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Responsibilities of a Young Father

A social-anthropological study of young fathers
and reproductive justice in Libreville, Gabon

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to explore how young fathers engage with fatherhood and the responsibilities surrounding it, in Libreville, Gabon. By using decolonial feminist theory, masculinities studies and a reproductive justice framework, the thesis focuses on themes such as fathers' accountability towards pregnancies and fathers' role as providers, but also wider issues such as the engagement of the wider family and the effects of patriarchy and masculinity on fathers' experiences of fatherhood.

Through multiple interviews, a questionnaire and observations the study reveals that while children are seen as a blessing and are with very few exceptions always welcome, many young men are able to "strategically disappear" and avoid responsibilities when they become fathers. At the same time, they feel pressure to succeed as providers at a time when the effects of colonisation, urbanization and capitalism have weakened family solidarity and fostered individualism. Even though new realities have led to some of the fathers defying rigid gender roles by doing domestic labour, the hegemonic masculinity still restricts men in their emotional lives and the choices they make. Lastly, the reproductive justice framework redirects the attention to the fact that the Gabonese government needs to prioritise the justice aspects of reproductive health care.

Key words: fatherhood, decolonial feminism, reproductive justice, masculinity, social anthropology, kinship, Gabon.

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1. Introduction

All over the world, taking care of children is seen as a woman's responsibility, even though men are just as involved in the procreation process. In the past, in Gabon, children used to be taken care of by the whole family, by the entire village, but changes inflicted by colonialism and rapid urbanization accelerated by capitalism has led to the fragmentation of families. As a consequence, there are no longer any clear guidelines as to how children should be taken care of. Furthermore, even though mothers still hold the biggest responsibility when it comes to care-taking, they are now also expected to participate in wage labour, at a time when family solidarity has weakened, raising the question: what roles do fathers play?

My field study and thesis focus on young fathers and their views and experiences of fatherhood. Research relating to childrearing tends to focus on the mothers¹, and little research is done on fathers and on how fatherhood is affected by patriarchy and masculinity. This thesis will revolve around young dads, trying to understand how and why they (don't) take responsibility.

Aim of the study and research questions

The aim of the study is to create a better understanding of young fathers' relationship to fatherhood in Libreville, how it came about, and the responsibilities that come along with it. Further, this study aims to bring light to the different types of fatherhood in Libreville and how they have evolved with time due to colonialism and capitalism within the global patriarchal system, with a focus on *responsibility* through a reproductive justice framework.

The main research question is as follows: **How do young fathers engage with fatherhood and responsibilities related to it in Libreville, Gabon?**

This question will be discussed and answered through the following subquestions:

- What accountability do young fathers take regarding the origin of pregnancies?
- How do the young father's families engage with fatherhood?
- How does the local understanding of masculinity affect young fathers' roles as fathers?
- What are the young fathers' ideas of a good father?

¹ when typing in the word "childrearing" on Finn (Lund University's own search engine), the first two articles from 2026 are titled as follows: "Child Maltreatment and Maternal Childrearing Practices: Mediation by Parental Sense of Competence" (Delhalle, Manon; Blavier, Adélaïde) and "Migration patterns and childrearing in contemporary China: Younger-generation rural migrant mothers in a large city" (Tang, Shuangshuang; Zhou, Jing).

Disposition

The following chapter is a description and summary of the prior research that has been done related to young fathers, having a child at a young age in Gabon, and men's approach to unwanted pregnancies. The third chapter lays out the theoretical framework that will be used to analyse the findings from the field work. The fourth chapter gives some contextual background information about Gabon as a country, its history, and its current economical and political climate. The fifth chapter delves into the methods I have chosen for this field study, including a general reflection regarding the field and ethical considerations. The sixth and first content chapter *The road to fatherhood* focuses on how these young men came to become dads and what decisions led to that happening. The seventh chapter *Providers* centres on the young fathers roles as providers, and the pressure and sacrifices that come along with it. The eighth chapter *It takes a village* delves into how the conceived children actually are being taken care of and how this has changed over time, including what roles they as fathers play in their lives besides being the providers. The chapter *Experiencing fatherhood* looks deeper into how masculinity and patriarchal norms affects these young dads and their experiences and identity as men and fathers. Lastly, chapter ten is a summarising conclusion.

2. Prior research

This chapter introduces the literature that informs my research. First, I will discuss some earlier research that has been done on attitudes towards unplanned pregnancies in a Gabonese context, research on fatherhood and how it correlates with the local understanding of masculinity, and lastly research on male responsibility and accountability connected to pregnancies. A sociology professor at the public University Omar Bongo in Libreville presented me with the book *Faire sortir la grossesse*, which means "Taking Out the Pregnancy", that consists of different articles based on sociological studies about unwanted pregnancies in the Central African region. I will start by introducing two articles from the book that are relevant to my study.

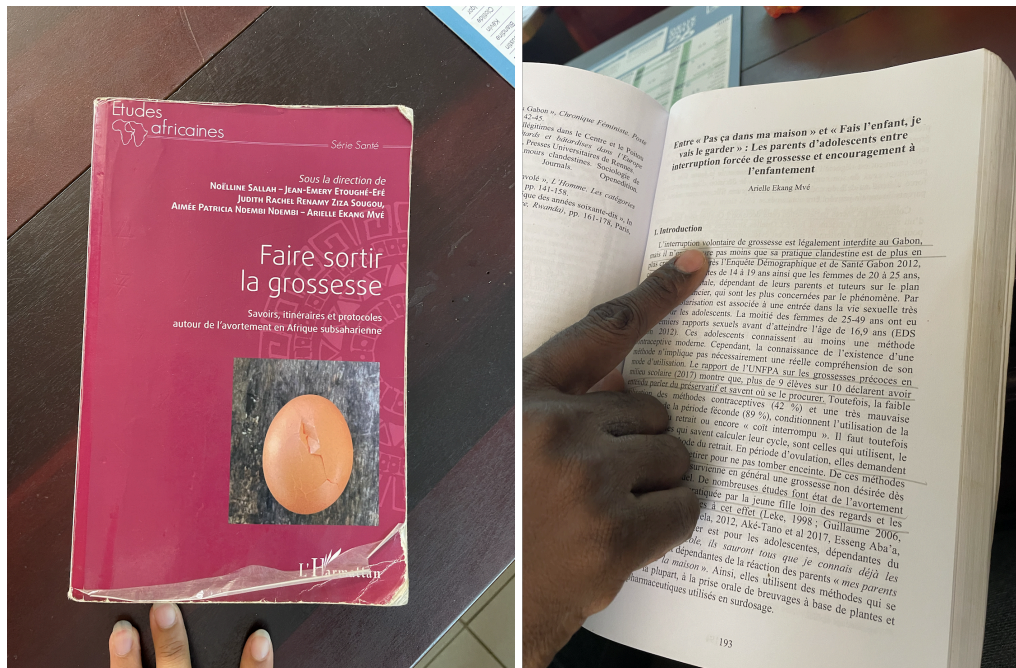


Figure 1 and 2: The book the sociology professor showed me.

Unplanned pregnancies in Gabon

The chapter “Honey, I don’t want the baby. I’m married: Reasons and feelings of married men in terminating the pregnancies of “mistresses” in Gabon”, written by Philippe Nkoma Ntchemandji, recounts men’s attitudes towards unwanted pregnancies and clearly shows how men are able to free themselves from responsibility and avoid accountability (2022). The article puts forth testimonies from married men having children outside of their marriage and wanting the mother to have an (illegal) abortion. While the article shines light on men’s audacity to push women into having illegal abortions, more interestingly, it tackles the issue of women having to bear most of the consequences of (unwanted) pregnancies in a new way, by interviewing the men directly, which is what my study also aims to do. The interviews I conducted revealed that similarly to the men in the mentioned chapter, the fathers who asked partners to have abortions were indifferent to the risks it could pose for the women.

The second chapter worth mentioning from the previously mentioned book, “Between “not in my house” and “have the baby, I’ll take care of it”: Parents of teenagers caught between abortion and encouraging procreation” [my translation from the original title in French]², written by Arielle Ekang Mvé, recounts stories of Gabonese parents’ reactions to their teenagers getting pregnant (2022). The experiences shared in the article highlight the existing taboo related to sexuality in Gabon and how it leads to teenagers having unprotected sex as most of them do not get a sexual education from home, and can further be punished if their parents find out that they are sexually active. For example, a daughter explains how her mother got mad when she found condoms in her

² I have translated all French titles and quotes throughout the thesis to English.

room, which led to her not using any protection anymore, as she could no longer keep condoms at home for fear that her mother would find them and punish her. The chapter also describes the general positive attitude in Gabon towards children being born, even if the parents are teenagers still in school, as procreation is culturally very significant. Some parents welcomed their teenager's pregnancy by assuring their child that they would help take care of the child, consistent with the phrase in the title "have the baby, I'll take care of it". Nevertheless, the article also showcases examples where these pregnancies are not welcome. A mother mentioned in the chapter decides that her pregnant teenager has to have an abortion as to not draw shame on her dad, showing that the father's dignity is seen as more important than the daughter's choice.

Fatherhood, masculinity and sexuality

In the book *Re/Assembling the Pregnant and Parenting Teenager: Narratives from the Field*, the chapter "It changed my life: Rethinking the Consequences of Teenage Fatherhood" written by Jennifer Beggs Weber (2018), explores American teenage dads in the USA and their experiences of fatherhood. The interviewed young men explained that fatherhood gave their life new meaning and a purpose, highlighting their experienced pressure to be breadwinning providers. It concludes that only working class boys' life plans were truly affected by them becoming fathers: poor/lower-income teenagers didn't have big plans to begin with, and the middle class ones got help and financial support to let them be able to go to college for example.

Alice Aterianus Owanga discusses one strand of Gabonese masculinity in her study on rappers in Libreville (2013). Her fieldwork shows a complicated relationship between men and their financial situation due to them not getting paid or struggling with unemployment. She describes the hegemonic Gabonese masculinity as revolving around (hetero)sexuality, *la force* which means power, and reputation which all are significant for a strong masculinity. Owanga also points out that the effects of colonialism are still felt in the Gabonese conception of masculinity, which can be seen in their attempts to reclaim it from Western influence. She brings up the contradiction in the rappers' attempts to reclaim their masculinity by labeling aggressivity and hypersexuality as "African", even though they instead reproduce the colonial ideas of "African masculinity" that was deemed to be aggressive and hypersexual. The Western colonial influence on Gabonese masculinity will be explored and discussed further in the theory section.

In the book *Masculinities in Contemporary Africa*, Kopano Ratele also discusses the effects of colonialism on masculinity in the chapter "Studying Men in Africa Critically" (2008). His chapter makes a distinction between critical and uncritical studies of men and masculinity. In short, uncritical studies of men focus more on empathy for men, while critical studies include men's agency and accountability. Using the example of men being able to leave the women they impregnate to take care of the children, Ratele demonstrates how uncritical studies would claim

that historic events such as anti-colonial wars have brought changes to men's lives and to masculinity, which has left men “confused and even terrified” to the point that they are incapable of taking their responsibilities (regarding a pregnancy they created), whereas critical studies of men take into account the historical background, whilst also emphasizing the need to include an analysis of power between the genders when holding men accountable for their actions (2008:20,21). Ratele advocates for more critical studies of men and masculinity that recognise masculinity as a social product and recognise the impact of historical events, such as anti-colonial wars, and that they also incorporate feminist and gender scholarship and theories (2008:21,32).

Male responsibility in pregnancies

The previously mentioned chapter written by Philippe Nkoma Ntchemandji about married men urging their mistresses to have abortions seeks to include men in discussions of pregnancy and their consequences. The article “Fatherhood, Reproductive Justice, and the Strategic Invisibility of Men”, by Hoon Choi also makes a point out of including men by using the reproductive justice framework and including men within it, as he mentions that men are far too often being overlooked while discussing the subject of reproductive health (2024). The reproductive justice framework and Choi's ideas will be developed further in the theory section.

I also found a seemingly relevant article about non-hegemonic fatherhoods and the need for intersectionality while discussing non-western views of fatherhood, written by two Israeli researchers. As an academic, I am choosing not to go against the Palestinians' BDS (Boycott, Divest, Sanction) call which includes an academic boycott (PACBI), and will therefore abstain from including their article, since they are based in Israeli universities that have strong ties with the Israeli military that currently is committing war crimes and perpetuating the illegal Israeli occupation and ongoing genocide of the Palestinians.

Lastly, it should also be mentioned that while looking through old theses in the anthropological and sociology department of the University Omar Bongo, I found an anthropological study on family solidarity written by Guy Faustin Mbadinga Moucketou in 1995 *Solidarité traditionnelle et responsabilité familiale au Gabon*, which will be used in the contextualising background section of the thesis. One of the aims of finding a thesis written in a Gabonese university was to find a local or at least an African (gender) theorist. Unfortunately I wasn't able to find any. To my disappointment, Western academic hegemony still casts a vast shadow over Gabonese academia who still rely heavily on western ideas and epistemologies and struggles to pave its own way forward based on local knowledge. Nonetheless, my study aims to combine local knowledge from the initially mentioned articles with the approach of including men in discussions and research about reproduction to further contribute to research on feminist decolonial deconstruction of

fatherhood and masculinity. I aim to contribute to the growing African academia and its evolving anthropological and gender studies, including critical studies of men and masculinity.

