectation that they should fulfill a provider role, and when they do so, they perceive themselves to be entitled to be rewarded with sex and obedience from women" (p. 9, Jewkes et al, 2012).

These results have very serious implications; they suggest that reducing the phenomenon of transactional sex among men should at least partially focus on restructuring the South African man's identity (Jewkes et al, 2012).

The laws of the apartheid era generated geographically defined wealth inequalities that still exist in South Africa (Zembe et al, 2013). Past research has hypothesized that such disparities drive high-risk sexual behavior, such as transactional sex, among black South African men and women (Zembe et al, 2013; Hunter, 2007).

### Public Health Implications

In 2007, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 accounted for 40% of all new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa; the majority of these infections occurred in females (p. S17, Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). In South Africa, women in the 15-19 age bracket have an HIV prevalence rate of 5.2%; men in the same age bracket have a rate of 1.2% (Van der Linde, 2013). In the 20-24 age bracket women have a 17.9% HIV prevalence rate; for men, the rate is 5.6% (Van der Linde, 2013). Biologically, the still-maturing vagina has been shown to put young women at a higher risk for HIV infection than men (Kristensen et al, 2002). However, in addition to biological factors, certain

social factors put women at a higher risk. According to Leclerc-Madlala (2008), “Age-mixing in sexual relationships between older men and younger women has been offered as a probable explanation for the disproportionate rate of HIV between young women and young men” (pp. S17-S18). The 2005 South African national household survey found a HIV prevalence of 29.5% amongst 15-19 year old girls who had partners of 5 years or older than them (Shisana et al, 2005). Further, in 2008 a national South Africa HIV survey reported that the percentage of females with a partner five or more years older than them increased from 18.5% in 2005 to 27.6% in 2008 (Shisana et al, 2008). Most recently, South African statistics have revealed an increase in HIV prevalence in women age 15-49 from 17.1% to 17.4% from 2010 to 2013 (Mid-year population estimates, 2013). In this context, HIV behavioral research, especially regarding transactional sex, has become a priority amongst academics.

Transactional sexual relationships often open the doors for gender-based violence. Prior studies have found that such relationships weaken a young women’s ability to negotiate safe sex practices and increase the likelihood of male perpetrated intimate partner violence (Luke, 2003; Dunkle et al, 2007; Hope, 2007).

It is clear that the trend of young girls entering intergenerational and transactional relationships is well and alive in South African culture. Research and literature widely recognizes that normative heterosexual activity is the primary mechanism for spreading HIV throughout sub-Saharan Africa (Holmes 2003). However, in the context of rapid globalization and social change, it is crucial to regularly re-evaluate what is as classified normative heterosexual activity.

Beyond HIV infection, intergenerational and transactional relationships may have important implications for teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence. A 2004 study by Dunkle et al cited a correlation between partner violence and transactional sex. Moreover, a 2007 study of 1200 Eastern Cape men discovered a strong and consistent correlation between gender-based violence and the exchange of material goods with female partners (Dunkle et al, 2007).

The issues of sugar daddies and intergenerational sex appear to be on the radar of health professionals and the South African government. In the 2012/2013 South African Health Review, “Launch of anti-sugar-daddy awareness campaign to encourage

community leadership and stigma of older men who seek sex with young girls, particularly those between the ages of 14 and 21” is listed as planned governance action to address social determinants of health in KwaZulu-Natal (p. 94, Rispel & Nieuwoudt, 2013). In addition, the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) recently launched the Zazi health promotion campaign, which calls on South African women and girls to know themselves and their strengths. The music video for the campaign features a sugar daddy health education message. With the implementation of anti-sugar daddy campaigns around South Africa, it is possible that young girls perceptions of risk have changed.

The relationship between intergenerational sex and higher risk of HIV infection has recently been called into question. As suggested above, previous cross-sectional studies of HIV prevalence have indicated that younger women in cross-generational relationships are placed at a higher risk of HIV infection. In a seven-year study, researchers enrolled over 2,000 HIV-negative women to measure the relationship between HIV infection risk and age of partner. For women in the 15-29 age bracket, the average sexual partner was five years older. Most importantly, “there was no significant difference in the risk of HIV infection in this age group between women who reported sexual partners less than five years older, five to nine years older, and ten or more years older” (Harling et al, 2014). In light of this information, it is of great importance and pertinence to re-evaluate transactional sexual relationships between young women and older men, as well as the effectiveness of anti-sugar daddy campaigns,

Quantitative statistics must be compared with qualitative studies illustrating the dynamics surrounding the exchange of material goods for sex and intergenerational relationships. Through a combination of individual interviews and focus group discussions, this study utilizes qualitative data from 21 young Zulu women living in KwaZulu-Natal townships. This project aims to re-evaluate young women’s changing motivations and perceptions of transactional sexual relationships, along with their public health implications, in light of increased anti-sugar daddy campaigns, globalization, and wealth inequalities in the country.

## Methodologies

### *Study Design*

The study utilized an exploratory, qualitative design to gather data regarding young Zulu women's perceptions of transactional, intergenerational, sexual relationships. The subjects sampled for this study include two major demographic groups. The first group included young Zulu women between ages 18 and 24 residing in Cato Manor township, KwaZulu-Natal. These participants were recruited using a combination of prior connections from the author's homestay in the township and snowball sampling. This data was collected with the use of individual interviews in the participants' homes. The second demographic group included female grade 10 learners at J.L. Dube High School in KwaMashu township, KwaZulu-Natal. The students were recruited using the author's connection with OneVoice South Africa (OVSA), a Durban-based non-governmental organization (NGO). OVSA facilitates life skills, sexual and reproductive health, and human rights workshops in classrooms around the greater Durban area. Participants in the study were students of a grade 10 classroom in which OVSA operates. These grade 10 students participated in focus group discussions (FGDs) rather than individual interviews. Focus group discussions were facilitated by the author in English. During one discussion, the project advisor was present in the room purely for observational purposes. In another study, a fellow American student with the School for International Training was present in the room, again for observational purposes. The FGD specifics are listed below.

