

**HOW ARE THE MESSAGES OF THE OFFICIAL GRADE TEN SEXUALITY
EDUCATION CURRICULUM AT A FORMER MODEL C GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL
IN SOUTH AFRICA MEDIATED BY STUDENT SEXUAL CULTURES**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

ANDISIWE TUTULA ZINZI MTHATYANA

Supervisor: Professor Louise Vincent

January 2014

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents (Mr Ndoda Mthatyana and Mrs Nondyebo Henrietta) and supervisor (Professor Louise Vincent) for their vision and value for education which they instilled in me. Above all, for believing in me and channelling me in the right path. This is for you mum, dad and Prof, I made it this far and I finished strong.

ABSTRACT

The increase in teenage pregnancy among school going learners is reported in the media as a crisis. Politicians and other stakeholders have also raised their views and concerns about pregnancy. In particular, these views and concerns perceive teenage pregnancy among school going learners as a cancer that needs a remedy because it has negative consequences for the learners, in particular the girl child. However, for all the sense of public crisis concerning sexuality and schooling, the voices of young people themselves regarding their own sexual subjectivity are seldom heard. This study focused on how girls in a former model C all girls high school negotiate and make sense of the meaning of the messages that they receive from the formal curriculum. The concept of student sexual cultures was employed in this study. Student sexual cultures are the informal groups that exist in the school and the girls take part in it. It is in these groups that the girls learn about sexuality and also make sense of their own gendered identities. This study employed ethnographic techniques of classroom observation coupled with in-depth interviews, focus groups and solicited narratives in order to understand how the participants experience and “take up” the messages they receive in the formal sexuality education component of the Life Orientation (LO) curriculum. The data was collected over a period of three months and was analysed using a directed content analysis. Four dominant themes emerged from the study. Firstly, the data reveals the school is a space of competing and conflicting discourses of sexuality and the learners are involved in a constant negotiation of the meanings of the messages. Secondly, the data shows the contested and confirmations of learners subjectivity. It shows that learners are regarded as sexual beings both in the formal and informal school cultures but there are limitations around one’s sexual subjectivities. Thirdly, the data reveals that the school is a site in which a variety of femininities are reproduced, contested and struggled over. Femininities are constructed in the complex context of the school thus the school emerges as a site in which multiple femininities intersect with class, race and sexuality. Lastly, this study argues for the incorporation of the discourse of erotics in the formal curriculum which allows young people’s voices to be heard. This approach (discourse of erotics) can be seen as a process of becoming, which focuses on possibilities of improving sexuality education as opposed to an imposed sexual model that is applied to young people and assumed to be the solution to young people’s sexuality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To me this thesis is a beautiful struggle, it defines me. It has not been an easy journey but it was worth it. The knowledge acquired within duration of this degree has groomed me as a student and most importantly gave me the confidence to speak well about my area of research. As my supervisor once said, “After this thesis Andisiwe, I want you to be an expert in this field!”

However, this journey would have not been possible without a good support system. Firstly, I want to thank my supervisor for her time, patience and knowledge. I attribute the level of my Masters degree to her encouragement and effort and without her this thesis, too, would not have been completed or written. I would also want to express my gratitude for her assistance in getting me financial assistance in the form of the NRF and SANPAD bursary.

I would also thank the research site and the research participants for allowing me to conduct the study. I appreciate their patience and allowing me to be part of the Green blood.

To my father, mother, brothers (Andile, Akhona and Banele Mthatyana) and sister (Linda Mthatyana) thank you for being a constant source of support, emotional and moral and of course financial during the course of my Masters degree, and the successful completion of this thesis would certainly have not been possible without them.

To a special friend who wiped my tears when I could not write and pushed me when I had lost faith in this thesis, I thank you Lwando Sobekwa. You have been a good friend and a source of inspiration. I will always keep your words: “Go home or GO BIG!”

Most importantly, to Qawekazi Maqabuka, Amanda Kahla, Likho Sikutshwa, Siphokazi Magadla, Amanda Shumi, Simamkele Dial, Grace Idahosa, Dale Moodley, Yonela Scina, Zandise Mrhali, Masakhane and all my friends and colleagues who have walked with me in this path and encouraged me to do better, I thank you all. Thank you for being there when I needed someone to talk to, thank you for all the encouraging words.

“It always seem impossible until its done.” – Nelson Mandela.