3. Theory

In this theory section I will explain the decolonial feminist framework that guided this thesis, that encourages us to see kinship as an inevitable aspect which needs to be included whilst still focusing on gender. Masculinity and its construction will be further delved into, and we will look into how the reproductive justice framework is a useful tool to reconnect men with their accountability vis-a-vis pregnancies. The key concepts that will be used during the essay such as coloniality of gender, hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, gender power and reproductive justice will be thoroughly explained.

Decolonial Feminism

When discussing the subject of young fathers in Gabon I will be using a decolonial feminist framework. The Argentinian philosopher María Lugones was one of the pioneers of decolonial feminism and coined the term *coloniality of gender* to demonstrate how colonisation and the introduction of christianity enforced new gender systems and hierarchies, and thus created new forms of gender oppression that exist to this day (Lugones, 2010:743 ff.). Decolonial feminism aims to incorporate an intersectional perspective including “critical discussions on the limitations of binary sex logics, hegemonic heteronormativity, hierarchies of race and social conditions” when discussing the topic of gender it aims to push past mainstream (white-liberal) feminism that is based on privileged women’s experiences, and work according to their interests and agendas (Rodrigues, 2022:1-2). A decolonial feminist framework is a suitable tool to analyse young men and their experiences as fathers as it is a topic greatly intertwined with gender norms. Even though feminism is rooted in women’s struggle, its broader aim is to target injustices, including those that affect men as well, notably injustices created by patriarchy. The decolonial approach is especially important when conducting research in a non-western country, as even in academia, there is a tendency to broadly apply western concepts and theories that are detached from local realities, instead of using indigenous epistemologies (idem, 2022:1).

In line with Lugones’ philosophy, Ifi Amadiume, a Nigerian scholar, also emphasizes the need to move away from western categorisation and conceptual systems, which depend on epistemological orders that are not indigenous to the region of one’s research. In the book *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*, Ifi Amadiume states that the previously mentioned hegemonic western feminism and gender studies are inaccurately built upon binaries and oppositions, while

referring to European knowledge about Africa (1997:4). In her latest book *African possibilities* from 2024, Amadiume also points out the effects of patriarchal bias in western anthropological classifications that often marginalise and render invisible “important women’s institutions, systems, terms of reference, multiple roles, and relationships in the household, family, and kinship” (2024:6). She implies that one must move beyond critiques of racist euro-antropologists and instead, as African scholars, create our own work (1997:4). While working with African experiences within an African context, it is therefore imperative to include African theorists.

The decolonial feminist Amadiume also promotes interdisciplinarity as a necessary tool in any approach to gender studies, arguing that one must include analysis of historical events such as colonialism, and contemporary systems such as capitalism and neoliberalism which she argues are “globalizing forces that are generating social inequality” and thus urging us to “focus on the local” (2024:xiii, 5). She concludes that “The wealth of local African cultures and knowledge systems can be employed to counter imperialist agendas and counterproductive patriarchal and sexist development”, referring to matrilineality e.g. (2024:xiii).

As previously mentioned, Amadiume argues against the use of western binaries in African gender studies, instead pointing out that kinship has always been a far more important social factor than gender in Africa and stating: “In Africa, everyone has a kin. It is expected to be guided by the rules of kinship morality (2024: 159). It is therefore natural to include a kinship-analysis focusing on family relations and dynamics, when discussing any African social phenomena, such as fatherhood. Especially as kinship still marks the basis of social welfare in Africa (2024:159). In my study, interviews showed that family and other members of the community are involved in the care-taking of children and constitute vital advisers in important decision-making. It is an example showcasing that kinship is as (if not more) important as gender in the analysis of young fathers in an African context.

The decolonial feminist framework aims to use emic concepts of kinship, and include analysis of the current and historical contexts, including discussions on the colonality of gender. Consistent with the decolonial feminist approach, I will give an introduction to African masculinity studies.

Masculinity

Definition of masculinity

When discussing the subject of fatherhood, theories of masculinity are of key importance. The anthropologist Raewyn drew new attention to masculinity, or rather masculinities, with a new analytical approach and led to the creation of a conceptual framework which identifies four different types of masculinities: hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and marginalised (2005:77).

Connell contested the widespread idea of a “fixed, true masculinity” and instead defined masculinity as a gender project created through time (2005:45, 68, 72). She explains that it is a social construct created by social processes and further by its relational production, for example in contrast to femininity and to other men (2005:68). Out of the four different types of masculinities in Connell's framework, *hegemonic masculinity* is most frequently used and originates from Antonio Gramsci's hegemony concept that stems from a class analysis and explains “the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life” (2005:77). Connell thus applies this concept to masculinity, claiming that a specific type of *hegemonic masculinity* is upheld by everyone in society by recreating it and conforming to its norms, and is simultaneously reinforced when in “correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power”, for example when hegemonic masculinities are enforced in schools or in the military (idem). Connell presents hegemony as held in place more by access to power and authority (which often has access to tools to inflict violence), than by direct violence. She states that *hegemonic masculinity* “guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” in its legitimisation of patriarchy (2005:77).

Connell opens up for the need to include the cultural and historical context (in accordance to decolonial feminism) to understand how any masculinity is created and discredits “any claim to have discovered transhistorical truths about manhood and the masculine”, instead she states that “to understand gender, then, we must constantly go beyond gender” (2005:68, 76). She does acknowledge her ethnocentrism by clarifying that she refers to “a concept of masculinity in the sense of *modern European/American culture*” and by that, refrains in that instant from generalising (2005:68). Even if Connell does not include a decolonial perspective, she includes race in her analysis by pointing out for example that white men's masculinities (in the US) are created in relation not only to white women but also to black men (2005:75).

Colonial masculinities and violence

African masculinities are to this day deeply affected by the continent's violent colonial past. In the introductory chapter of the book “Masculinities in Contemporary Africa”, Nigerian scholar Egodi Uchendu points out that Africa hasn't always been, and still isn't completely patriarchal due to many societies being matrilineal and thus less patriarchal, which could be argued to be the case of Gabon where many of the indigenous ethnic groups are matrilineal (2008:12). Uchendu explains that those groups had a different type of masculinity, a non-patriarchal masculinity, that was undermined and replaced by the colonial patriarchal one, a clear example of the previously mentioned coloniality of gender (2008:13). Amadiume also argues that there still exists remains of matriarchal culture stemming from the matricentric unit in the African kinship system (2024:6). Along with Uchendu, she blames colonialism and its colonial policies to have disrupted the values of matrilineal kinship by enforcing upon Africans the nuclear family model with its categorising

terms creating a shift from mothers and children to wives and children, and equally from fathers to husbands (2024:157). Amadiume concludes that the impact of colonialism led to great transformations of family structures, and consequently to the male role and masculinity (idem).

Uchendu brings up examples of the Shona people, from the country we today call Zimbabwe. British colonisers implemented their patriarchal and hierarchical masculinity while simultaneously introducing wage labour that led to further confusion of Shona masculinity, as it forced young men to leave the rural areas to search for employment in the urban areas, thus disconnecting them from their elders and their influence, and instead pushing them to adopt “urban” values that were predominantly influenced by Europeans (2008:9). Gabon experienced a similar situation with the urbanisation that came with colonialism, which will be delved into deeper in the background section.

South African decolonial feminist scholar Pumla Dineo Gqola brings up another example of how colonialism has influenced African masculinities. She points out the aggressive and potentially violent type of masculinity that is seen as an expression of both patriarchal power and of freedom in its aim to oppose and abolish colonial rule, which she labels *hypermasculinity* (2015: 154-155). Alice Aterianus Owanga also describes African men’s urge to express new forms of masculinity to regain power following colonial domination in her study on Gabonese rappers and argues that Gabonese masculinities are still inherently hierarchical both in relation to women but also other men (2013:145,147). In further analysis of Gabonese masculinity Owanga refers to Connell when claiming that masculinity cannot be separated from sexuality, explaining that Gabonese men see a restraint from sexual activity with women as abnormal and unmanly (2013:148). Owanga claims that many indigenous Gabonese ethnic groups traditionally view sexuality as deeply intertwined with masculine power, even before the influence of colonialism (2013:153). Gqola’s concept of hypermasculinity also entails an emphasized sexuality, specifically heterosexuality, however also deeply entangled with misogyny in its aggressive performance and urge to dominate, in this case connected to the effects of colonialism (2015:154). This hypermasculinity can further be connected to an analysis of gender power that is mentioned in the first chapter of the book “Masculinities in Contemporary Africa”, an analytical tool focusing on power relations connected to gender, but also intertwined with age- and money-powers (Ratele, 2008:21). Tenets of hypermasculinity are present in Gabon, and were displayed by some of the young fathers I interviewed in for instance their expression of disgust towards homosexuality or in their refusal to ever be put in a subordinate position in relation to a woman.

Emotions and stoicism

The decolonial feminist bell hooks discusses men, masculinity, love and violence in her book *the will to change* (2004). Even though she writes about african-american men in an American context and therefore doesn’t discuss family lineage which is central for Africans, it can still be argued that

her work is applicable in a Gabonese context as well. She discusses how historical systemic oppression of black bodies by white bodies affects men, with a consistent in depth analysis of how patriarchy, a universal social system that is also prevalent in Gabon, affects men, masculinity and love. She states that the only emotion valued by patriarchy and acceptable for men to express is anger: “their mad-ness, no matter how violent or violating, is deemed natural - a positive expression of patriarchal masculinity” (2004:7). She continues by claiming that violence between patriarchal parents, the father in particular, and children is the most common form of patriarchal violence (2004:24). hooks explains that “The point of such violence is usually to reinforce a dominator model, in which the authority figure is deemed ruler over those without power and given the right to maintain that rule through practices of subjugation, subordination and submission” (2004:24). This type of violence is not unfamiliar to the young dads I interviewed, but is rather widespread in Gabon and leads to a lot of pain. But, as hooks explains, patriarchal culture does not care if men are unhappy (2004:5). Instead patriarchy teaches men to engage in a form of emotional stoicism. This was affirmed by some of the young fathers I interviewed who had difficulties with expressing their emotions related to their children for example. bell hooks claims that men are longing for love and urges feminist thinkers such as myself to examine and explore precisely that (2004:4), which is why this essay will include an analysis of how patriarchy affects these young fathers' emotional availability.

Reproductive Justice

The theory of Reproductive Justice is used as a framework to analyse young fathers' relationship to fatherhood, the responsibilities it entails, and the support they receive. Reproductive Justice is an interdisciplinary decolonial feminist contemporary framework “for thinking about the experience of reproduction”, that combines human rights with social justice, focusing not only on creating rights on paper, but aiming for lived justice and a world where reproduction becomes safe for everyone (Ross & Solinger, 2017:9). The term Reproductive Justice was theorised by Loretta Ross and Rickie Solinger in the book *Reproductive Justice: an introduction* and has three primary principles: (1) the right not to have a child; (2) the right to have a child; and (3) the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments (idem).

Ross and Solinger explain that the term grew out of a need to broaden the struggle for reproductive rights by not only focusing on the right and choice to *not* have children, with debates about being “pro-life” regarding abortion often dominating the topic of reproductive rights. They amplify the voices of women of color who point out that the rhetoric of “choice” used by white feminists focuses almost entirely on a woman's ability to prevent conception, with a singular focus on prevention, and argue that “the right to have a child was as crucial to women's dignity and safety” (2017:71). The reproductive justice framework includes a critique of the limits of the neoliberal “free” market with its focus on individual “choice” which inevitably blames individuals for not adjusting to a neoliberal economic system (2017:170). In Gabon abortion is illegal (except for

certain circumstances, see upcoming background section), leading to a large number of dangerous clandestine abortions. In the book *Feminism for the 99 percent*, scholars Cinzia Arruzza, Nancy Fraser and Tithi Bhattacharya also bring forth a critique towards neoliberalism by pointing out that even if abortion is made legal, it is not accessible to everyone if it is not free of charge or if clinics are too far away, thus concluding that “reproductive justice requires free, universal, not-for-profit healthcare” (2019:14). Many of the fathers I interviewed mentioned costly (illegal) abortions that they had to pay for, and the lengths they went to in order to acquire the needed amount of money. Accordingly, Ross and Solinger emphasize that “a reproductive justice analysis looks at how economic and social systems harm lives and constrain the options both of individuals and communities” and examine the failures of public and corporate policies through a human rights analysis (2017:71, 170).