**Table 1: Focus Group Discussion Particulars**

<b>Focus Group Discussion</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Facilitators present</b>
1	2	Both participants were 18 years old	Author and the project advisor
2	5	15-17 years old	Author
3	4	15-16 years old	Author
4	6	18-19 years old	Author and fellow American SIT student

Both individual interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in an informal, conversational style using a list of guideline questions (Appendix A). Discussions lasted between 10 and 45 minutes, and were recorded with the participants' permission. As the topic of transactional sex is sensitive and personal, questions were framed around a discussion of transactional sex in general, allowing participants to respond in the third person. As a result, all participants spoke of 'others' rather than disclosing personal information. The conversations were subsequently transcribed, organized into themes, and analyzed.

### *Study Setting*

As stated above, the demographic groups for this study include two major communities in the greater Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal – KwaMashu and Cato Manor.

KwaMashu, one of the largest townships in South Africa, is located 35 kilometres from Durban; the township consists of thirteen formal settlements and approximately nine informal settlements. KwaMashu has a total population of roughly 750,000 people (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, 2001). The area was created by the City of Durban in the late 1950s in an effort to accommodate Africans who had been displaced from other areas within the city (Monitor Group, 2007).

Geographically, the boundaries between the communities of KwaMashu, Inanda, and Ntuzuma (INK) overlap; thus, the KwaZulu-Natal government often groups them together for research purposes. In the mid-1980s KwaMashu experienced significant levels of political mobilization and criminal activity; high crime still plagues the community today. Within the INK area, over 65% of the population is below 29 years of age. Approximately 40% of the population is unemployed; further, nearly 33% report themselves to be not economically active. This low employment rate has played a role in sustaining widespread poverty in the community; 75% of all households in the INK area earn below R9600 (\$820) per year. Additionally, only 4% of the educated population of INK has earned a tertiary degree; 34% of the population has never attended school. Finally, INK has some of the highest HIV infection rates in KZN (Monitor Group, 2007).

Cato Manor, located approximately 10km from the Durban city centre, is the home of roughly 93,000 mainly Zulu residents (eThekweni Municipality, 2011). After the Group Areas Act of 1955, the entire population was forcibly removed to nearby racially segregated townships (Cato Manor Development Project, 2000). The area remained mostly unpopulated for the next 20 years until interest grew in re-settlement in the wake of the end of apartheid (Cato Manor Development Project, 2000). Cato Manor now is home to some of “the poorest of the urban poor” and high unemployment rates (eThekweni Municipality, 2011). However, the Cato Manor Development Project, which was formed in 1993, has created some development success in the community (Cato Manor Development Project, 2000). As with many post-apartheid townships, many of Cato Manor’s impoverished are geographically juxtaposed with shopping malls, middle and upper-income housing, schools, clinics, and recreational facilities; this has generated a newfound, relatively easy access to material goods (Cato Manor Development Project, 2000).

### *Ethical Considerations*

Prior to data collection, the study was subject to a human subjects review and an ethical review by the School for International Training. Ethical clearance forms are located in Appendix C. At the beginning of every individual interview and focus group discussion, consent forms were read, discussed, and signed by both the author and the participants. Parental consent was given for participants under age 18. Given the sensitive topic of transactional sex, special consideration was given to anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of participants. All names of informants in the study have been changed.

### *Limitations and Biases*

While all participants were native Zulu speakers, all interviews were conducted in English. In one of the focus group discussions (FGD4), respondents clearly had difficulty articulating their thoughts in English. The study would have been improved with the support of a Zulu-speaking research assistant. Primary data was collected over the short period of three and half weeks. As a result of this small amount of data, it is difficult to judge the representativeness of the sample. However, the narratives shared do provide

important insight into young girls' transactional sexual relationships with older men. Additionally, all participants responded to questions in terms of 'others.' As a result, this study is credible for investigating perspectives on transactional sexual relationships, but not necessarily young girls' experiences in transactional sexual relationships. Finally, the study did not enquire about respondents' socioeconomic status. Thus, this paper must use the study setting's demographic data to infer about socioeconomic status of participants.

## Findings and Analysis

### Motivations for Entering Transactional Sexual Relationships

All young women cited knowledge of peers in ‘sugar daddy’ relationships; with the exception of one participant, all believed the practice to be quite common. One young woman from Cato Manor even suggested that such a transactional sexual relationship was inevitable in young women’s lives.

*“Well, sugar daddies is like a common thing. So somewhere along the line you’re gonna have to get one. So I don’t know of any stories of guys with sugar daddies, but it’s like with teenage, the teenage age, you’re gonna have to get somebody older than you, so a sugar daddy. And then when you’re grown up, you’re gonna get somebody older.... So he has to have a car... maybe if he doesn’t have a car, he has to like do some improvements in your life.... It just happens... it’s such a normal thing. It’s a normal thing”*  
**(Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).**

#### *Sex for Consumption: Popular Youth Culture & Wealth Inequality*

Literature on transactional sex, in both South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, has often separated drivers of the practice into sex for consumption and sex for subsistence (Hunter, 2002; Zembe et al, 2013). Although young women were often placed in the context of poverty, all respondents in this study believed that young women most frequently pursued transactional sex for goods of consumption, such as fashionable clothing, cell phones, drugs, and alcohol. Often times, the young women reported that the older man simply provided money; the women then would use the funds to purchase these material goods.