Table of Contents

Dedication	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	6
Chapter 2: Theoretical Approaches to the Study	24
Chapter 3: The Research Process	43
Chapter 4: The school as a site of competing and conflicting discourses	51
Chapter 5: Learner pregnancy and homosexuality – the limits of acceptance of learner sexual agency	69
Chapter 6: Multiple feminine communities of practice in a single sex school	88
Chapter 7: Future directions for LO sexuality education in South Africa	103
References	115
Appendix A	130
Appendix B	131

Chapter 1

Introduction

This study is interested in how learners negotiate sexuality education covered in the Life Orientation component of the formal school curriculum in an all-girls South African government school. The study forms part of a wider South African Netherlands Research Programme on Alternative Development (SANPAD) funded project investigating Life Orientation sexuality education in South Africa. The study site for this particular aspect of the wider project was a historically white all girls' high school in South Africa. The specific focus is on the content of the gender and sexuality sections covered in the formal curriculum and also the way in which these formal aspects of the curriculum are received and interacted with by learners.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge that views schools as sites for the production of sexual identities (Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Epstein *et al.*, 2003). In so doing, it aims at rendering visible the social relations of schooling with respect to the construction of gendered sexual identities. In particular the study aims to reveal the role student sexual cultures and teacher sexual cultures play in the way in which sexuality education in the formal curriculum is taken up in the formation of sexual subjectivities among the research participants. The school is conceptualized as a site of discursive practices relating to sexuality which will be studied in three areas: (1) the life orientation sexuality curriculum; (2) the practice of teaching sexuality education and (3) in the informal cultures of teachers and learners in a particular school.

The specific objectives of the study are to discover:

- What frameworks inform the teaching of sexuality education at the research site?
- What is the school's approach is to sexuality education?
- How this is similar or different to the approach of the Department of Education?
- How these policies and approaches are translated into the practice of sexuality education for grade ten learners at the school?
- What are the student sexual cultures that exist in the school?

- What are the teacher sexual cultures that exist in the school?
- Given the informal sexual cultures that exist at the school, how is sexuality education at the school received/taken up/responded to by its grade ten learners

Existing research done internationally on the field of sexuality education has focused on how sex education programmes have been delivered (Wolpe, 1988; Lees, 1993). Research done in South Africa has focused on how sex education programmes have been implemented and the perceptions of educators (Rooth, 2005; Naidoo, 2006; Prinsloo, 2007; van Deventer, 2009). The participants included grade ten learners since the bulk of sexuality education takes place in the grade ten curriculum; however a small number of participants were drawn from other grades (eight, nine, 11 and 12).

Historical context

The history of sexuality education can be traced back to the 1900s. The increase in sexually transmitted diseases among American youth led to the inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum (Kyman, 1998; Araujo, 2008) with the sponsorship of the American Social Hygiene Movement which aimed at limiting the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among the youth (Kyman, 1998; Araujo, 2008). The American Social Hygiene Movement held the belief that parents did not have the means to address issues of sexuality with young people and that the school was the most suitable space for addressing matters of sexuality with youth as the majority of children were school going (Kyman, 1998:133).

Boys and girls were taught in separate classrooms (Kyman, 1998). From the beginning a moral approach to sexuality education was adopted which focused on teaching abstinence. In the fourth and fifth decade, the curriculum included a biological component which focused on reproduction (Strouse & Fabes, 1985:251). The increase in the rates of premarital sex, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases in the 1960's led to the development of "sexuality education" and the beginning of the debates about which approach should be adopted in the sexuality education curriculum: an approach emphasising abstinence or a more comprehensive approach (Moran, 2008).

In the abstinence approach the curriculum exclusively encourages abstinence. The term "abstinence" used by policy makers is often not clearly defined (Santelli, Ott, Lyon, Rogers, Summers & Schleifer, 2006:81). In behavioural terms, abstinence would refer to

“postponing sex” or “never had vaginal sex” and pragmatically, abstinence is defined using words such as “chaste” or “virgin”, framing abstinence as an attitude or commitment to abstaining from sexual behaviour (Santelli *et al.*, 2006:81). Proponents of this approach argue that the problems of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers are a result of children having “too much information about sex and sexual relationships” (Araujo, 2008; Perrin & DeJoy, 2003). They further argue that the best place that one can learn about sex is in marriage and that “sex” is something “natural” between a “heterosexual”/ “opposite sex”, “married couple” (Weeks, 1986; Luker, 2006). The implication is that there is no place for sex education in schools. Such an approach identifies teenagers as a unique group with a different cultural experience from the rest of the society and also characterizes them as a group that is facing “emotional and behavioural upheaval” (Erikson, 1968). This approach is associated with a number of myths about adolescence which characterise both academic and popular concepts of the youth (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992).