Ross and Solinger involve governmental institutions as they argue that high quality health care, housing and education, a living wage, a healthy environment and “a safety net for times when resources fail” are all fundamental resources that need to be provided to achieve safe reproduction practices (2017:9). The Reproductive Justice framework thus involves a human rights analysis that allows for pressure to be put on governments as they are the ones supposed to provide these necessities whilst upholding their citizens’ rights. Governments are dependent on their citizens’ reproductive capacity, and often encourage child bearing to increase their labour force and boost the economy (2017:15). This is the case in Gabon. Amadiume remarks that states police and penalise those that abort “yet does not even care properly for women who are producing the future workforce!” (2024:19). This further amplifies the need for the human rights framework present in reproductive justice, which encourages us to resist laws and policies that deny people the right to control their bodies and interfere with their decisions regarding reproduction (2017:10). In its call for justice, Reproductive Justice looks further than just acquiring rights and urges us to understand the historical background and societal context that have created peoples’ lived realities by drawing attention to “the ways that the history of white supremacy operating in a capitalist system penetrates and misshapes the present” (2017:11).

So how does this reproductive justice framework that centers on women apply to this thesis concerning fathers, essentially men? The Reproductive Justice framework is highly suitable for young fathers reflecting on their experiences as parents, of how they became parents and the support they receive from the government. The Reproductive Justice framework allows us to analyse and critique the governmental institutions and legislation that form their living conditions and support or hinder their ability to be good fathers.

This is explored in the article *Fatherhood, Reproductive Justice, and Strategic Invisibility of Men*, where Hoon Choi discusses the need to include men in discussions of reproductive justice “because

men's disappearance from these stories contributes to the lack of their moral accountability" (2024:145). Choi describes men's strategic invisibility that allows men to "walk away" from the multiple responsibilities that can come from physical sexual activity and who they are able to treat as an isolated incident (2024:128). Choi attributes it to "the physicalist mindset rooted in a long-standing dualistic tradition of the Western philosophy and culture". He argues that men should be involved in all three of the Reproductive Justice's primary principles in terms of accountability and support by supporting women's reproductive choices and actively sharing responsibility for pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and creating safe and healthy environments for children, while also working toward social structures that enable equitable parenting (2024:127).

Many of the young fathers that I interviewed mention having unprotected sex or their sexual partners having abortions without truly grasping the severity of those actions. This invokes the need for the Reproductive Justice framework to help recenter men into taking responsibility and accountability. As Choi puts it: "If women cannot decide whether to carry a child, fathers should not be able to decide whether to support the woman and the child." (2024:135).

This theory section largely emphasizes the need to include the context to better understand a social phenomena. This brings us to the background section that will elaborate upon a few focal points to give the needed context regarding the young fathers in Gabon, and to their realities and experiences.

4. Contextualising background

As earlier mentioned, to understand Gabonese masculinity and the experiences of fatherhood one must understand the context from which they stem. I will therefore give a short introduction to Gabon, its history, its culture and its current political situation, including the changes in gabonese kinship which has had a significant impact on fatherhood. Everything mentioned in this chapter will be discussed further in the content chapters.

Introduction to Gabon

Gabon is a coastal country in central Africa bordering Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo. Gabon has a population of almost 2,6 million according to UNFPA (2025). With the exception of the autochthonous minority group Pygmies, that only constitutes a few thousand people, Gabon's population is made up of Bantu peoples divided into over 50 different Bantu ethnic groups, most of which are matrilineal.

With a territory of 278 000 square kilometers, Gabon has a low population density of only 10 inhabitants per square km. Gabon's territory is 80% covered by rainforest and deemed a "pioneer in ecological protection" with multiple projects aimed at preserving the forest and making it a "net

carbon absorber" (World Bank 2025). At the same time, Gabon has one of the highest urbanisation rates in Africa, with 92% of the population living in cities (a.a. 2025). Gabon has a high fertility rate, with women in rural areas having approximately six children and women in the urban areas having four children, leading to half of the population being under 20 years old (a.a. 2025).

Gabon also has one of the highest GDP per capita in sub-Saharan Africa, with 8,263 USD per capita (a.a. 2025). In terms of HDI, Gabon ranks 7th in Africa and 108th in the world with a score of 0.733 (UNDP 2025). Gabon's economy is mainly driven by oil extraction and exports, but also other natural resources such as manganese, palm oil, wood and rubber (World Bank 2025). The former colonial ruler France is by far Gabon's main trading partner, followed by the United States, China and Belgium (Britannica).

Gabon's history

Gabon is a former French colony. The first Europeans to trade in the territory which was to be called Gabon were Portuguese in the 15th Century. By the 19th Century, France dominated and brought along Catholic missionaries to spread christianity and promote French cultural influence. France gained full sovereignty over the Gabonese territory between 1939 and 1946, by signing treaties with local kings and leaders who were unaware of the magnitude and significance of the "legal" documents that they signed in exchange of "gifts" such as weapons, fabric and alcohol (Metegue N'nah 1981:27).

Gabon gained independence from France in 1960, just like all French colonies in West and Central Africa. Metegue N'Nah explains that the socio-economical changes that Gabon went through during its colonial rule led to the rise of a national identity, but failed to eradicate what he labels as "ethnic consciousness", referring to the the indigenous ethnic groups that existed long before colonial interference and which persist today (1981:9). Metegue N'Nah argues that this "ethnic consciousness" led to a micro-nationalism that created obstacles in creating a unified battle against the colonial rulers (idem).

One consequence of colonialism was the creation of the nation Gabon, which divided some ethnic groups (such as the Fang who were divided between Gabon and Cameroon) while simultaneously clumping up many others into one nationality/nation. After independence, the nation-building process put forth the nation over the ethnic group, and led to confusion in regards to Gabonese people's own traditions. Today, the Gabonese people within the Gabonese state are expected to adhere to the same law regardless of their ethnic group. Even though exogamous relationships, and children belonging to multiple ethnic groups are not uncommon, traditions from one's ethnic group still bear great importance for most Gabonese people and their identity.

Cultural changes in Gabon

Kinship

Mbadinga Moucketou Guy Faustin describes Gabonese kinship history in his thesis “*Solidarité traditionnelle et responsabilité familiale au Gabon*” (1995) where he explains that the Gabonese definition of a family is the same regardless of being matrilineal or patrilineal, defining the traditional family as a group of people connected by blood, marriage or adoption, who normally live together (1995:22). Mbadinga Moucketou explains that in Africa, generally, families include more people and are larger than in other places, mentioning Europe as an example (1995:32). The traditional Gabonese family consists of children, parents and grand-parents, and also includes uncles, aunts and cousins, leading to families potentially consisting of 10 and up to 100 people, larger when the men are (legally) polygamous (1995:32,33).

To this day, the family gives children their first education, and relays cultural traditions to those who will constitute the new generations (1995:22). In the villages, education used to be collective: every child that was born was the child of the village (1995:26). Children weren’t raised only by their two biological parents, but also by aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins, grandparents (1995:27). Originally, there was no differentiation between siblings and cousins, or parents and uncles and aunts in Gabon: cousins are considered to be siblings and uncles and aunts fathers and mothers. From my own experience, to an extent, this is still the case today. However, there are differences in the relationship one has with siblings, parents and grandparents.

Raymond Mayer’s book about the history of the Gabonese family delves into the different family dynamics (1992). All these relationships are guided by “le droit d’ainesse”, translated as “the right of the oldest”, which means that one owes respect to one’s older siblings or any person older than one self, especially to one’s parents and those who are part of one’s parents generation (1992:155). The exception to this rule is the relationship with grandparents, which is the most relaxed and laidback (1992:173). In line with what I learned growing up, Mbadinga Moucketou’s thesis mentions the relationship between grandparents and their grand-children, explaining that grand-children can tease and joke as much as they want with their grandparents, ask them all the questions they want, whereas the relationship to one’s parents is more strict and respectful (1995:25; Mayer 1992:177).

Even when families in Gabon are matrilineal, they are still patriarchal. The thesis from 1995 describes the traditional family as always headed by a man: “le chef de famille” (1995:23). Traditionally, the “chef de famille” participated in the village counsel, gave orders within his family, directed work tasks and decided upon marriages (idem). In patrilineal families, the biological father became the “chef de famille” of the household he created, whilst in matrilineal families, the oldest

uncle on the mother's side became the authority figure and decision maker (1992:171). This entails that in patrilineal families children could have closer relationships with their uncles as they did not have any significant power over them. Equally in matrilineal families, children could be closer to their biological father as he had less authority than the maternal uncle (1995:25). Mbadinga Moucketou mentions that his informants recalled times of earlier generations where the "chef de famille" had almost total authority upon his children (nephews and nieces if matrilineal). This was justified by the thought of him being the link to the ancestors and the spiritual world (to God) (idem).

Already in 1995, Mbadinga Moucketou pointed out that the family systems were going through "mutations" (1995:23). According to him, the idea of the "chef de famille" still persisted, but with much less power since the political system and its laws no longer give parents impunity to exercise their authority to the fullest (idem). For example, violence against children has been forbidden by law since 2019 ([Journal Officiel de la République Gabonaise](#), 2019). Furthermore, as scolarisation from the age of six has become mandatory, the state in the form of schools have taken over more responsibility for the education of children, thus minimizing parents influence over their children (1995:24)

Sexuality and fertility

It should also be noted that sex is still a taboo subject in Gabon. Sexual education is traditionally passed down from your grandparents. Grandparents have time to spare and are no longer (hopefully) working hard, so they have time to answer their grandchildren's questions. They also have the wisdom to answer wisely.

Today, due to urbanization and the shift towards nuclear families, a distance to the older generations has been created. The educational system has tried to fill the gap but it has created reactions from parents who fear that it instead will encourage the students to engage with sexual activities at an earlier age.

While sex is a taboo subject, fertility and child bearing is of paramount importance. Mbadinga Moucketou explains the importance of fertility: "Having children is giving life to the dead and allowing the clan to live on through time and space" (1995:24). Thus, children are seen as blessings. He also mentions that infertility can be considered a *curse* inflicted by someone with ill intentions.

"Monoparentalité" (single parenthood)

Partly due to urbanization, child rearing has also changed significantly. With the western world as a role model, combined with the limited amount of space in the big city, living only with the nuclear family has become the norm, whilst the elders tend to stay in the villages. A news program on the

national television channel mentioned a report written by sociologists revealing that 39% of children grow up in single parent households, 34% grow up with both their parents, and only 27% still grow up in the traditional way within a large extended family (Gabon 1ère 2026). The big family with many generations in one household is no longer a norm or a given. There are still big families, but they look different today, which will be discussed further in the content chapters.

Gabonese politics

The political system

Gabon is a parliamentary democracy with a presidential regime. The republic of Gabon, its constitution, democracy and laws are only 70 years old, and has had only 4 elected presidents. The political system was not created by the Gabonese people, it was inherited from the former colonial ruler and is being navigated trying to find ways to combine the local tradition with the french format. Like in other former French colonies, the political system and a large part of its legislation is based on the French system.

Health care and insurance

The Gabonese government offers social security insurance for all its citizens called the CNAMGS, which stands for National Health Insurance and Social Security Fund (Caisse Nationale d'assurance Maladie et de Garantie Sociale). This system is built upon workers having a part of their salaries be poured into the fund, with those earning more contributing a bigger share.

On the official CNAMGS website, a statement about the insurance covering 100% of pregnant women's expenses (within the limits of the agreed ceiling) is one of the few things in bold, although an interview with a midwife led me to understand that it isn't entirely true (CNAMGS 2025). Those with the lowest incomes get an 80% discount on the fees, but the entirety of the maternity care is not free of charge. The only part of maternity care that is completely free is the actual birth. And still, there might be additional costs for the room and for single use equipment such as medicine and gauze.

Pronatalist policies

In my discussions with sociology professors at the University Omar Bongo, they frequently mentioned that the Gabonese government has a pronatalist agenda, encouraging the growth of the population, believing it will contribute to economic development. This could be one of the reasons for the restrictive attitude towards abortion, which will be discussed below.

Even so, in reality, the economic incentive provided by the pronatalist policies is quite limited. In an article written by Geneviève Dewuno Edou, she firmly argues that the state's economic support of a single 50 000 FCFA (840 SEK) deposit for each birth, a yearly child allocation of only 5000FCFA

(84 SEK) per child and a sum slightly bigger for school tuition twice a year, is inadequate, especially if they want more women to have more children (Gabon mediatime, 2024).

The abortion issue

The article “The legalization of abortion: a law parallel to Gabonese realities” gives an introduction to Gabon's history with abortion and its legislations (Marcelle Ibinga & Clarisse Maryse Mimbuih M’Ella, 2020). The authors explain that abortion is seen as something dangerous in Africa and highlight that the restrictive legislations regarding abortions is part of a colonial heritage that in itself is heavily influenced by religious christian beliefs that condemn such practices (2020:48-49).