*“Now she will get the sugar daddy, and the sugar daddy will get her some stuff she is not getting from home, probably fancy clothes, fancy stuffs, extra money for school, yeah, so she can have fun with friends and take her out to fancy places, yeah”* **(Khanjisile, age 18, 04/12/2014).**

*“Most of the times it is money, maybe new cellphones. Food... no. They do get food but most of the time it is clothes, money, or phones. Cellphones” (Ntokozo, age 18, 04/03/2014).*

*“They can buy those expensive weaves, clothes... some suga daddies buy them houses, cars” (Nothando, age 24, 04/22/2014).*

*“Clothes, chocolate, necklace, nails, hair, new clothes, expensive things” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

Drugs and alcohol were more commonly reported by the FGDs in KwaMashu than in the individual interviews in Cato Manor. Fashion, clothing, shoes, brand names, and material goods necessary to maintain a certain appearance... were commonly cited as rewards of transactional sexual relationships. Another study focusing on transactional sex, conducted in an impoverished Xhosa community in the Western Cape, discovered that,

*“by physical appearance alone, a young woman could convey important messages about herself, such as her affiliation to fashionable society, modernity, her economic background, and involvement in an economically rewarding sexual relationship” (Zembe et al, 2013, p.6).*

The young women of KwaZulu-Natal in this study seemed to subscribe to a similar set of values and ideals linked to fashion.

*“What could it be? It’s... I could say fashion and style. Because everybody wants to be like fashionable, and stylish... and probably cannot afford that so now... it just puts pressure on them. That’s the fastest way to get stuffs, yeah” (Khanjisile, age 18, 04/12/2014).*

*“They want to have expensive clothes. They want the Nike. Yeah. They do” (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

Peer pressure, popular youth culture, and community expectations regarding appearance and status intersect to construct an environment that pressures young women into transactional sexual relationships. Participants demonstrated a keen awareness of peers who were wealthier, more stylish, and better dressed than them. In the opinions of these young women, transactional sex seemed to be a method of negotiating

socioeconomic disparities to level the playing field in terms of fashion and material wealth.

**Author:** *Do girls peer pressure each other?*

*“They do, they do tell other girls. ‘I saw this old guy, yeah’. They say you will get money. They give them. Yeah. They want their friend to do it” (Ntokozo, age 18, 04/03/2014).*

*“They are telling her the sugar daddy, how they are taking care of them. They are telling us that they have a lot of money, they are doing everything for them, but they want us to get one. They are taking them to the higher places... Umhlanga, Durban North. They tell us to get one of the sugar daddies” (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

*“Because everybody can see I am in my clothes and I have money, everything I want. So if I don’t have these things, you would think, “How do you do it?” And I would say I am dating these old men and I would pressure her. She is starting to get pressured to have an old man” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

In contrast to Cato Mator and KwaMashu, Umhlanga, or Durban North, is a wealthy, majority white community. In a country and city characterized by wealth inequality, to be lacking stylish clothing or material goods was understood as leading to unhappiness, shame, and social exclusion.

*“It’s peer pressure, yes. And it’s pressure from the community. Because you have to walk up with something nice. It’s not like you have to have to, but just to have a good feeling in you... You wanna taste something – food. To get nice things... to be happy! Not to be sappy and sad and what not. It’s like a stepping stone” (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

Research regarding post-apartheid social behavior in South Africa suggests that both interracial and intra-racial inequality gaps have widened since 1993 (Seekings & Nicoli, 2002). As of 2011, South Africa had one of the highest Gini indexes in the world, signifying high levels of income inequality (World Bank, 2011). Moreover, research has shown that the trajectory of risky health behaviors is significantly influenced by wealth inequality (Demombynes & Ozler, 2005). While South Africa’s interracial wealth inequality undoubtedly affects behavior within township communities, intra-racial wealth disparities seemed to have the most significant influence on these young women’s motivations for entering transactional sexual relationships. This study, as well as work by Zembe et al (2013), indicates that intra-racial wealth disparities are a more potent driver

of behavior among low-income South Africans than interracial wealth disparities, likely due to the close geographical distance of the former.

*“Because when you’re a girl, it’s like, my friends got a sneaker. I can’t get this sneaker at home. These expensive sneakers. Nike sneakers. Young girls go like, ‘Oh, my friend has got these Nike sneakers.’ But the friend lives in this rich family and this one doesn’t” (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

*“Like, the environment and the pressure from... if you have a friend that comes from a rich family... the standards. You can’t get that thing in your family... you can’t get one. So most of them get the pressure from their friends” (Nothando, age 24, 04/22/2014).*

The young women of Cato Manor tended to cite pressure from intra-racial wealth disparities more frequently than those of KwaMashu. It is possible that the Cato Manor economic development programs, initiated in early post-apartheid era, have generated more wealth amongst black South Africans than exists in KwaMashu. The very street on which three of the Cato Manor interviews took place features several modest, low-income, government houses juxtaposed with a two-story, modern, gated home.

It is of significance to note that the young women had no expectations of boyfriends their own age to provide such material goods for sex.

**Author:** *Is it normal to have sex with a boy your age without a gift?*

*“Yeah, it is quite normal, yeah. Because, if they are dating, yeah, that’s like. They don’t expect much if both of you are in school. You get money from parents and you just spend it at school... you don’t expect much from that person because normally... they don’t have nothing. Jobs, no” (Khanjisile, age 18, 04/12/2014).*

*“Because I have dated a boy my age, I just go for love... I don’t need gifts and things, no” (Nothando, age 24, 04/22/2014).*

*“Um, they are not willing to buy. A boyfriend at my age is not able to buy, because he is still at school, still learning. That’s why we choose to date sugar daddy, so they can buy us things” (FGD 3, 04/23/2014).*

This finding contradicts research in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, which found that young women perceived sex without material compensation as shameful (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008; Nyanzi, Kinsman, & Pool, 2001). Rather, the young women of this project only expected gifts and material reward from older men who were in a

position to provide. These results suggest that the association between sex and gifts does not necessarily apply to all sexual relationships.