The United States federal government tried to define the meaning of abstinence education under Title V Section 510 of the Social Security Act (22). Under Section 510 of Social Security Act (22), abstinence education is defined as an “educational or motivational” program which:

1. Has as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realised by abstaining from sexual activity;
2. Teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;
3. Teaches that abstinences from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
4. Teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual behaviour;
5. Teaches that sexual activity outside the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
6. Teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child’s parents and society;
7. Teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increases vulnerability to sexual advances; and
8. Teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity (Santelli *et al.*, 2006:84).

This standard set by the federal government does more than to teach the biology of sexual intimacy, it goes further and teaches the codes of morality that define the boundaries for relationships and sexual relationships in particular (Araujo, 2008:26).

David C Wiley (2009: 164-165) questions the notion of ethics and morality in the abstinence education programmes. He poses four questions. He asks:

1. Is it ethical to intentionally withhold sexuality information from students?
2. Is it ethical to present contraceptives information exclusively in terms of failure rate?
3. What are the implications of educating students that the only acceptable form of sexual expression occurs in marriage?
4. Is it ethical to use a curricular approach that lacks scientific data?

He argues that there are four basic ethical principles (non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy and justice) and that these principles form the basis of ethical enquiry and practice. For Wiley (2009:166), the abstinence only debate invokes two of the ethical principles (i.e. non-maleficence and beneficence). The first (non-maleficence) requires that the teachers do not harm the students, and for Wiley presenting abstinence-only information harms the learners by not providing them with better information. Condoms provide protection against certain sexually transmitted diseases and their use is based on valid scientific information that students should be provided with (Wiley, 2009:166). Secondly, Wiley argues that the second principle (beneficence) obligates the teachers to contribute to the learners' welfare. This concept (beneficence) includes the principle of providing benefits and balancing benefits and harm (Wiley, 2009:166). He suggests that it is clear that there is more harm done by such programmes and the only way to benefit learners is by giving them "complete, age-appropriate, scientifically valid information" (Wiley, 2009:166). Wiley concludes that school district officials and teachers must work within the "gaze of legal, moral, ethical and personal issues that surround sexuality education to make the best curricular" (2009:167).

Perrin and DeJoy (2003:449) argue that the America federal government spends a vast amount of money on abstinence education, and that this is in direct conflict with the expressed opinions and needs of stakeholder (taxpayers and youth). Statistics show that 92% believe that such education should be open and should acknowledge that at least a proportion of adolescents are sexually active. A further 83% believe that teenagers should receive information about protecting themselves from pregnancy and STDs even if they are not sexually active (Mayer, 1995). These percentages indicate that a majority of voters are willing to support comprehensive approaches but the Congressional voting record seems to be complex and political in this regard (Perrin & DeJoy, 2003:449). Perrin and DeJoy conclude that the issue of teenage pregnancy is a complex problems and evidence thus far

indicates that “abstinence-only” is a simplistic and inadequate solution and until the proponents of abstinence-only can provide adequate evidence that proves that the approach works (2003:455) it should be replaced by a more enlightened approach to youth sexuality.

The alternative to abstinence only approaches to sex education is a more comprehensive approach which may still emphasize abstinence as the most desirable behaviour but will also for example, “promote the use of condoms or other forms of contraception for those who do have sex” (Kirby, 2001 cited in Kirby, 2008:18). The rise of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in the 1980s led to the consolidation, approval and encouragement of the existence of sex education and an acknowledgement of the need for educators to be more explicit about how students can protect themselves from contracting the virus. It is at this stage that a more comprehensive approach to sex education became more acceptable as the inclusion of information on contraceptive uses, homosexuality and premarital sex were considered to be the important elements of HIV/AIDS prevention (Moran, 2008). Proponents of this approach believe that problems (such as teenage pregnancy and STDs) that society is facing are a result of young people not having enough information on about sex, rather than being the result of too much information. Several studies have demonstrated positive outcomes of comprehensive sex education including “delayed initiation of sexual activity, increased condom use and decreased number of sexual partners” (Collins, Alagiri, Summers & Morin, 2002:9). Ekstrand and colleagues studied the effects of an intervention titled *Healthy Oakland Teens in Oakland, California* which involved learners in the seventh grade in five adult-led and eight peer-led sessions (Ekstrand *et al.*, 1996). The learners were provided with information on HIV, STIs, substance abuse and preventative behaviours. Issues such as personal risk, cost and benefits of preventative behaviours, refusal skills and condom use were well addressed (Ekstrand *et al.*, 1996). The study revealed that the learners in the intervention group delayed sexual activity which might have been a result of the learners having access to both information about abstinence and ways of protecting themselves when engaging in sexual behaviour.