The legal framework surrounding abortions is still restrictive in Gabon. In 2018, in a context where the numbers of clandestine abortions kept increasing, abortions within the first 10 weeks were legalised if the life of the mother or child is in danger, if there is evidence that the child will suffer from severe or incurable malformations, if a minor suffers from a state of severe distress or in cases of rape and incest (2020:47,51). Clandestine abortions are still criminalised, with legal consequences such as imprisonment up to two years and/or a fine up to 1.000 000 FCFA (16 800 SEK) for a person attempting an abortion. However, while the legal system is restrictive, in practice, it is not very difficult to get an abortion in Gabon, if one is able to pay a private practitioner. Also, as far as I could find, no one has been prosecuted for carrying out an abortion. This is confirmed by the responses to a questionnaire to investigate people's knowledge regarding the juridical repercussions, which revealed that out of 100 women between the ages of 17-43, of which 81% have had an abortion, only 15 knew about the strict legislation surrounding abortions (2020:54,55).

5. Methods

This chapter presents the methods that I have chosen, how the interviews were structured, who the informants are, how they were found and my relationship with the field. This chapter also includes ethical considerations.

Interviews with young dads

Informant criteria

I have collected the majority of my data through semi-structured interviews with young dads, held in French, the official language of Gabon. Firstly, I had to delimit the population and decide the criteria I wanted in my informants. I decided to focus solely on Gabonese fathers living in Libreville as to not have to make comparisons between different nationalities, but also focusing only on Libreville and not the entire country to help narrow down the search for informants due to the

limited amount of time available for the field study. As I am interested in young fatherhood, I decided to focus on younger dads, under the age of 35 as they face more adversity and represent the newest changes within parenthood. Additionally I chose to delimit the age of when the fathers had their first child, requiring that they became fathers before the age of 25³, as earlier pregnancies are rarely planned and therefore put the fathers at a bigger test of living up to their responsibilities. Further, I wanted to interview young dads with a child of at least 6 months to have had the time to form some kind of relationship with the child, and experience the responsibilities that come after childbirth. I aimed for a wide range of perspectives, trying to find young dads with different types of situations and experiences.

Finding informants

I started to find informants by making posters stating that I was looking for interviewees with the earlier mentioned criteria, that I printed out and put up around the university in Libreville and the area surrounding it. I also made a digital poster that my gabonese friends and family shared on their social media, opting for a convenience selection (Göransson 2019: 132) I found most of my interview participants through a snowball method, by asking my personal contacts to recommend potential informants and give me their contact information or setting up a meet-up.

Types of informants

I have conducted nine semi-structured interviews with nine young dads. One of them was still a student in high school, others were studying at university, working or unemployed. Their living conditions varied with one dad living together with his daughter and her mother, other dads living on their own without children or as single dads with their child, and some dads having multiple children with multiple mothers were currently living with a girlfriend with some of their respective and shared children. The interviewed dads also had different levels of engagement towards their children. One of the young fathers that was interviewed would be regarded as an uncle in a western idea of family, but according to his and other matrilineal gabonese ethnic groups he is considered to be a father to his sister's son. It was a conscious choice to include an "uncle-dad" to showcase a part of Gabonese kinship, which will be further discussed in the content chapters.

Interview form

The interviews were held with the support of an interview guide with questions within 4 different themes: The origin of the pregnancy, the reactions toward the pregnancy, responsibilities, and fatherhood. As I held more interviews I focused less on the specific interview questions within the interview guide, instead focusing more on the themes, to be more open to where the informants led

³ An employee at the ministry of social affairs deemed 25 to be the cut off for "young fathers". Generally you are considered to be "young" for a very long time in Gabon. A 35 year old father could be considered a young father.

the conversation, and to the topics they brought up and therefore deemed as relevant and important. I also noticed in the first interview that some of the questions I had written down and had planned to ask already had been answered by our natural back and forth, thus minimising the need for the interview guide. I was pleased when most of the fathers thanked me for the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings, as they rarely talk about those subjects but were actually happy to do so.

Not knowing the local research culture, I asked a fellow anthropology student at the local university UOB for advice regarding the choice of location for the interviews and basic customs as a researcher. She recommended that I ask the participants where they would feel most comfortable to talk freely, that I bring some kind of gift to acknowledge and thank them for the time they accord me and offer to pay for transport. Accordingly I asked the participants for their preference and then suggested potential meet up places close to them for less inconvenience. The interviews were thus held in neutral places: a park, a bar, in a less crowded part of the university, in their home and at a gate-keepers house. I ended up paying for an informant's taxi only once, as I either met them close enough to their home or workplace that a taxi ride wasn't necessary, or they had their own car. As suggested by the student, I bought or brought drinks and a snack: djino (a local soda), water, beer, yoghurt, grilled chicken and rice or shawarma. (I did end up consuming the drink and the snack intended for one informant once as he showed up two hours late and I got hungry. I did then of course propose to buy him something else but he politely declined after having apologised (the delay wasn't really his fault), even after my insisting.)

Interviews with professionals

I additionally interviewed a midwife and a man working at the ministry of social affairs to get more information on the Gabonese institutions. I walked to a local health center and asked my way to a midwife who had time for some questions, after having attended to a couple of patients. I acquired the contact of the ministry official through a personal contact who gave me his number. I had gone once before directly to the ministry of social affairs and talked briefly with another official who was meant to redirect me to a more qualified person, but that lead fell through.

Questionnaire

In addition to the interviews, I made a questionnaire aimed at teenage students to reveal their thoughts and attitudes towards parenthood, sexuality and responsibility. The questionnaire was filled out by around 120 high school students in the ages 16-22 in three of Libreville's biggest high schools. The school employees gladly helped me navigate the required procedures that were needed before getting access to the students, such as meeting the principal, explaining the purpose of my

visit and handing in my official letter from Lund University. Even though it became exhausting, I enjoyed being in the lively school environments, and witnessing the students' giggly reactions upon having to fill out a questionnaire about sex among other things. Most of the time I had the opportunity to introduce myself and my research, and explain that the questionnaire was voluntary, anonymous and confidential. At some occasions one of the employees took over and failed to mention that students under 16 could not participate, thus leading to me excluding 3 of the filled out questionnaires from the collected data as the respondents were only 15.

Upon reflecting on it, I realised that there were plenty of other topics that I would have wanted to include in the questionnaire: How do their family situations look like? Who did they grow up with? What are their thoughts on masculinity? But then I remember their voices from the classrooms saying out loud "C'est beaucoup hein!", basically exclaiming that there were a lot of questions in a questionnaire with 21 questions, out of which 14 were multiple choice questions. So it is fair to say that I couldn't have asked much more.

Observations in the field

By being in Libreville I was constantly collecting data through daily conversations with people in taxis, with the women in the corner shops and by watching people interact. Even through conversations with family members attitudes towards parenthood and anecdotes were revealing. For example, an uncle explained to me after receiving an audio message from a woman, that his nephew used to have a relationship with her and that they have children together, but that his nephew no longer takes any responsibility for his children with her. Rather, he has moved on with a new wife, new kids, new life. I then asked my uncle if anybody said anything. He tiredly replied that he and others who were disapproving of his behaviour have talked to him multiple times, but that he doesn't think that he is doing anything wrong, and thus refuses to change.

I also conducted a more specific observation at a public beach where families go during weekends with their kids to observe how young men interact with children. I noticed men holding small children's hands whilst walking on the beach, buying candy or balloons. I noticed a couple with a young daughter whose father (I assume) was watching her while she was playing in the sand, and when it was time to go home the mother (I assume) was the one to brush off the sand and put on her clothes and shoes. The act of buying balloons or candy is a way of showing affection in a consumer-prone economy, and the couple gave a good example of the gender roles where the father acts as the protector and the mother as the caretaker.



Figure 3: A young man carrying a little girl at the Leon Mba beach in Libreville

Media consumption

I watched the national television's programme on mono-parentality and single parenthood, which gave important contextual insight on the current situation for parents in Gabon. The programme included a panel discussion where they for instance discussed the many different ethnic groups in Gabon and how different traditions make it difficult to create laws that apply to all within the Gabonese state. Having seen the programme, I reflected upon how many critiqued the modern nuclear family but still emphasized children's need to grow up with two parents, but rarely mentioned how other family members can help fill the gaps of disengaged parents.

Ethical considerations

Before every interview I informed the informants that their participation is voluntary and that they can at any time choose to withdraw their participation, even after the end of the interview. I assured them that they would be anonymised and that everything they say is confidential. I then asked for permission to record the interview with my phone and asked if it would be okay to use an AI-tool to help with the transcription. Nine out of eleven informants accepted to be recorded. One of them accepted to be recorded but preferred that the audio file not be put into an AI-transcriptor. Two others specified that as long as their face and name wasn't included they saw no problem in the use of an AI-transcriptor. Two others politely declined from being recorded, so I proceeded by taking notes in my notebook. One of them later expressed his regret for refusing to be recorded as he saw how much I was writing, but I assured him that it wasn't an issue. I recorded nine of the interviews and took notes by hand in a notebook and in one of the cases I took notes on my computer, as we were sitting outside with not enough lighting to be able to see what I was writing.

Reflexivity in the field

I spent a total of seven weeks doing fieldwork in Libreville, Gabon. As a young woman it was at times demanding having to interview only men (except for the one female midwife) and listen to their male-centered narratives without objecting. At times I protested when I didn't agree with certain ignorant or misogynistic statements, for example when one young father claimed that the pressure felt by men to provide is way worse than 9 months of pregnancy and the pain of giving birth. It is an objective comparison, but knowing that 160 women died in childbirth in Gabon in 2023, combined with his refusal to acknowledge that the pressure being put on men is a social construct that he plays a part in upholding, was frustrating (WHO, Unicef, UNFPA, World Bank, UNDESA, 2025:74). However, I constantly reflected upon my positionality as being half Gabonese and half Swedish, and the relationships between me as a researcher and my informants.

Charlotte Davies explains that the ethnographer's personal history and the broader sociocultural circumstances under which we work affects the study and the relationships between ethnographer and informant (2008:5). I lived in Gabon from when I was 4 to 12 years old, until we moved to Sweden where I have been living ever since. Being Swedish and therefore being part of "the west" I was aware of the power dynamics it could imply doing fieldwork in Gabon and therefore wanted to avoid neocolonial tendencies in applying my western-influenced feminist worldview upon Gabonese realities. Spending my influential teenage years in Sweden, Swedish feminism, that values and promotes a specific type of gender equality, for example the equal sharing of household tasks or parental leave, is the normative lens through which I see and analyse the world. But I am aware of the fact that the Swedish idea of equality and gender justice is not the only or best way.

Additionally, my skin tone comes with certain privileges in Gabon. By having a lighter skin tone than the majority of the gabonese population, due to my mother being white, I can also be perceived as white in Gabon. For the most part I'm perceived as "métisse", the skin tone that comes from having a white and black parent. When I start talking I get recognition for being Gabonese as I am a native speaker of the Gabonese French dialect, but nonetheless it is not uncommon for people to call me "la white" or "la blanche". Colonialism implemented notions of white-supremacy that still linger on to this day and are still being reinforced by the popularity of western media (music, films, tv-shows and programs), which for example affects beauty standards that deem a lighter skin tone as more attractive. Further, Davies claims that all types of ethnography could be deemed to be exploitative in some ways (2008:45). Therefore, the combination of my skin tone and my position as a researcher could potentially create a larger power imbalance between my informants and I. Although, as most of my informants were men that mostly were older than me, it is difficult to define the power dynamics.

Nonetheless, I would like to think that I have been able to successfully collect a large amount of useful data by stimulating reflexivity, as Davies describes it, through creating a cooperative product through meaningful conversations and connections along the way together with my informants despite the difference in gender, worldviews and skin tone (Davies, 2008.9).

The data collected through the above mentioned methods will be analysed in four content chapters: *The road to fatherhood*, *Providers*, *It takes a village*, and *Experiencing fatherhood*. The first chapter explores how they came to be fathers and what choices they made, with a focus on reproductive justice. The second chapter goes into detail into how fatherhood is connected to breadwinning and what it requires from them. The third chapter focuses on how the fathers' children are being taken care of, including decolonial kinship-analysis. The last chapter discusses how masculinity affects their roles as fathers.

6. The road to fatherhood

The pregnancies that led these young men to become fathers came about in different ways. For the majority of the young fathers, the pregnancies weren't planned, especially not the first ones. Some of the fathers were in committed long term relationships with the mother, in other cases the pregnancy came about by a one night fling, or by a "petite nga", the gabonese slang for a girl that one dates, but doesn't necessarily imply a monogamous relationship.

*Alain*⁴

There was an exception, Alain, who wanted to have a child while he and his younger girlfriend were still in high school. His parents died when he was young and he desperately longed for a family. Some relatives tried to talk him out of it but he stood by his decision, and his girlfriend got pregnant. As earlier mentioned, kinship is of the utmost importance in African countries. Amadiume writes in her book *African Possibilities* that kinship morality is what guides one through life (2024:159). This explains why Alain felt strongly that he wanted to start a family at such an early age as he lacked the feeling of belonging to a family, which is fundamental in Gabon. Although it can be argued that just because he lost his parents it doesn't mean that Alain doesn't have a family. He had family members giving him advice, but the big tightly knit families that used to be the norm are no longer as common in Gabon, especially not in Libreville. The changes in family structure will be discussed further in the third chapter "It takes a village".