### *Sex for Subsistence*

While sex for consumption was more commonly referenced, all the young women in KwaMashu referenced the use of transactional sex for subsistence needs. The exact parameters of sex for subsistence have been difficult to locate in past literature, but general goods of subsistence or “needs” have been defined as food, essential clothing, and school fees in past studies (Leclerc-Madlala, 2004). School fees, food, and employment were commonly cited as the needs of young women coming from poor families.

*“I think that some teenagers date sugar daddies because their families are poor and probably don’t have the money to pay them, that is why they date sugar daddies, so that they can get money to buy something” (FGD 4, 04/24/2014).*

*They promise them jobs. They want to have sex with them. So they will promise to get them jobs. But after that, no jobs” (FGD 4, 04/24/2014).*

*“Because they are desperate. They are desperate. For food and money, yes” (FGD 4, 04/24/2014).*

*“Some people have lost their parents, so they go to sugar daddies because they want more money to afford those things. They don’t have money to afford it” (FGD 4, 04/24/2014).*

*“Some of them they are doing this because of their backgrounds. Their families, they are suffering. Her mother is smoking and [drinking] alcohol. She likes the alcohol. She is not working. There is no food in their house” (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

Two FGDs in KwaMashu personally shared their own concern for financial stability and independence in the future. In the most extreme cases, the young women stated that unstable families coerced their daughters to enter relationships with sugar daddies.

*“Some of them, some of them are forced into it by their mother to date with these older men, a father, because he has money and he can get money to buy food and some things” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

*“Some of them, their mothers they say, “Leave the school. Go to these guys” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

*“And I think that yeah, many of them, it is because of their family. Many of them, it is because of their parents. Because there are parents that choose for you that say, “leave the schools, go and date the sugar daddies so you can have some money” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

In South Africa, men have historically held a privileged economic position in society, linked to their access to the most profitable section of the economy, as well as to housing (Hunter, 2002). As Hunter established in his 2002 ethnography in KwaZulu-Natal, these inequalities create the material foundation for transactional sexual relationships. The responses given in KwaMashu seem to reflect findings based in gendered economic inequalities as found in Hunter’s study.

In Cato Manor, unlike KwaMashu, only two young women recognized the presence of sex for subsistence in the community.

***Author:*** *Do girls ever date sugar daddies because they can’t afford food?*  
*“Nope. Nuh-uh. They just do it. It’s not because maybe they are poor or anything.”*  
**(Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).**

It is possible that this discrepancy is again attributable to the success of economic development programs in Cato Manor and the comparatively deep poverty of KwaMashu. Without accurate socioeconomic data however, these correlations can only be hypothesized.

### *Blending of Subsistence and Consumption*

Notably, the use of a sugar daddy for subsistence needs and for consumer wants was blurred in the minds of the young women in this study. Further, the monetary value of the gift given by the older man did not seem to make a difference in the young woman’s decision to engage in sexual relations. Young women expected of their older sugar daddy simply what he was capable of providing.

*“It depends on how powerful the guy is. Depends. Because my friends from the suburbs, they get cars. They get Apples. They take trips. They go overseas; they go everywhere. They get Timberlands. They get almost everything. They get those Peruvian weaves. They get everything. It’s not one specific thing. But it depends on how powerful the guy is. Because you cannot ask the guy working in the Municipality, cleaning the road, for a car. [Laughs]. Definitely you won’t get a car! But if you get a business man.... He’ll say, “Baby, wait. Just give me a moment, I’ll get it. You’re gonna get it. Which one do you like? Mini?! Okay cool.” [Laughs]. Then she got a car” (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

Moreover, the use of transactional sex for subsistence needs may lead into the use of the practice of consumer wants.

*“There is a girl I know... She is my friend... her family doesn’t like her. Her mother doesn’t do anything for her. She will tell her, “I don’t have any money.” And she starting dating older guy. She first dropped out of school. She doesn’t work, and every time she will go and try to find somewhere, nobody will hire her.... She starting dating a guy that is like 22. He gave her money. She’s just now, she’s dating older man, like old man. They give her money. She has a new phone, clothes... and she loves it.” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

Creating and using the definitional dichotomy of sex for subsistence and sex for consumption may be neither accurate nor beneficial. In this study, the two concepts were not distinct in the young girls’ minds. Sex for subsistence and sex for consumption are not mutually exclusive concepts; they often go hand in hand. Participants reported that older male partners would often provide both basic needs, such as food and shelter, along with consumer wants, such as drugs, cell phones, and fashionable clothes.

*“Yeah, I have a friend who is dating sugar daddy. She says she got one because she wanted to finish University. She always is telling me that all the time. He pays for her school fees. Then he pays for everything she wants. He pays the school fees, the bus tickets to go to school, food to eat at home, gives her money to buy fancy clothes” (FGD 3, 04/23/2014).*

Following the paradigm of subsistence versus consumption assumes overly simplistic motivations and outcomes of young women engaging in transactional sexual relationships with older men. Further, it does not recognize the pervasive nature of transactional sex in black South African culture and the multitude of nuanced contexts in

which it can be found. Creating a definitional dichotomy between sex for subsistence and sex for consumption is neither accurate nor useful for understanding transactional sexual practices.

While it is tempting to conclude that poor women tend to turn to sugar daddies more frequently than their wealthier counterparts, the responses in this study suggest this is not true. In fact, all participants believed the opposite to be true.