A similar study to that of Ekstrand and colleagues titled *Reducing the Risk* was implemented in rural California involving 15 sessions with ninth to twelfth graders (Collins *et al.*, 2002:9). The programme included extensive role playing and use of protection against sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. The findings revealed that the programme helped the learners to delay sexual activity, reduced the frequency of unprotected sex, increased the frequency in the use of contraceptives and reduced the risk of participants

contracting sexually transmitted diseases (Collins *et al.*, 2009:9). Other studies such as *Becoming A Responsible Teen, Be Proud! Be Responsible, Safer Choices* based on a more enlightened approach to sexuality education have also been shown to be effective (Collins *et al.*, 2009). Based on these studies, Collins *et al.*, (2009: 10) conclude that if the aim of sex education is to reduced HIV and STIs then such education must take into account the reality of youth sexual experiences, as well as experiences of sexual abuse, homelessness and gay and lesbian desire .

Abstinence only programmes on the other hand have been shown to have limited efficacy. Borawski, Trapel, Lovegreen, Colabianchi and Block (2005) conducted a study in the United States. The aim of the study was to examine the effectiveness of abstinence-until-marriage curriculum called “For Keeps” which was designed for middle school teenagers. For Keeps is a five day (40 minutes sessions) classroom based curriculum that emphasizes “abstinence until marriage” and the consequences of early sexual activity (Borawski *et al.*, 2005:425). The curriculum stressed that the learners should resist drugs, alcohol and sexual advances. It also emphasized that contraceptives are not 100% safe in preventing pregnancy and contraceptives do not protect adolescents from the “emotional consequences of sexual activity” (Borawski *et al.*, 2005:425). This study is similar to the Barnet and Hurst (2003) study which evaluated an abstinence-only curriculum called Life’s Walk program which shared similar goals as with the For Keeps. The results of the Borawski *et al.*, (2005) study revealed that there was an increase in the communication between the parents and learners about sex but overall, there was no change in learners’ attitudes about sex. When the learners were asked which method they would choose in order to prevent pregnancy, they chose abstinence yet there was an increase in the number of sexually active learners.

Different states in the United States took different approaches to sexuality education and today the political battle between approaches advocating abstinence and those advocating for a comprehensive approach in sexuality education continues. States that teach abstinence-only receive huge funding from the United States federal government compared to states that take a comprehensive approach (Santelli, Ott, Lyon, Rogers, Summers & Schleifer, 2005; Kirby, 2008; Araujo, 2008).

In Britain sex education was incorporated in the school curriculum after the Second World War when the incorporation of soldiers back into civilian life resulted in an increase of sexually transmitted diseases (Reiss, 2005). Previously, hygiene was covered in high schools with specific focus on “self-reverence, “self-control” and “true modesty”, and directed at boys, talks on the “temptation of factory and workshop life” that they could expect on leaving

school, (Reiss, 2005). Now, the feared rise of sexually transmitted diseases led to the inclusion of sex education in the formal school curriculum with specific focus on the prevention of gonorrhoea and syphilis (Reiss, 2005). Sex education was a component of biology lessons which focused on human reproductive systems (Reiss, 2005). In the early 70's, biology textbooks started providing detailed accounts of human reproductive systems and instruction on methods of contraception was incorporated into sex education (Reiss, 2005). The emphasis on providing "accurate information" and the "aims of sex education programmes included a decrease in ignorance, guilt, embarrassment and anxiety" concerning sex (Reiss, 2005). The rise of the feminist movement resulted in a more critical examination of assumptions about gender and sexuality in the approach taken to sexuality education (Reiss, 2005). Also, sex education began to have aims such as "the acquisition of skills for decision-making, communication, personal relationships, parenting and coping strategies" (Reiss, 2005).