When Alain's girlfriend was about 6 months pregnant someone knocked on his door. Alain went to open and then saw a young pregnant girl and immediately understood that the child was his. She lived in a village nearby and they had a fling 7 months ago. She was 7 months pregnant. His initial reaction was to "nié", to deny his involvement with her as he did not want to be made responsible

⁴ Alain and all the following names are pseudonyms, to safekeep my informants identities.

for another pregnancy, and didn't want his girlfriend to know that he had been unfaithful. So he denied everything and sent her home. He later talked the situation through with his cousin who asked him: "did you have sex with her?" "yes." "Did you use protection?" "no.". They came to the conclusion that the child must be his, and his cousin encouraged him to do the right thing and take accountability.

Nié

Even if Alain was the only one to plan (what he thought was) his first pregnancy, his story encompasses many themes that were found in the other fathers' stories. "Nié", the act of not claiming a pregnancy that is said to be yours, is an example that shows how men can strategically make themselves invisible, as Hoon Choi puts it, and walk away. A couple of the interviewed fathers admitted to have refused to claim a pregnancy that was said to be theirs by the mothers. Some of them simply did not want the responsibility of being a father, whereas one father explained that multiple boys had sex with the same girl, thus claiming that she couldn't be sure of who the father was. Another father recounted a similar story of him dating a young woman, but they were not in a monogamous relationship. So when she became pregnant she first designated another man as the father, but after he refused she told him that he was the dad. He felt that she couldn't be trusted and chose to not get involved.

Even though they knew that they had had unprotected sex with these women they freed themselves from the responsibility. This is a clear example of why men need to be included in discussions of reproductive justice as current gender power dynamics enables men to walk away. Hoon Choi argues that men need to take responsibility when pregnancies occur and support women by being present in supporting prenatal care, childbirth expenses, parental care, and raising the child, in the cases where they chose to have the baby, or "contribute to what is required when she decides not to have the child" (2024:127). One of the fathers actually said that he felt bad about rejecting the woman and sends the mother money from time to time even though he isn't sure that he is the father, taking at least some accountability. The uncle-father recounted the story of his sister's pregnancy and that when his brothers found out about it wanted to beat up the father. He then stepped in asking "did he deny?" "no" "will then let him 'assumé'", thus defending him as he was ready to be held accountable and be responsible.

Accountability

The questionnaire also revealed fathers' tendency to not take accountability. One young girl wrote: "he told me that if I one day give birth, if I try to call him to *reconnaitre* (recognize) the child he won't do it", and another wrote "At first I was in tears, I was stressing out because I didn't know what to do between the father denying his paternity and the insults from the parents". The girls were left to carry the consequences on their own. One boy on the other hand wrote that he at first denied the pregnancy because he was afraid, even though he knew that he was the father. Another

wrote that he was stupefied at first, but made the choice to *assumer* (assume responsibility). The last sentence clearly demonstrates how the fathers have the option to make a *choice* of whether to be involved or not. Fortunately, in the majority of cases the questionnaire revealed that the male students would not deny their paternity, one of them stating that “For me one should always take accountability”.

Men are involved in every unwanted pregnancy, and these examples show the existing double standards that allow men to free themselves from responsibility and accountability whilst there are countless expectations on women. Hoon Choi criticises these double standards by drawing parallels to coerced sterilization, forced adoption, disregard of informed consent, and the applying of laws without due consideration for the human aspect of the problem, which when applied to women is justified “in the name of making the world safer for babies”, but seem all too excessive for men, and concludes that they thus should be viewed as excessive for women, too (2024:136).

Posters at a school.



Figure 4: “I am a student and soon a dad... if only I had listened...”

Figure 5: “At 12, already a future mom, I feel like I have all the problems in the world on my head.”

Unprotected sex

Alain’s story also mentions him having unprotected sex even when he wasn’t trying to become a father, an experience that was shared by most of the interviewed young dads. A professor at UOB recounted instances from when he was young and how sex was had whenever, wherever. He further explained that some of the times he used a condom, but he didn’t stop having sex if he ran out.

This sentiment was shared with most of the interviewed young dads. Some of them shared that they kept track of the girls menstrual cycle but would still have sex during “un-safe” periods as the urge was too strong. Loic always asked his girlfriend if she was in a “safe” period of her menstrual cycle to make sure that she wouldn’t get pregnant. She would always say yes. He therefore partially blames her for the pregnancy as he feels that she should have known that she would become pregnant. Loic brought up the term “pieger” which means to trap, implying that she might have done it intentionally to “trap” him and keep him in her life, describing it as selfish and malicious. Another young father, also mentioned “pieger” by recounting how an older boy told him and his friends when they were young that if they find a nice girl they should get her pregnant and “trap” her to stay with them.

To “trap” someone with a pregnancy is not right in either case, but the field study revealed that women are blamed and judged more harshly for unplanned pregnancies. The questionnaire revealed that the majority felt that both parties were equally responsible for a pregnancy following consensual intercourse, with one student writing “it would be preferable if the young girls and the young boys would use protection during relations to avoid any unwanted pregnancy”. But it also showed that more felt that the woman is more responsible than the father. This idea was further proved by a student writing that “the mother shouldn’t carry all the responsibility as if the father was dead because both of them did the deed”, clearly stating that there is a tendency of mothers bearing all the responsibility even though she didn’t become pregnant on her own. I also noticed a poster on the wall of a school in the social service office that showed a pregnant teenage girl and the phrase “Young girls, avoid the 5910” followed by: “5 minutes of pleasure, 9 months of pregnancy, 1 baby, 0 father”. The point of the poster was to raise awareness amongst young girls to learn more about their sexual health and encourage them to take precautions, but I couldn’t help to notice how once again it was so blatantly clear that girls and women are expected to take the most responsibility without including the accountability of boys and men who seem to be invisible.



Figure 6: “« Young girls, avoid the 5910 » 5 minutes of pleasure, 9 months of pregnancy, 1 child, 0 father”

Hoon Choi points out the paradoxical reality that “men often occupy and enjoy the center stage of society without the burden of accountability”, clearly showing why men need to be incorporated in conversations about reproductive justice, so that they no longer can strategically make themselves “invisible”, but instead be held accountable for their decisions and actions (2024:121).

The tendency of frequently blaming women and freeing men from responsibility is part of the normalization of patriarchal understanding of gender power dynamics. Ifi Amadiume, bell hooks, Gqola and Connel all emphasize that the effects of patriarchy must be understood by also seeing the links to other systems of power and oppression such as capitalism and colonialism. These will all be discussed further in due time.

Sexual education

The earlier mentioned normalcy of having un-protected sex raises questions about sexual education. As before mentioned, sex is still a taboo subject in Gabon, illustrated for instance by my informants tending to lower their voices while talking about sex. However, the interviews also revealed that the unplanned pregnancies didn’t come about from a lack of knowledge regarding reproduction and unprotected sex, rather they stemmed mainly from carelessness. Most of them had learned about sexual health in school and a few also from home. For example, Martin’s mother (the aunt he grew up with) had talked to him about the importance of using protection, especially

before he left his home town to go to university in Libreville. She wanted him to be successful and do well. He listened but said that he was just a kid (18), meaning that he was impulsive, lacked restraint and didn't think of the consequences of his actions.

I did not ask about my informants experiences getting access to condoms and contraceptives, and whether the price might have been an obstacle. Regardless, some of them mentioned that the pleasure is much better without a condom, one reason for not using them. While discussing my thesis subject a young man talked about the existing stigmatisation connected to contraceptives. He recounted the time he went to the pharmacy to buy condoms for him and his wife and was met with a judgy attitude from the staff. Even though he is a married man, wearing a visible wedding ring, he was scrutinised. The discussion led to a conclusion that people tend to associate condoms with an overly active sex-life and potentially cheating, even by "professionals" at the pharmacy. This demonstrates a failure to destigmatise the use of contraceptives, which Solinger and Ross emphasize is a governmental responsibility (2017:3).

A professor at UOB mentioned that there is a "hiding" culture in Gabon, where the norm is not to talk about such things openly, rather delicate subjects such as sex and even abortion are dealt with in discretion. He further continued to explain that the traditional gabonese culture didn't use to solve these issues out in the open in front of everyone. It was dealt with by the ones involved and with the guidance of the elders who knew how to proceed. Abortions, for example, were seen as private affairs and weren't decided upon by the men in the villages at "meetings under the mango tree". He saw it as a potential explanation to why legislation still doesn't allow abortion, as it wouldn't be natural to introduce public and general laws regarding abortion.

Abortion

The earlier mentioned "hiding" culture can be identified in Gabon's approach to abortion. Many of the interviewed fathers shared that they had paid for partners to have an abortion without further problematising the act. Some of them recounted how girls that they had had sex with told them that they were pregnant and expected them to pay for the abortion at a clinic, which Choi argues is fair as they should "contribute to what is required when she decides not to have the child" (2024:127). A few of the fathers expressed some anxiety concerning abortion. The fear of abortions stems partly from low quality health care, as abortions are illegal there are no guarantees for the procedure, and also from two different types of authorities: family authority often guided by the christian religion that forbids it, and the legislative authority that has deemed abortions illegal (also influenced by christian conservatism).

Even though abortion is illegal in Gabon, most do not know of the legislation making it illegal. The "hiding"-culture could explain why abortion legislation is still strict as there is little persecution of

those that do have abortions. The issue still remains that legislation makes it more difficult to access safe abortions. The midwife I interviewed explained that many young women try to have abortions with products they've bought from the black market, but later end up at her clinic due to internal bleeding caused by unregulated medicines. They then use this as an opportunity to educate the young girls they meet, and talk about family planning and offer different types of contraceptives in the aims of lowering the casualties from clandestine abortions stemming from unwanted pregnancies. Safe and dignified fertility management is fundamental in achieving reproductive justice, including high-quality healthcare (Ross & Solinger 2017: 9). By criminalising abortion, the Gabonese government is doing the opposite of offering the much needed health care to women involuntarily becoming pregnant, instead punishing them for a fate they cannot escape and thus forcing them and the father (if present) to become parents.

The biggest issue with the abortion legislation is not only that it isn't legal and thus unsafe, but that clandestine abortions at clinics are expensive and therefore not accessible to everyone. It is emphasized in the book *Feminism for the 99%* that making abortion legal does little in itself, especially for poor and working-class people (2019:14). The inaccessibility to that specific type of health care is the main issue. One must be able to afford it and live in an urban area where it is possible to pay for a safe abortion. One father admitted to have stolen money (50 000FCFA, 830 SEK) from a job to pay for a girl's abortion at a private clinic. Calvin recounted another example of the accessibility issue: his girlfriend became pregnant whilst they were living in a rural town. She wanted to "remove" the baby, but he didn't want her to, afraid of the risks that came along with it. Despite his opposition she insisted on terminating the pregnancy, so he then mixed Guinness beer with nescafé-coffee for her to drink, a brew he thought would bring an end to the pregnancy. But as no blood excited her body, he knew that the experiment had failed. She was 16, he was 21.

To avoid these unwanted pregnancies and the collateral damage it causes, Hoon Choi encourages more structural justice including improved access to health care (2024:146), which scholars Cinzia Arruzza, Nancy Fraser and Tithi Bhattacharya argue should be free, universal and not-for-profit (2019:14), in contrast to the dominating capitalist, neoliberal model that blames the individual for not being able to adapt to the neoliberal economic system (Ross, Solinger, 2017:170).

Fertility

The restrictive abortion legislation also reflects the Gabonese people's view of children and reproduction. Many spoke of a general opposition to abortions in Gabon as fertility is widely celebrated, and traditionally there is a "social obligation" especially for women to have children. The midwife I interviewed shared the story of her cousin who married a man when they both were in their fifties, and later died during the process of IVF after pressure from her husband's family for her to have a child because they had married. My interviews with the young fathers revealed fertility

to be very important for them as well. One father said that one of the best things about becoming a dad was knowing that he can have children (as others can not), and that people now see him in a new light, as a responsible person. Martin started working at a young age at a gas station to pay for his education, which is where he met the mother of his first daughter. They had sex, “naturally without protection” as he himself said. Martin mentioned that he was anxious and had wondered why no girl had come forth saying that they were pregnant as he had been sexually active for some time, and many of his friends had already impregnated girls. So he was actually very happy and relieved when she told him that she was pregnant, even though it wasn’t planned. Other young fathers also talked about their fear of impotence as fertility is a central part of life and masculinity in Gabon, and interwoven with dignity.