*“But, the most people who is dating the sugar daddies is the rich people. It is because they know that I can get everything that I want, I can do what I want with myself, there is no one that can tell me what to do or what not to do” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

*“Girls who come from rich homes have sugar daddies more than the girls that come from poor homes. So the people that are coming from their poor families, they did not do it. Yeah they, they are doing it... But not as many of them” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

*“Normally it’s the rich girls who do that. They approach men. They die for men. It’s the rich ones” (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

*“Most of the time it is the case of nice things, nice weaves. Because you can come from a poor family, but most girls don’t go for sugar daddies. They try something else, like getting themselves a jobs. Those ones that like things, they go to the guys” (Nothando, age 24, 04/22/2014).*

*“... most of them they don’t come from poor families.... Just they do it. They just want things. They think it’s cool” (FGD 3, 04/23/2014).*

These responses suggest that subsistence is a less common reason for young women to enter transactional sexual relationships with older men. Socioeconomic status is just one of a multitude of factors that may influence young women to seek out and engage in transactional sexual relationships with older men. All females who become involved in sugar daddy relationships desire some form of monetary or material gain, even if compensation is not a primary motivator. The ways in which these young women *spend* the money, however, is dependent on the socioeconomic status. In light of this information, it is crucial to seek out and keep an open mind for alternative reasons young girls may enter transactional sexual relationships with older men.

*Alternative Motives for Transactional Sex: Fun, Love, Preference, and the Silence of Sexual Pleasure*

Fun was the most commonly cited alternative motivator for young women to engage in intergenerational, transactional sex. Nearly half of participants considered it a significant reason for their peers to pursue sugar daddies. The pursuit of love and marriage was vehemently denied as a component of transactional sex by some young women; others believed that it could occasionally become a factor.

*“1: They don’t fall in love. It’s about sex and money.*

*2: It’s about sex, clothes, money, phones. They don’t fall in love” (FGD 3, 04/23/2014).*

*“Because some girls, they... some girls actually fall in love with sugar daddies. Not intentionally. Some fall... some fall pregnant. And some of them just play the game. Yeah” (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

One FGD recognized that the motivations for each young girl to enter a relationship with a sugar daddy was different; these students highlighted the need to acknowledge that the motives of young girls are highly varied and dependent on a multitude of micro and macro level factors. Finally, two young women perceived some of their peers to simply have a preference for older men.

*“You can never tell what it’s because of... maybe some girls like sugar daddies because of their cars. Maybe the girl is financially stable at home, but she likes the guy with a big bump [belly] and a fly car” (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

*“Maybe they are just into older men” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

These responses reflect prior literature on transactional sex, which has supported that there exists a “complex interplay of meaning and motives that prompt both men and women across socioeconomic strata to engage in intergenerational sex” (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008).

The absence of the recognition of female desire and sexual pleasure is representative of dominant discourse surrounding gender equality in South Africa. None of the young women made any mention of the enjoyment of female sexuality in the

discussions. This silence manifests itself in the context of South Africa's sociocultural history, in which women and female sexuality in general are perceived negatively (Shefer, Clowes, & Vergnani, 2012). Thus, it is not surprising that the young women of this study are restating dominant discourses around gender and sexuality.

## **Young Women's Agency, Active Participation, & Mutual Exploitation**

### Women's Agency

The majority of participants recognized that both the young women and the older men involved in transactional sexual relationships actively seek one another out.

*Author: Who tends to initiate relationships?*

*"Both, both. Because they both know where to find each other. There will be like on the hunt... they will know that this is the place that the big guys got that one girl"* (Khanjisile, age 18, 04/12/2014).

*"4: The older guys do... but them too. Some of them [the girls]... Some of the girls look for the guys, but most of the time it is the older guys that look for girls. 2: Sometimes the girls do"* (FGD 3, 04/23/2014).

*"The girls they go and look for the boys, and the boys they go and look for the girls. When it started, it starts when the boy, he is driving in his car and he sees the girl in the road, then they start to talk, exchange cell phone numbers and maybe start to chat"* (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).

In addition, the young women overwhelmingly believed that the vast majority of girls in sugar daddy relationships made an active choice to enter the relationship.

*"It's their choice to enter the relationship. You choose what you want for your life. Nobody ever pulls you in and shouts at you, "Go for a sugar daddy!" No, It's your choice; you decide for yourself. It's not a vulnerability thing at all"* (Nothando, age 24, 04/22/2014).

All of the few respondents who believed that young girls were forced into transactional sexual relationships were residents of KwaMashu. Despite this, most of the

students in KwaMashu FGDs believed that their peers were making a choice, not being forced into a situation. FGD2 debated the conflict of situation versus choice.

*“1: It’s the situation. It’s more about the situation, yes. It’s more about the situation than the choice.”*

*3: I think, I think that they do it because as we all know it is the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So as we are young now, we do things because we like it, not by force.*

*2: “Yeah, I think it is probably a choice because those coming from those backgrounds, you can start, restart a lot, you are able to do things for your future. So I think it is their choice.”*

*3: No, they know [about the risks]. It is a choice. It is a choice. It’s their situation that they are coming from. Because they could choose not to date an older man. It is a choice so it is coming from the heart.”*

*2: You can always try to find something to bring food onto the table. So it is a choice. You can choose not to date an older man” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

As this study was both qualitative and asked for young women to speak in terms of “others”, it is difficult and likely unsuitable to draw concrete conclusions regarding how often young women choose to enter transactional sexual relationships and how often they are coerced into the situations. However, one can assert that young women are not passive victims in transactional sexual relationships, and often actively use their sexuality as a resource. Furthermore, valuable insight can be attained by analyzing the respondents’ perspectives on the debate of choice versus situation. In the eyes of these young women, sugar daddies were somewhat of a scorned pathway to achieve economic success and a better life. In general, it was deemed more moral or credible to turn to sugar daddies for money in a situation of a bad family or poverty, but young women were making an active choice regardless.

### *Sugar Mummies*

As stated earlier, the practice of transactional sex with older men was believed to be quite common; literature supports this claim as well (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008; Shefer, Clowes, & Vergnani, 2012; Jewkes et al, 2010). While this study attempted to deliver a close-grained focus on sugar daddy relationships between young girls and older men, FGDs and interviews inadvertently led to the recognition of transactional sex among a different demographic, specifically between older women and young men.