Similarly to Britain and the United States, sexuality education in New Zealand was a strategy to provide learners with information on how to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (Willig, 1999 cited in Allen, 2005:4). Unlike in the United States and Britain where sexuality education was formally integrated into the curriculum, in New Zealand, it was driven by a religious and a eugenics agenda the vehicle for which was "pamphlets" and "manuals" (Smyth, 2000). The religious organizations adopted a moral-religious approach which sent a clear message of maintaining a pure relationship with God by looking after the temple (the body), and delaying sex until after marriage. The Eugenicists focused on the maintenance of a "pure race" (Smyth, 2000) which would be threatened by sexual promiscuity. In common with Britain, after the First World War, sexuality education as a tool to prevent the spread of venereal diseases (Smyth, 2000) was recognised by the state. However, sex education aroused anxiety among politicians, religious organisations and other community stakeholders as the prevailing orthodoxy was that parents should be the ones to take responsibility for teaching their children about sex (Allen, 2005). This belief was different from that of the American Social Hygiene Movement that placed the responsibility with the school. The New Zealand government gave parents the option to decide if their children would attend sexuality education classes or not (Allen, 2005). Today, the focus of the sexuality education curriculum has shifted to providing learners "with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to develop positive attitudes toward sexuality, to take care of their sexual health and to enhance their interpersonal relationships, now and in the future" (Ministry of Education, 1999:8 cited in Allen, 2005:5). The New Zealand Education Act of

1964 makes it mandatory for the school principal to consult school governing bodies and come to a consensus concerning whether or not sexuality education is offered as a component of Health and Physical Education (Allen, 2005). This means that some schools offer sexuality education and some schools do not. The emphasis on the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases remains unchanged (Allen, 2005:7).

While in the West (primarily Britain and the United States) sexuality education has been included in the curriculum since the 1900's and has gone through many reforms, in South Africa this is not the case. The history of South Africa and most developing nations has been impacted upon by colonialism. The paper titled *Sexual Socialization in South Africa: a Historical Perspective* by Delius and Glaser (2002) provides a historical perspective of sexual socialisation in South Africa. Delius and Glaser (2002:27) highlight that the existing academic work that covers sexuality in pre-colonial and colonial Africa which informs us about the "high degrees of sexual education and regulation" that was evident in many African societies prior to the advent of colonisation. Sexual education and regulation involved openness to issues of sexuality and also high degrees of control among children and the youth as premarital pregnancy and sex were regarded as unacceptable (Delius & Glaser, 2002). For instance, in the Zulu culture, puberty was a public matter that was well received in isiZulu communities (Delius & Glaser, 2000:31). Menstruation for girls marked a shift from childhood to belonging in the group of marriageable girls who were being groomed for marriage (Delius & Glaser, 2002:31). On the occasion of a boy's first nocturnal emission he would rise early in the morning while it was still dark and herd the cattle far away from the kraal. When the rest of the homestead awoke they would realise what had happened and the boys who had already reached puberty would be sent out to find him to welcome him into the next phase of his life (Delius & Glaser, 2002:31). In isiXhosa communities while youth sexual contact and experimentation was acknowledged, premarital pregnancy resulted in public humiliation for the girl who would be regarded as having lost her chance of marriage since marriage required a pure body (Delius & Glaser 200:31). Sex education took place in youth groups with the guidance of elders while those who transgressed the community's unwritten laws were punished. For other studies that provide accounts of sexual education and regulation in pre-colonial African societies see Schapera, 1940; Pitje 1948; and Mayer, 1961.

With the arrival of colonialism, the influence of Christianity and the demand for workers in urban areas altered the already existing structures of African communities and the traditional forms of sexual education and regulation (Delius & Glaser, 2002). Christianity

was driven by a political agenda of “modernising and emphasizing Christian values and western education” in African societies (Delius & Glaser, 2002:35). Missionaries settled in African local communities and they successfully absorbed some Africans into Christianity. Unlike traditional communities in which sex education was part of communal life, Christianity did not offer any sex education but rather preached a message of abstinence, sex as sin outside of marriage and sexual purity including monogamy, heterosexuality, and lifelong marriage as a virtue (Delius & Glaser, 2002).