As before mentioned, an active heterosexual sex life is seen as manly and the norm for Gabonese men, who gain more status the more women they “conquer” (Owanga, 2013:148,149). In her study on Gabonese rappers, Owanga quotes a gabonese man who said that men get their powers through “the sex”, referring to both the act itself, but also to the genitals, as the word in french is a polysemy (2013:150). He meant that it is through the woman that men show and gain their power, evoking *bwiti*-tradition (an indigenous spirituality practice), explaining that “les bwititistes” deem women to have greater energy potential than men; for example, all initiation rites are represented by the female sex (2013:151). Even though not all indigenous traditions share the particularities of the bwitistes, Owanga asserts that “The importance given to sexuality in the treatment of masculine strength and spiritual integrity is [...] evident among the individuals and ethnic groups involved in the practice of Bwiti, but also among various Gabonese peoples” (2013:152). One gains a higher status when you have a child (regardless of how involved you are in their life) in the same way that you show power and success in having built a house of one’s own. Being able to father a child thus subconsciously (or not) becomes an essential part of manhood and life. As one of the fathers described it: he was very happy that his pen could write. Martin who finally succeeded in getting a girl pregnant, realising “his pen could write”, was rejoiced by the news of the unplanned pregnancy and went to meet her family, ready to own up to the responsibilities, but unfortunately she ended up having a miscarriage.

7. Providers

Dads’ reactions to pregnancy

Martin was delighted the first time he made a girl pregnant. The second time when the child actually was going to be born, however, he, like the other young fathers, started to feel the pressures of fatherhood. Loic said he panicked when he received the phone call from the girlfriend he had recently broken up with, who told him that she was 2 months pregnant. He panicked because at

the time he didn't have a job, he was still studying (in the middle of exams) and didn't know how he was going to be able to provide for the mother and the child.

“Le trousseau” and prenatal care

The young fathers explained that the first things they were expected to do after the pregnancy was announced was to provide “le trousseau”, meaning “the kit” that is needed for every pregnancy and to pay for the prenatal care. “Le trousseau” can be described as a baby-starting kit with baby clothes, diapers and other useful things. Martin's sisters explained to him about the needed visits to the doctor and helped him with “le trousseau”. To be able to afford to pay for “le trousseau”

Martin and his best friend started a bush-clearing business, gathering small contracts from neighbours and local businesses. “Je suis un bon villageois”, meaning that he is a good villager who found creative solutions. His friend had two children within three months and needed to provide for both mothers as well. He laughed about the two of them helping each other. They would call each other and ask for milk or diapers and help each other out when in need. It is custom that the father has to pay for the “trousseau”, not the mothers family. It is a great example of how Gabonese culture has created a modern way of ensuring that men take responsibility and support women even before they have given birth, thus participating in creating more reproductive justice (Choi, 2024:127). Le trousseau is not something required by law, but a local custom, unlike the hospital visits that are mandatory.

My conversation with the midwife cleared up some of my confusion regarding maternity care. When I got called into the midwife's office, a mother was still inside with her 9-month-old baby sleeping peacefully in her arms. “You tell dad 17 000FCFA (290 SEK)” the midwife said, to which the woman responded “Ah, he will scream again”. The mother had 10 different tests she needed to do during her current pregnancy, and the midwife had kindly tried to plan them with enough time in-between to give some time to the father to acquire the money.



Figure 7: The waiting room outside of the midwife's office.

The midwife told me that the CNAMGS insurance used to cover all maternity care, but that the uncertain financing from the government has forced the public clinic she works for to charge patients in order to keep providing their services. An employee from the ministry of social affairs claimed that maternity care is paid for in its entirety by the government, which we mutually agreed helps not only the mothers but also the fathers, who are seen as the ones responsible for taking on the financial expenses. The midwife contests the claim of maternity care being completely free by pointing out the many costly required pre-natal visits that are no longer covered by the CNAMGS insurance. One of the fathers mentioned that he paid the entirety of the health care expenses as he hadn't registered for the CNAMGS insurance. I asked him if he has now but he merely laughed and didn't see the use. This demonstrates both the lack of information about the existing infrastructure that is in place to support parents, as this dad wasn't even aware of the help he could've received, and shows once again the flaws of the neoliberal model that leads to individual "choice" that unavoidably leads to blaming the individual for his decisions, rather than scrutinising the flawed system and the failure of its public policies that end up harming lives (Ross, Solinger 2017:12,170). The midwife's statements also reflect the flaws in the system that no longer is as functional as it used to be. The ministry employee proudly stated that Gabon's state insurance is one of the best in central Africa, but the reality is that it is very flawed.

The midwife explained the gravity of the issue by pointing out that earlier one could be refused upon arriving at the hospital to give birth if you hadn't done all the required tests, such as testing

for HIV to know what procedures are necessary during the delivery to avoid transmission to the child. As the required tests are not free, some people are not able to afford them, meaning that women were denied crucial health care for being poor, thus the government failing yet again to provide health care for those in need and thereby a safe and dignified experience for pregnant women and their children (Ross, Solinger 2017:9). When applying a social-determinants-of-health model it is clear “how social and economic resources create advantages and disadvantages for parenthood based on income” (Ross, Solinger 2017:173).

The expenses connected to prenatal often create frustration as dads will get angry over the high prices, so the midwives tend to help the mothers out by calling the fathers together and explaining why it is important that they help pay for the maternity care. Today some clinics are able to test pregnant women and do an emergency assessment upon their arrival at the hospital, right before giving birth to give them a safer experience.

Providing

In every conversation I had regarding fatherhood, the fathers financial responsibility was always brought up. Martin would miss school to be able to work. He also bought ammunition, and borrowed a gun to go hunting and sell bush meat. The toughest period for him was when the child was born and he was in his last year of high school. It was hard balancing studying with making sure there was enough milk, water, and diapers. He wanted to make sure that the mother had everything she needed so that he wouldn't get blamed for her not being able to finish her studies.

After he graduated Martin left for Libreville when his daughter was barely 6 months old, to a city where he knew no one. He described it as him not having a life of his own, living only for his daughter. Everything he got he sent back to them, saying “I can't do what others do, I got someone else's child pregnant.”, meaning that he couldn't abandon her but had to take responsibility. He got introduced to the construction business and got paid 3500 FCFA (60 SEK) for a day, if he even got that much. At the end of the week he would get less than 12 000 FCFA (200 SEK). He would send home 10 000 (167 SEK) and keep 2000 (33 SEK) for himself. Martin is proud of the fact that he was always able to provide them with milk when needed. He recounted how he used to wash the reusable diapers that existed before, and how there wasn't enough money both for the necessities and the taxi (which is the cheapest most common way of public transport), so he would buy all the groceries and carry the heavy bags for 2-3 km under the blazing sun, all the way home.

Similarly to Martin, Alain also tried his best making ends meet with what he described as his entrepreneurial spirit, living with his sister to save money and being helped out by his student grants. He expressed that after having accepted his responsibilities he never felt it was a burden, rather it was normal to him and he felt grateful to “see his blood and how it grows”.

Even though Alain doesn't feel that his economic responsibilities as a father are a burden he nonetheless like all the other fathers feel the pressure of having to be the breadwinner. The institutionalisation of wage labour which became more intensified by capitalism, created a dependency on consumption goods and a salary to buy them, even though Gabonese people used to be self-sufficient. Whilst living in the villages there was enough space for everyone to be able to have their own agriculture or enough fish in the waters to feed everyone. One father mentioned how his grandfather taught him different crafts such as twining lianas, but that today it is deemed useless as local craftsmanship has been replaced by cheaply produced plastic alternatives. The same father, and many others mentioned that they instead try to find "petit bricolage", small temporary jobs such as electricity, plumbing, construction work, street portrait photography to earn money, but they do not themselves recognize them as "real" jobs even though they get paid, but as there is no regulatory and thus no long term safety and "no desk" they do not value it as much.

Calvin's third child is growing up with its mother and her parents. When they call and he has the possibility he sends something. He didn't finish school, he's a "fallaman", someone still searching for a "real" job. He says that they (the family) know and say that "Oh if we call him he will say he has nothing, he's always broke, he has nothing." He says that sometimes months pass without them calling because they know that he isn't able to contribute anything. But for that he is thankful. He is grateful for the fact that the mothers' families have the means to take care of his children and their mothers, even though they aren't rich. He sees that as a help to him as he feels he should be the one taking on the responsibilities of taking care of them. When asked the only thing the fathers expected from the government regarding support for them as fathers was merely opportunities to find jobs in order to be self-sufficient. But most of the time they expected no help or support from the government because they see it as a personal responsibility as men to be able to provide, but I also identified an indifferent attitude towards the government that they felt had nothing to offer.

Not being able to provide as fathers appeared to damage a man's self-esteem and their hopes to reach the idealised hegemonic masculinity. Masculinity is deeply affected by the labour market and (un)employment (Connell 1995:95), especially in Gabon where the colonality of gender imposed by white gender norms has further created a gender divide through new types of labor division, for capitalistic reasons (Rodrigues 2022:4). Sakhumzi Mfecane claims that "high rates of unemployment, poverty, and women empowerment have particularly undermined men's traditional status and the capacity to perform their expected roles of breadwinners" (s.56). bell hooks explains that "in patriarchal culture, males are not allowed simply to be who they are and to glory in their unique identity. Their value is always determined by what they do." (2004:11). One of the young fathers I interviewed said that as a man he didn't have any choice but to succeed, meaning having to provide for his family. Patriarchy expects men to prove their value and worth, as

bell hooks puts it: as a man in a patriarchal culture simply being doesn't give them value or the right to be cherished and loved (2004:12). Whereas some of the fathers pointed out that women are lucky enough to be born with value through their looks and appearance.

Sacrifices

Martin, who tried his best to provide for his children and their mothers had to drop out of university during his third year to start working full time. He reflected upon the sacrifices he made and said that when you're still young, you don't really understand that a child is for life. He would recommend that one should be financially stable before having children. Martin also expressed that he doesn't like having his children spread out and so far away, partly because that means that he can't only send money for only "one piece of bread" for his kid, when his child is living with other children. So instead of only paying for one, the family solidarity leads him to pay for five instead, concluding that it is more expensive having many children, especially with different mothers.

Another theme I detected throughout interviews and also during the panel discussion of the television-series on single parent households, was the distrust men felt towards women as they felt they were being used for their money as women allegedly would lie about children being sick or that women have kids only to get money from men. This is their perceived reality that exists parallel to women's stories about their financial situation. The midwife shared the story of a mother who was pregnant with her fourth child and during a visit at her mother's, her husband told her not to bother coming back, as he didn't want to support her throughout a fourth pregnancy. She is now fighting on her own trying to make ends meet through "le commerce", buying and selling commodities for profit. The midwife claims that this is representative for the majority of cases she sees, dads who "démissionne", quit. She explained that these men make these women and children "disappear" from their minds to be able to move on, but the reality is that they cannot be erased. She further added that these men want to restart their lives with another woman, but the children are the ones to pay the price. Some women even commit suicide or become alcoholics, and others keep fighting.

Ifi Amadiume problematises women's wage labour that she situates in a context of changing family structures in Africa under postcolonial conditions that create a new pattern of oppression (2024:157). She brings up an example from Uganda, where rural urban migration and the development of nuclear families has "increased gender differences in men and women's work patterns and the use of income" (idem). She argues that these changes have led to "the economic separation of husband and wife, as for example the unpaid labour of women, which is a source of potential conflict within the family" (idem). The experience of Gabonese women is similar to those of Swazi women that are described to be overburdened with both domestic and wage labour "in a context where they no longer are able to rely on traditional kinship support for childcare" (idem).

In the case of the Swazy women, the phenomenon of single women households was due to men being the ones to migrate, whereas in Libreville today single women households stem mainly from men leaving and not taking accountability. The oppressive exploitation of women's unpaid wage labour is also a consequence of capitalism that free-rides on the unwaged work that reproduces human beings and communities (Arruzza, Fraser & Bhattacharya, 2019:14)

Hoon Choi wishes that men to a greater extent would see the issues that women face related to caretaking as “their issues” and share appropriate responsibility (2024:132). He wonders: “What would happen if men, and their bodies, had to go through such anguish, enforcement, and torment because of an external control over their bodies and agency? [...] would it not help them see and be outraged by the preposterous demands on women?” (idem). Ratele encourages scholars to include the struggles for women's liberation into work about men as it is a joint struggle for a just gender order (2008:19). Similarly, bell hooks encourages feminist activists to acknowledge that men are also hurt by rigid sexist gender roles while simultaneously making clear that “Male oppression of women cannot be excused by the recognition that there are ways men are hurt by rigid sexist roles.” (2004:26). hooks clarifies that the pain men experience “does not erase or lessen male responsibility for supporting and perpetuating their power under patriarchy to exploit and oppressed women in a manner far more grievous than the serious psychological stress and emotional pain caused by male conformity to rigid sexist role patterns” (idem).