*“Because some women are financially stable but they don’t have men. So they go for sugar daddies who are small kids. Like Mariah Carey. [Laughs]. She’s got everything, but she still goes to a child, Nick Cannon” (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

The increasing prevalence of “sugar mummies”, while still less common than sugar daddies, has been cited in literature in both sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa (Kuate-Defo, 2004). Like the sugar daddies phenomenon, the practices of this behavior are believed to be at least partially driven by the spread of global materialistic values (Kuate-Defo, 2004). While sexual behavior must be closely monitored for potential negative health implications, the rise of sugar mummies may reflect positive growth in South African women’s access to economic power and resources.

### *Mutual Exploitation*

In addition to intentionally seeking out and initiating transactional sexual relationships, young women were also cited to be cognizant of actively exploiting their male partners for economic gain.

***Author:** Who is using who in the relationship?*

*“It’s even. Because the guy, the guy can date a girl for ... maybe because she got good company. Yeah, and the girl can date a guy because the guy is stupid, or maybe the guy has got a lot of money, or maybe the guy has nice clothes. So it is the same” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

*“I think the girls they are telling themselves that ‘I am using the guys.’ They did not know that these old man is also using them” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

Participants discussed the active role that young women play in exploiting their older male partner for financial, symbolic, and social capital. This data found the issue of exploitation in transactional sex to be a two-way process, as supported by Leclerc-Madlala’s 2008 study of modernity and transactional sex in KwaZulu-Natal.

### Multiple Concurrent Partnerships

Although the practice of maintaining multiple concurrent sexual partners is linked to modern expressions of masculinity in South Africa (Leclerc-Madlala, 2004; Hunter, 2007; Selikow, Zulu, & Cedras 2002), the young women of this study cited several examples of their female peers sustaining multiple sexual partners as well. Both FGDs and young women in individual interviews described young girls who simultaneously maintained both multiple sugar daddies and boyfriends their own age and sugar daddies who did the same.

*“Yeah, because those guys.. I don’t think that they’ll have one, like, girl, small girl... they’ll be 3... probably it’s gonna be like 3 or 4... and he’s gonna be sleeping around with them” (Khanjisile, age 18, 04/12/2014).*

**Author:** *Do girls ever have more than one sugar daddy?*

*“Um, yeah you do get girls who do that. You do. Yes, that’s normal. I’ve seen quite a few” (Khanjisile, age 18, 04/12/2014).*

*“Oh yes, three or four [sugar daddies].” (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

For young women, the practice of maintaining multiple sugar daddies was perceived as a way to maximize monetary rewards and increase access to economic resources and power.

## **Power Dynamics**

### Control of the Relationship & Gender-Based Violence

Discussions surrounding power dynamics between the older man and the young woman were remarkably polarized between the Cato Manor participants and the KwaMashu participants. All the young women of Cato Manor believed that the young female had at least partial control in the relationship dynamics.

**Author:** *Who is controlling the relationship?*

*“I think both do because... The girl can blackmail the guy, like ‘I’ll tell your wife, so sometimes when he can’t do it, then she’s gonna be like, I’m gonna tell your wife and tell your family, and then everybody know... And sometimes the guy can be like, I do things for you so you have to do this and you have no choice because I have been giving you so much money, taking you out, doing so many things for you, yeah” (Khanjisile, age 18, 04/12/2014).*

Moreover, none had ever been informed of incidents of rape, physical assault, or sexual abuse associated with sugar daddy relationships.

**Author:** *Does physical or emotional abuse ever come into play?*

*“No... because they always play street smart... I don’t know. Probably it does. Probably emotional abuse because we don’t see what goes on in that car and when they go out constantly probably they do. But physically, I have never seen that” (Khanjisile, age 18, 04/12/2014).*

*“No. No. Ni\*\*as too grown up for that sh\*t. Most of them are much more mature. Because most of them say, ‘Look. Listen. I got a wife at home’” (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

*“No, sugar daddies, everything is just money. Everything is just fair game. Maybe they do that to their wives. But during this dating thing, there is no physical abuse. The sugar daddies know there is no physical abuse” (Nothando, age 24, 04/22/2014).*

On the opposite end of the spectrum, all of the students from KwaMashu, with the exception of one young 16-year-old, believed that the man had complete control of the relationship. Further, with the mention of control, the young girls quickly cited cases of rape and physical abuse without further prompting.

**Author:** *Does the man control the relationship?*

**1:** *Yes, yes because if you don’t want to have sex, sometimes they beat you, sometimes they will shout at you and say “Do it! I give you the money.”*

**2:** *Yes, others they rape the girls because if he says come and have sex, the girls they don’t want to” (FGD 4, 04/24/2014).*

*“Yes, yes. Because they hurt them. If the girl says I don’t want to have sex on that day they say I am going to kill you. They will start the abuse, especially of the girl. They rape*

*them. If the girls does not want to have sex on that day, they will rape them. The sexual abuse” (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

**Author:** *Does physical of emotional abuse ever occur in the relationships?*

*“Both. Yeah. I think that, if they are having sex, it happens that he may assault her. If she doesn’t feel like having sex, then he will start assaulting her. Sometimes he will beat her, just because I don’t want to have sex with you” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

*“Some of the sugar daddies, they do that. If the girl refuses, they hit them and beat them” (FGD 3, 04/23/2014).*

The stark contrast and confidence of responses between the two demographics demonstrates the incredible nuance that transactional sexual relationships can assimilate in different contexts. The majority of these same respondents clearly believe that girls willingly enter into these relationships. Where, then, does the young woman lose control of her fate?

*“In the situation of having fun, she can leave. But in a situation of providing food or safe shelter, they will stay, and he will assault her or beat her. Yeah” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

While this article established earlier that poverty was not necessarily the key driver of the commencement of transactional sexual relationships for young girls, socioeconomic status irrefutably has a considerable impact on power dynamics and gender-based violence. This likely has roots in South Africa’s history of patriarchal society.

### Condom Use

Power dynamics within transactional sexual relationships have crucial implications for women’s ability to negotiate condom use. All participants believed that entering a sugar daddy relationship would potentially compromise the young woman’s ability to request condom use. Furthermore, it was reported that young women often agreed to not use a condom in exchange for extra money or gifts. In this high risk manner, young women exploit their sexuality in order to maximize economic profit.

*“They are saying they want a girl who is coming without a plastic. They do not use the condom and they get the HIV. The STIs” (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

*“The other ones, say, I don’t use condoms. If we use condoms I won’t give you money” (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

*“But the girls will say it is alright [if we don’t use condoms], but you need to give me the extra money” (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

*“They force them to have sex without condom, yes. Yes, because they are bad” (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

A lack of condom use in transactional sexual relationships is, of course, of great concern in terms of health implications for HIV, STIs, and pregnancy. These findings demonstrate that young women may value financial gain over potential health risk.

## **Negotiating Priorities: Money, Health, Morality, & Culture**

### *Risk Awareness*

In the context of recent government initiatives to raise awareness and stigma about the risk of sugar daddy relationships, it is critical to evaluate young women’s current risk awareness and the prospects of success for such campaigns. All of the participants in this survey acknowledged that entering a transactional sexual relationship with an older man carried significant risks for the young woman’s health. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of the participants believed that other young women were completely aware of these health risks before they engaged in transactional sexual relationships.

*“Yeah, they know [about the risks]. The thing that they want the most is money. They don’t think what will happen at the end, most of the girls” (Ntokozo, age 18, 04/03/2014).*

*“They know. They definitely know. It’s all around. It is all around... Black parents don’t sit you down and tell you all about this. But television will tell you. School will tell you. Even your friends will tell you. Because there has to be a time in your life when you will*

*see it. That's how we grow up... there is no clueless person" (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).*

*"Yes, they do, they do... The thing is taught every day on the radio, in the newspapers, especially in school. First thing they teach you about is these diseases. Yeah, they know, they know. They just looking... They just do it for money. The sugar daddy is there for money" (Nothando, age 24, 04/22/2014).*

These results are significant in that they contradict past research that has shown a low risk perception of transactional sexual relationships among young women (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008).

### *Transactional Sexual Relationships as Deviance from Culture*

None of the young women cited in this study claimed to have had a sugar daddy relationships in the past or present; many, rather, explained their reasons for avoiding the phenomenon. Although the participants were extremely cognizant of the risks of HIV, STIs, and pregnancy, these sexual and reproductive health concerns did not seem to provide the rationale for refraining from transactional sexual relationships. Alternatively, all the young women cited their Zulu culture as justification for their abstinence from such relationships.

**Author:** *So do you think among Zulu people in Durban, it is accepted to have a sugar daddy?*

*"Not really, it not accepted. But, nowadays, you do whatever you want because there is freedom. You are allowed to do anything you want. But in our culture, it is not" (Nothando, age 24, 04/22/2014).*

*"They [the girls with sugar daddies] tell us to get one of the sugar daddies. But eish, I don't like it. It is not right for me. I don't want to embarrass my parents. In my culture, I know my culture, I have to deal with my culture" (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

*"They are not teaching them [girls with sugar daddies] the right culture, yes" (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

*"In my future, I want to make my mother proud, I want to make my family proud, so why should I date a sugar daddies" (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).*

*"...her family is telling her you do not date an old man. In my culture we don't date old men" (FGD 1, 04/10/2014).*

All respondents believed that a sugar daddy relationship must be hidden from the young woman's parents.

### *Sugar Daddies – Moral or Immoral?*

The practice of transactional sex with an older man was 'othered' by participants. The young women spoke of others' practices of transactional sex; the majority conveyed these relationships as immoral.

*"She's just now, she's dating older man, like old man. They give her money. She has a new phone, clothes. I don't know what's wrong with her"* (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).

*"A friend of mine she was learning at J.L. Dube High School. Last year she has done her matric. So this year she started at University. She was my friend, my best friend. But now I am starting to not become close to her because she is starting to date old guy, sugar daddies. I was asking her why, because she did not stay with her family, she was staying with me.... **But things that she does I do not like.** Because the way she does this things, it is embarrassing her family"* (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).

Although acquiring fashionable clothing and material goods indicating wealth was perceived as a positive marker for young women, respondents generally scorned the method of using sugar daddies to achieve these means.

*"I think there is [ways to make money], but not to date sugar daddies. There are many things that you can do in the future without dating old mens. Yes that you can do your own money"* (FGD 3, 04/23/2014).

*"You must stay in school, do your own money, instead of dating. It is important to save your money, to save your pocket money. There are many things you can do without dating a sugar daddy"* (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).

These findings regarding the immorality of transactional sex are supported by those from Shefer et al (2012), which discovered a similar moralistic lens placed on transactional sex on a college campus in South Africa. Shefer et al attribute the negative opinions of transactional sex to the growth of "middle-class, urbanized values" among South Africans, a judgment that may be applicable here. The consideration of 'sugar

daddy' relationships through a moralistic, 'good' femininity versus 'bad' femininity, lens suggests that modern-day South African women reproduce dominant discourses on female sexuality and patriarchal societal structures. It is possible that the historical notions of 'clean' and 'unclean' women in discourses on unsafe sex have evolved to influence the current discussion around transactional sex (Shefer et al, 2012; Shefer and Foster, 2009; Waldby, Kippax, & Crawford, 1993).

It should be noted that one young woman did speak of transactional sexual relationships in a neutral, non-judgmental tone. She also did not discuss the role of Zulu culture in the phenomenon.