8. It takes a village

Family Reactions

The families had different reactions upon receiving the news of the pregnancies. Martin's mother was happy to have a grandchild, the second time he got a girl pregnant. For Pierre-Emerick the situation turned out to be a bit more complicated. He and his girlfriend had been together for over 7 years, they were high school sweethearts. They took precautions so that she wouldn't get pregnant before they were done with school, as her military dad strictly forbade it. Years went by without any pregnancies. They started university together, and shortly after, it happened; she was pregnant. They had long discussions about what to do: they loved each other and did want to start a family together someday, his mother's christian faith was against abortions, but they feared the reaction from her military father if they were to keep it as he had forbidden her from getting pregnant before she was done with her studies. They decided to keep the baby which led to her father throwing her out of the house.

Luckily Pierre-Emerick's family was much more positive and had the possibility to take her in. They kept in contact with her father's wife who had helped them previously in their relationship, but she offered no support economically as to not go against her husband's will. He had forbidden

everyone from his family to help his daughter with the pregnancy he didn't support. This ultimately put a lot of pressure on Pierre-Emerick for him to provide. They made multiple attempts to reconcile with him, and finally three years after his granddaughter was born he agreed to meet them. Today the same grandfather who didn't meet his grandchild for the first three years is now "the best granddad" according to his step-son. The grandfather's reaction to kick out his daughter displays a hypermasculine behaviour triggered by the undermining of his authority, when his daughter got pregnant before his set timeframe, and thus not submitting to his rule (2004:24). bell hooks explains that this type of violence between patriarchal parents and children is not uncommon, and describes his behaviour as a violent patriarchal dominator model which in this case is further reinforced by the fathers hypermasculine military background (idem). Gqola, in reference to Cock, claims that military training tends to "inculcate aggression and equate it with masculinity ... that the army cultivates a form of masculinity that involves insensitivity, aggressiveness, competitiveness, violence and the censure of emotional expression.", thus leading to military men not being able to be understanding or show empathy towards their daughters (2015:50).

Similarly to Pierre-Emerick's situation, when Calvin's first child was born his mother decided that he no longer could live at home. He felt confused by it, because in his mind the daughters are the ones supposed to leave the family home when they "leave for marriage". But in his family's case, his sisters who had multiple children of their own (one having 4-5 children) are allowed to stay in their mothers house. His sister's partners were allowed to move in with them, but he as the man was forced to leave. Calvin's mother didn't want him and his children living in her home and told him to go rent a place somewhere. His mother is from the matrilineal Punu ethnic group, whereas the father that raised him is Fang, an patrilineal ethnic group. Calvin identified as Fang. He also explained that he doesn't get along with his mother, so she potentially used the fact that he had a child as an excuse to tell him to leave.

Upbringing and family solidarity

Every father had a unique story about how their children grew up. Most of the time the children grew up with their mothers for the most of the time. One father's daughter lives with him some weekends and during holidays. Alain's daughter came to live with him when she was only 6 months old as he couldn't bear her living so far away in a different city. In another case, the fathers sister offered to take care of his daughter in her own house with her own children as he was now single and had to take care of his daughter alone while also working, a great example of family solidarity. He was thankful for it, and tried it out, but brought her home after a couple of months as he didn't like the way she was getting raised. According to him she became impolite and he wanted his daughter to be raised better, so he brought her home.

Martin recounted how he, the child and her mother lived together to begin with, but he then moved away to study, leaving the child with her mother and grandmother. Later the child came to live with him for a period of time before returning to her mother and grandmother, and then returning to him yet again. It wasn't easy for Martin to take care of his daughter alone when he also needed to work. His daughter would go home from school together with the neighbour's daughter and wait alone at home until her dad came home. He would often find her in tears when he came home, which broke his heart, he said. But he hugged her and tried to explain why things were as such, as much as you can try to explain something to a three year old. His neighbour also offered for her to stay with them until he came home, which she did a couple of times. But he mentioned that he didn't feel completely comfortable with it as he explained that he doesn't really know her, she is not family, at the end of the day she is a stranger. Martin explained that he doesn't come from a family where you call each other for help, there is no family solidarity left: "Qui t'a envoyé faire l'enfant?" "Who sent you to go make a baby?" is what his family would have said.

Amadiume blames colonial and post colonial land alienation, migration and wage employment for the transformations in family structure that has led to more individualistic family models, the emergence of the nuclear family, the splitting up of the large extended families and the decrease of family solidarity (2024:157,159). Today parents tend to carry most of the responsibility for their children on their own. As mentioned in the background section, back in the day everyone in the village, which consisted of family, would partake in raising the children. The uncle-father I interviewed mentioned that he sends 50 000 FCFA (840 SEK) for his nephew to his sister at the end of every week. When she was pregnant she would call him more often than the child's father if she needed anything. He has always helped out with buying diapers and milk and said that he is under the impression that his nephew likes him more than his own biological father. Amadiume claims that to this day kinship obligations still persist in Africa even if it is weaker than it used to be, but still functions as a support system for example in "fragmenting experiences like divorce, widowhood and orphanhood" (2024:159). The midwife I interviewed stresses that men should take care of their children for that specific reason, because you never know what awaits tomorrow, and someday they will need someone to take care of them. In Africa, family "is still the basis of social welfare" (idem). But the issue with a lot of Gabonese men is that they have many children, and take care of some better than others, thus creating a guarantee that some children will be kind and give back, while neglecting others. She also notices a pattern of the children being mistreated, often being the ones taking care of their parents later in life, reflecting over how that plays into these men's conscience.

Kinship confusion

As mentioned many times before, the changes in family structure has led to a need to adapt in different ways, as it is no longer possible to adhere to the "old" traditional ways. Not only has urbanization and the decomposed families created confusion, but the lack of knowledge about the

culture and tradition of the ethnic group one belongs to (due to being separated from the elders who bear all the wisdom), make it even more difficult as there are no clear guidelines. The unification process that occurred in the creation of the country Gabon also created a shift in children's education, which has been taken over by schools who give out a more general education, in contrast to the ethnic-group-specific education that children used to receive when education was given by the village. This has led to a confusion regarding traditional customs, for example in Calvin's case, that was mentioned earlier, where he was confused as to why he had to move out from his mother's home when he became a father, or another father stating that children belong to the mother's family even though he is Fang, a patrilineal ethnic group that traditionally deems children as belonging to the father's family. Although, the uncle-father I interviewed showcased that some of the traditions still remain, mentioning that he sends money for his nephew to his sister at the end of every week, thus behaving as the provider as uncles in matrilineal groups tended to do.

The colonial unification process has created confusion regarding our own traditions. Amadiume argues that "Colonial policies and post colonial conditions have [...] introduced tensions between matrilineal kinship and values of the nuclear family" (2024:157). For example, an employee at the ministry of social affairs mentioned how a law regarding the designation of a new born child's father had been changed to a "one size fits all" as to adhere to the "unified" Gabon and not to the specifics of the different indigenous ethnic groups. Earlier, an uncle could be designated as the legal father of the child, in line with matrilineal kinship. Today this is no longer allowed, instead leaving the space blank on birth certificates if no biological father recognizes the child, as it created issues with inheritance, since in matrilineal groups one inherits from one's uncle and not one's father. But seeking unification in a post colonial reality, the more patriarchal patrilineal way of inheriting (from one's father) was favoured. The ministry employee described it as a duel between "le droit canon", canon law and "le droit coutumier", traditional law, indirectly pointing out the influence of christianity. Uchendu also mentions how the insertion of christianity led africans to abandon matrilineal practices and instead favour christian patriarchal tendencies, in combination with colonial legislation such as the criminalisation of polyandry (2008:13).

Modern fathers

It is not only women's gender roles that have been affected by the changes in family structure, even men have had to adapt to this new reality. When Martin was a single dad he did all of the domestic work: cooking, doing the laundry, shopping, and his daughter helped him out by sweeping the floor. He learned through his sister. Another dad had no problem changing diapers and making and giving bottles to his children when they were babies as he used to help out his sisters with their children growing up. A third dad said that he washes his children's clothes and is teaching them to do laundry. All of the mentioned domestic work is usually seen as woman chores in Gabon, but these men defy the patriarchal gender roles.

Another example of how men are adapting to the current conditions in modern day Gabon, is Calvin who wants a girlfriend that works. He wants a “nga”, a girlfriend, with money, someone who would be able to contribute financially. An example he gave was that he could bring home 2000 FCFA (34 SEK) at the end of the day and she could maybe add 3000 FCFA (50 SEK), concluding that put together it becomes a lot. I then had to ask the question: if they both work to get money, will he then help with the domestic labor? To which he first responded “Obviously she would have rest days when she could do the laundry”, to which I burst out laughing as it was comical to me that he meant that her rest day should be used on domestic labor. I then decided to push further and ask “what if she earns more money and therefore maybe you should be the one cooking?”, to which he answered “umhum”, the well known gabonese sound that comes with pushing up one's lips and blowing air out of the nose which means “obviously not, what you're saying is ridiculous”. “So what? So that she can go out and cheat on me?”, explaining that he doesn't like it when his girlfriend goes out a lot and he stays at home. But he then assured me that he is a great cook and does his own laundry. He went so far as to say that he is a better cook than a lot of women: *Y'a pas une nga qui peut me faire la bouche*, meaning that he doesn't have to rely on women to be fed. In the end he conceded to my idea of him potentially making a delicious meal for his girlfriend when she comes home from work. But it should be noted that this conclusion came after he was able to boast about his culinary skills. Even though there still is a long way to go to achieve more gender justice, the above mentioned changes may finally have led to less patriarchal but more matriarchal (matriarchitarian) tendencies with less rigid gender roles.

9. Experiencing fatherhood

Purpose

All of the fathers shared that being a father gave their life a new purpose, similarly to the teenage fathers in the USA interviewed by Jennifer Beggs Weber (2018). The earlier mentioned pressure Gabonese men feel in their need to succeed was also transformed into something positive when they had a child to take care of, a life that was in their hands, their responsibility. Peirre-Eimerick said that becoming a father gives you a reason to fight, it allows you to focus on your goals. He expressed that it is something truly amazing being a father, seeing your child smile and walk for the first time: “It can't even be described with words what a beautiful experience it is to be a father”. All the fathers felt that fatherhood created a new drive that pushed them forward. One father was a heavy smoker, but after his daughter started asking him about his smoking habits in front of other people his shame drove him to quit smoking, wanting to become a better father.

A good father

In my interviews I asked the young dads who they saw as fatherly role models and the definition of a good father. Martin saw his own dad as an example of a good father as he was someone who always prioritised his children and would give the last penny or energy he had to them. He did everything so that they would miss nothing. Jean-Luc designated his mother as a role model for a good father, saying that she wasn't a woman but rather, she was a man in the way she fought for herself and her children. One of them said that a good father is not one that gives gifts, but one that is present. He expressed his fear of not being enough for them as he doesn't have a stable job and having many kids he feels the pressure of not being able to provide for them and their needs. But he was proud of the fact that he always takes his daughters to school everyday and shared with a smile lighting up his face that a girl from school told him that he was such a good father for bringing his daughters to school. Another described a good father as one who listens, gives advice, pays for school and clothes, seeing it as a duty for parents and a right for children. He is with his daughter as much as he can, picking her up from school and wishes to be there for birthdays. Calvin said that a good dad takes care of his children. He said that he isn't being a good father right now because he doesn't have the means. Months can go by without him seeing his kids, he said, before realising that years can go by without him seeing them. Another hoped that he would grow to be able to show more affection toward his daughter as he finds it difficult.

In the book *the will to change* bell hooks recounts her meetings with men and a conversation about their experiences of fatherhood and their fear of failing to be good dads as many of them did not grow up with loving role models (2004:9). She mentions that one dad upon being asked how he will be able to love his sons responded "I just think of what my father would do and do the opposite", to which everyone started laughing (idem). hooks pushed further and urged these men to dig deeper than just rejecting their own fathers behaviour, but also actively work to learn how to love (idem). She explains that patriarchy teaches men a form of emotional stoicism that equates feelings with unmanliness and leads men to ignore and push away their emotions (2004:5). hooks uses her brother as an example, stating that he once was a loving presence capable of expressing his emotions, but that was taken away from him as he got ridiculed, and patriarchal thinking led him to mask his loving feelings (2004:12). She claims that irreversible damage was done to his self-esteem as he to this day struggles between allowing himself to define who he wants to be or letting himself be defined by patriarchal standards (idem). hooks denounces patriarchy as "the single most life-threatening social disease assaulting the male body and spirit" (2004:17), and explains that it cannot be dismantled "as long as we engage in collective denial about its impact on our lives" (2004:24). hooks points to the lack of awareness about patriarchy and that most people do not learn that there is a name for the system of institutionalised gender roles that guide our lives

(2004:25). She claims that in order to save themselves men need to understand patriarchy to be able to relearn the art of loving (2004:16)

If their children have children when they are still children

I was curious to know how the young fathers would react if their children were to end up in similar situations with early unplanned pregnancies. Most fathers said that they would support their child, most of them mentioning specifically that they would help in order for their child to be able to finish their education, one of them requiring that they stay in school and get good grades. Another father said that he would be supportive especially if the father would not take accountability, but he said that if someone was to impregnate his daughter they would be held accountable and have to take responsibility. Jean-Luc went as far as to say that if someone were to impregnate his daughter they would have to marry her, even though he has children with two different women and hasn't married any of them. This hypocrisy and the above mentioned requirements the fathers had for them to support their daughters could be other examples of a father reinforcing a hypermasculine dominator model, that hooks describes as patriarchal violence aimed at maintaining an authoritarian position over his daughter, expecting her to be submissive to his authority (hooks, 2004:24). Further it could be argued that his daughter getting pregnant without being married would affect his reputation as a father and thereby his dignity thus threatening his identity as a strong powerful masculine man as he lacks the hegemonic masculine "force" to control his daughter (Owanga 2013:148).