*"They are climbing their way up. But it is a good thing because they are not climbing their way down. I don't judge, I don't judge anyone. A step forward is better than a step back"* (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).

## **Young Women's Constructs of Masculinity**

Through their discursive narratives of transactional sex, the young women of this study revealed important insights into constructs of the masculinity of the black South African man. Respondents gave no serious effort to consider any motivations of men beyond the desire from sex, a dialogue that was markedly absent from discussion of women's motivations.

*"And I think it is because there is no guy that is going to buy those things without something. Without getting nothing in return. There is something that they want. If they give you something, you must give them something too. There is no guy that will give all these gifts and not have sex"* (FGD 2, 04/16/2014).

*"Mhhmm... South African guys like girls. Whether the girl has got one eye. Or no legs. They like girls. They love pussy. [Laughs]. Yeah, it's funny. It's true though. Because you can find a lady whose got shorts and no legs... but she's pregnant! And you can find it in the most ugly girl in Cato and... She's pregnant! Like, seriously. Yeah, so they like pussy"* (Nompumelelo, age 22, 04/22/2014).

Literature has cited that a man's identity in black South African culture is linked to their sexual prowess and the number of sexual partners they can accumulate (Leclerc-

Madlala, 2004; Hunter, 2007; Selikow, Zulu, & Cedras, 2002). Furthermore, Dunkle et al cite that masculinity heavily encourages heterosexual success with women, as well as the control of them (2007). In transactional sexual relationships, gift-giving by the man serves as a control mechanism of the young woman. These conversations with young Zulu women suggest that young women contribute to reproducing and upholding dominant discourses surrounding masculinity in South Africa.

## Conclusion

In the wake of an HIV epidemic that does not seem to be releasing its stranglehold on South Africa, generating knowledge and understanding of potentially high-risk sexual behavior is of utmost importance. This qualitative study sought to explore young KwaZulu-Natal women's perspectives on transactional sex between 'other' young women and older men.

In the context of an increasingly globalized, materialistic society, as well as growing intra-racial wealth disparities, young women were cited to be motivated by money, material goods, and symbols of modernity significantly more than by subsistence needs. However, the distinction between sex for subsistence and sex for consumption was far from clear. This paper argues that the two practices often go hand-in-hand, and a definitional binary is neither accurate nor useful. Drivers of transactional sex are varied and complex; alternative motives for young women include the pursuit of fun, potential love, and partner preference. Sexual pleasure was utterly absent from discussions regarding transactional sex by the young women in this study, reflecting the country's roots of patriarchal society and dominant discourses surrounding gender and sexuality.

Young women are often active agents in transactional sexual relationships, and cannot be regarded as passive, exploited victims. This study cites several cases of young women purposefully pursuing, initiating relationships, and exploiting their older male partners. Females challenge gendered economic inequalities by utilizing their sexuality for access to economic power and resources traditionally held by men. Both men and women maintain multiple concurrent partnerships amongst practices of transactional sex. The rise of sugar mummies in South African society may suggest both the widespread practice of transactional sex and women's increased access to economic resources. Female agency in transactional sex serves to both disrupt and reproduce patriarchal norms.

The power dynamics between older men and young women in transactional sexual relationships have crucial implications for high-risk sexual behaviors. This study found that socioeconomic status likely exacerbated gender inequalities within a transactional relationship, leading to gender-based violence.

While transactional sex can prove to be socially, psychologically, and financially beneficial and meaningful for both parties involved, it seems to be deemed as a scorned, immoral pathway to success in the eyes of young women who do not partake in such relationships. The perception of ‘sugar daddy’ relationships through a moralistic, ‘good’ femininity versus ‘bad’ femininity, lens demonstrates that modern-day South African women reproduce dominant discourses on female sexuality and South Africa’s historically patriarchal societal structures.

The young women of this study are well aware of the health risks of transactional, intergenerational sexual relationships, such as HIV infection and pregnancy. This knowledge, however, does not drive their decision to abstain from sugar daddy relationships. Rather, the young women of the study base their decisions off of their moral values based in Zulu culture.

Finally, the conversations in this study reproduced popular discourse on the Zulu man’s identity and constructs of masculinity. The young women overwhelmingly believed that a man’s only motive for entering a transactional sexual relationship was sexual pleasure.

In the context of varied socioeconomic status, geographical location, and micro-level power dynamics, transactional sex is temporal and nuanced across space. Understandings of transactional sexual relationships, along with their health implications, should be frequently revisited to attempt to minimize high-risk sexual behaviors in South Africa.

## **Recommendations for Further Study**

A longer and more thorough data collection process would greatly benefit and contribute to the knowledge generated from this study. KwaMashu students from other grade 10 classrooms, as well as Cato Manor residents from other sections of the neighborhood, may contribute diverse opinion to the discussion. Moreover, an in-depth investigation of the geographic and socioeconomic demographics of the communities of Cato Manor and KwaMashu could provide valuable insight into the perspectives contributed by the young women of this project.

Literature reporting men's perspectives on transactional sex have been miniscule in comparison to women's perspectives on the issue. In addition, most of the male-based research has been quantitative in methodology. A qualitative, inquiry or narrative-based study of men's opinions on transactional sexual relationships would be immensely valuable in contributing the current body of knowledge.

Although this study was of qualitative nature, informants revealed clear correlations between poverty and gender-based violence as well as morality and culture in the context of transactional sexual relationships. Both of these relationships could provide intellectual fodder for further research, whether it be qualitative or quantitative in nature.

Finally, the trend of transactional sexual relationships, especially between young women and older male partners, appears to be alive and thriving in South Africa. While anti-sugar daddy campaigns aim to reduce the practice, it may be worthwhile to investigate methods to promote equitable, non-violent, and mutually beneficial transactional sexual relationships.

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