Even though Jean-Luc's reaction stems from traditional values where marriage is seen as the unification of not only two people but two families, which becomes very relevant and valuable when a child is waiting to be born, reality shows that it is no longer the norm that a child being born requires marriage, which he himself exemplifies. Thus, his expectation that the impregnator would have to marry his daughter raises questions about his audacity to expect something of someone else that he himself is not able to fulfill. It could be argued that the fathers requirements of education and marriage come from a place of love as they want to create a safe and secure future for their daughters, but Jean-Luc also expressed that he would never allow a woman to "crush him", meaning letting a woman be dominant in relation to him. hooks brings nuance to the conversation about men's urge to dominate women by explaining that "As long as men are brainwashed to equate violent domination and abuse of women with privilege, they will have no understanding of the damage done to themselves or to others, and no motivation to change" (2024:27), advocating once again men's need to understand patriarchy and how it also affects them negatively. Jean-Luc mentioned during our interview that his dad was far from loving, but a hard man with jealous tendencies that led to violence towards his mother, but he didn't reflect upon why his fathers jealousy turned into physical violence, blinded by the hegemonic masculine norms that condone hypermasculine aggression. Gqola encourages men to question what they were

taught as children and what they are passing forward to new generations as the patriarchal tendencies lead men to believe that women need to be controlled, that violence is justified and that being strong means being emotionally hard (2015:68).

Storytelling

Both bell hooks and Pumla Dineo Gqola emphasize the need to reflect upon what we are teaching the new generations, for example through storytelling. But the passing down of knowledge through stories has also been altered through time. Frank told about the girl he got pregnant at the age of 14 and as he had been taught to take accountability, he didn't "nié", deny the pregnancy. The girl's father then came to their school and threatened to kill Frank or at least have him locked up. Frank paused his storytelling, his gaze lingering in front of him, he wandered away in his own thoughts. I waited a bit before bringing him back to the interview. He explained that he hadn't thought of all this in a very long time and that it is bringing back a lot of memories, both good and bad ones. I apologised and said that we could stop or change the subject but he insisted on continuing "This is good, as a man I need to be able to tell these stories to my children someday". So he kept on reminiscing and explained that he was saved by his father, a military man who stepped in and said that no one will be locking up his son. The girl's parents wanted her to have an abortion and for Frank's family to pay for it. Frank's father furiously objected, threatening to lock them up if they dared to remove the baby. The military man took care of the expenses and she gave birth to twins. A smile on Frank's face. He explained that twins are a sign of good luck and carry power, proudly stating that his father knew what he was doing.

Frank expressed the importance of being able to relay the stories of his life to his children and to the ones that will come after them, a sentiment shared by Kopano Ratele who wrote "the knowledge is stored in the stories" (2008:26). In his text about critical studies of men, Ratele discusses the abandonments men have gone through in a sweeping generalising way, but lifting a common denominator; the impact of men being abandoned by their fathers and grandfathers and thus missing out on the stories that are filled with knowledge (idem). In Libreville, due partly to urbanization initiated by colonialism and intensified by capitalism, and to patriarchy creating conditions for men to become strategically invisible and to slip away, many stories go untold. Ratele concludes that men need to return to the stories and get together and help each other and "be each other's fathers and grandfathers" and educate one another (idem).

Love

When talking about how the young fathers express their love towards their children, Calvin said proudly that he memorizes the mothers number by heart to be able to call his kids. One father expressed that his daughter was all he could ever hope for, regarding her character and intelligence but also in the way she makes him feel as she is very caring. He said that he had envisioned studying

abroad but could no longer allow himself to do it as it would create an uncertain financial situation, but most importantly he didn't think he could bear being away from his daughter for that long. He has become so used to his daughter's affection and told me that he has never been away from her longer than a month. This was the first time he had ever talked about this subject, about his strong feelings towards his daughter. He thought it was nice and was grateful for the opportunity to do so. He mentioned that he has friends who are in similar situations but that they never talk about the emotional aspects of their lives even though they share many similarities. This emotional stoicism imposed by patriarchy prevents them from fully experiencing and expressing their emotions in an effort to conform to hegemonic masculinity (hooks 2004:5).

While envisioning the future, Alain said that he wants his three kids to live together with him and has already talked with the mother about the children coming to live with him when they start 6th grade. Calvin wants to be a dad like in the movies, sitting down with his children, with his wife who loves him. Having a good job. With his cars. *Like in the dreams*. He wants to be with his three kids and a wife. Hopefully, the stories they tell their children in the future will bear seeds that will lead to further dismantling of patriarchy, capitalism and the remnants of colonialism.

10. Conclusion

Young fathers in Gabon find themselves in an odd position today: crushed under the pressure of being supposed to be a successful provider but simultaneously being able to escape responsibility.

The study revealed that for all those interviewed, becoming a father did bring a new purpose to life. Having a child to care for that loves you encourages young fathers to try to be good fathers by providing, being loving and present. A responsible father was described as a successful provider who is able to pay for school, food and healthcare and care for the wellbeing of their child to ensure that they grow up to be responsible adults in their turn. But being a father also entails a burden and weight of responsibility that wasn't as heavy before when there was a stronger sense of and better conditions for family solidarity. A burden and weight that not all fathers accept.

The decolonial feminist and reproductive justice frameworks enabled to highlight how colonialism and its introduction of christianity combined with urbanization and a capitalistic economic system led to the transition from large extended families to nuclear families. The rapid cultural changes have created a confusion regarding traditions. There is now significantly more weight on the parents shoulders, leaving women in particular more vulnerable. Patriarchy reinforced by Gabon's colonial past and by capitalism has implemented a coloniality of gender for the purpose of fitting wage labour that has reinforced preexisting notions of patriarchal gender power imbalance.

Today, new ways of being a father are emerging due to major cultural changes: some men are now defying rigid gender roles, but the local understanding of masculinity still perpetuates hypermasculine violence and control, especially as it is still reinforced by institutions such as schools and the military. Men need to learn about patriarchy to save themselves and learn how to love and be loved.

The transformation of kinship also raises an important question about responsibility. While biological fathers should be held accountable for their children, the traditional role of the maternal uncle in matrilineal kinship demonstrates that responsibility for children has not always been located primarily with the biological father. The move towards individualised parenthood may therefore have strengthened paternal responsibility in some respects while simultaneously making it easier for fathers to withdraw from family life. Reconsidering the role of extended kinship could offer alternative ways of distributing responsibility without removing accountability from fathers.

Ultimately, contemporary Gabonese fatherhood is shaped by a tension between inherited expectations and changing realities: between provider and caregiver, individual responsibility and collective kinship, and traditional masculinity and emerging forms of fatherhood. Further research should examine why some fathers are able to withdraw from responsibility, the role of economic insecurity in this process, and whether the cultural understanding of children as a blessing encourages or discourages reproductive responsibility. The potential role of matrilineal and extended kinship structures in addressing these challenges also deserves further study.

To achieve more reproductive justice, the government should ensure access to affordable and safe maternity care, contraception and comprehensive sexual education, to prevent unwanted pregnancies that stem from carelessness.

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Appendix

Les jeunes pères et la paternité

Questionnaire fille/garçon:

Âge:

Pour chaque question, coche la / les cases de la /les réponses qui te correspondent. Tu peux choisir plusieurs réponses par question.

Parler de sexe

1. D'où viennent tes connaissances sur la sexualité, sur les risques des rapports sexuels non protégés et sur les contraceptifs?

- ☐ ton père
- ☐ ta mère
- ☐ tes amis
- ☐ tes soeurs
- ☐ tes frères
- ☐ tes grandpères
- ☐ tes grandmères
- ☐ tes parents (tantes, oncles)
- ☐ l'école

- ☐ les réseaux sociaux
- ☐ l'internet
- ☐ les ONG
- ☐ autre, préciser :

2. À qui **peux-tu poser** des questions sur la sexualité?

- ☐ ton père
- ☐ ta mère
- ☐ tes amis
- ☐ tes soeurs
- ☐ tes frères
- ☐ tes grandpères
- ☐ tes grandmères
- ☐ tes parents (tantes, oncles)
- ☐ un adulte à l'école
- ☐ sur internet
- ☐ autre, préciser :
- ☐ personne

3. À qui **as-tu déjà posé** des questions sur la sexualité?

- ☐ ton père
- ☐ ta mère
- ☐ tes amis
- ☐ tes soeurs
- ☐ tes frères
- ☐ tes grandpères
- ☐ tes grandmères
- ☐ tes parents (tantes, oncles)
- ☐ un adulte à l'école
- ☐ sur internet
- ☐ autre, préciser :
- ☐ personne

4. À qui **aimerais-tu pouvoir poser** des questions sur la sexualité?

- ☐ ton père
- ☐ ta mère
- ☐ tes amis
- ☐ tes soeurs
- ☐ tes frères

- ☐ tes grandpères
- ☐ tes grandmères
- ☐ tes parents (tantes, oncles)
- ☐ un adulte à l'école
- ☐ sur internet
- ☐ autre, préciser :
- ☐ personne

Les rapports sexuels

5. As-tu déjà eu des rapports sexuels?

- ☐ Oui
- ☐ Non
- ☐ Je ne sais pas

Si la réponse est non, passe directement à la question 14.

6. Si oui, à quel âge as-tu eu ton premier rapport sexuel?

.....

7. As-tu utilisé un contraceptif lors de tes derniers rapports sexuels?

- ☐ Oui
- ☐ Non
- ☐ Je ne sais pas

Si oui, lequel?

8. Es-tu déjà tombée enceinte?/Est-ce qu'une fille t'a déjà dit qu'elle est enceinte de toi?

- ☐ Oui
- ☐ Non
- ☐ Je ne sais pas

Si la réponse est non, passe directement à la question 14.

9. Si oui, le géniteur a-t-il/Si oui, as-tu:

- ☐ directement assumé la grossesse
- ☐ d'abord nié mais assumé plus tard
- ☐ complètement nié
- ☐ Je ne l'ai pas informé.

10. Explique avec quelques phrases comment tu as réagi et comment le géniteur a réagi/comment tu as réagi et pourquoi tu as fait ce choix:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. As-tu déjà un enfant?

- ☐ Oui
- ☐ Non

Si oui, de quel âge?.....

12. As-tu envisagé une IVG (avortement)?

- ☐ Oui
- ☐ Non

13. Explique avec quelques phrases pourquoi tu l'as envisagé ou pas envisagé.

.....

.....

.....

.....

13.2 Pour les filles, as tu déjà réalisé une IVG (avortement)?

- ☐ Oui
- ☐ Non

Les responsables de la grossesse

Dans le cas d'une grossesse en milieu scolaire entre deux élèves consentants:

14. Selon toi, qui est responsable de la grossesse? (une seule réponse)

- ☐ surtout le père géniteur
- ☐ surtout la mère génitrice
- ☐ autant le père que la mère

15. Selon toi, qui devrait assumer la responsabilité financière de l'enfant? (plusieurs réponses possibles)

- ☐ le père géniteur
- ☐ la mère génitrice
- ☐ les parents du garçon
- ☐ les parents de la fille
- ☐ l'état (allocations par exemple)
- ☐ autre, préciser :
- ☐ je ne sais pas

16. Qui devrait être responsable de l'éducation sociale et morale de l'enfant? (plusieurs réponses possibles)

- ☐ le père géniteur
- ☐ la mère génitrice
- ☐ les parents du garçon
- ☐ les parents de la fille
- ☐ l'état (l'école, la crèche)
- ☐ autre, préciser :
- ☐ je ne sais pas

Être parent

17. Quelles sont les responsabilités d'un père? Cite au moins trois choses.

.....

.....

.....

18. Quelles sont les responsabilités d'une mère? Cite au moins trois choses.

.....

.....

.....

19. Comment est un bon père?

.....

.....

.....

20. Comment est une bonne mère?

.....

.....

.....

21. Veux-tu ajouter quelque chose?

.....

.....

.....

Voudrais-tu raconter plus? Contacte moi par email: ayloute@gmail.com