On the other hand, industrialization in the urban areas was male centred. The demand for male labour to work on the mines and in other domestic spheres of the city meant men leaving families to be headed by their female partners (Delius & Glaser, 2002). In some cases adult women also left families in rural areas to seek employment in the cities and the absence of authoritative figures in African societies resulted in the dismantling of indigenous structures of authority for the regulation of youthful sexuality which had formerly played a huge role in controlling the sexual behaviour of the youth. The breakdown in traditional mechanisms of control and hierarchies of authority is implicated in an increase in premarital pregnancy and sexual behaviours which would have been considered delinquent including premarital penetrative sex (Delius & Glaser, 2002).

Apartheid also played a huge role in the diminishing of peer group and parental authority as the focus of those marginalized by apartheid was on the struggle for freedom. Men, women and the youth were involved as equals in the struggle and the strong focus on the struggle played a role in the dismantling of family structures in African homes. The upheavals that went along with heightened resistance and oppression with millions participating in the mass movement against apartheid in turn had an impact on that the extent to which families were able to offer sex education to children after puberty (Delius & Glaser, 2000).

The end of apartheid in 1994 paved the way for democracy. The new democratically elected government aimed at addressing the problems created by the past government. Education was a significant part of this agenda from the outset. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 had produced a racially divided and unequal education system. This Act ensured that Africans received minimal education in preparation for the expectation of later taking up domestic and other forms of menial labour in the white economy (Christie & Collins, 1982). Post 1994, the education system was reformed so as to provide equitable education across the country. A new curriculum was put in place as part of curriculum reform across the country. Also, as part of curriculum reform, sexuality education was formalized by the South African

government and became part of the curriculum offered in South African public schools in 2002. Before 1994, the South African education system was “rooted in authoritarian, rigid Christian national education, with rote learning and streaming at its core, manifested by an unequal distribution of resources, racially-biased content-driven curricula and racially delineated, separate education departments” (Rooth, 2005:28). The democratically elected government aimed at offering an equitable curriculum across all schools in the country informed by the values of the new Constitution.

Since 1994, the South African education system has gone through many reforms but in all cases the common thread running through these reforms has been to base new curriculum initiatives on the principles of the Constitution. The *National Curriculum Statement (Grade 10-12) Life Orientation* provided by the Department of Education (2002) states that:

The adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) provided a basis for curriculum transformation and development in South Africa. The Preamble states that the aims of the Constitution are to:

1. Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
2. Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person;
3. Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; and
4. Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations (Department of Education, 2002:1).

Life Orientation is among the learning areas offered in the new curriculum. Life Orientation is defined as:

the study of the self in relation to others and to society. It addresses skills, knowledge, and values about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity, careers and career choices (Department of Basic Education, 2011:8).

Life Orientation is among the four prerequisite subjects that are required in order for a student to qualify for a National Senior Certificate. It is a compulsory subject for learners from grades eight to 12 (Department of Basic Education, 2011:8). The Department of Basic Education describes its approach to Life Orientation as a “holistic approach to the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners”

(Department of Basic Education, 2011:8). It aims at promoting learners who are confident to participate in a democratic society. More specifically the aims of Life Orientation are:

1. Guide and prepare learners to respond appropriately to life's responsibilities and opportunities;
2. Equip learners to interact optimally on a personal, psychological, cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural and socio-economic level;
3. Guide learners to make informed and responsible decisions about their own health and well-being and the health and well-being of others;
4. Expose learners to their constitutional rights and responsibilities, to the rights of others and to issues of diversity;
5. Equip learners with knowledge, skills and values to make informed decisions about subject choices, careers, additional and higher education opportunities and the world of work;
6. Expose learners to various study methods and skills pertaining to assessment processes and
7. Expose learners to an understanding of the value of regular participation in physical activity (Department of Basic Education, 2011:8-9).

In grades 10 to 12, Life Orientation is divided into six topics which include: (1) Development of the self in society, (2) Social and environmental responsibility, (3) Democracy and human rights, (4) Careers and career choices, (5) Study skills and (6) Physical Education (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The focus of the present study is mainly the topic that is labelled "development of the self in society" as it is here that sex, sexuality and gender are covered in substance, particularly in the grade 10 curriculum hence the emphasis on grade 10's in the study. The contact time for the Life Orientation learning area is 80 hours in grades 10 to 12 and these hours are divided among the six topics including examinations hours.

The teaching of sexuality education in South Africa takes place in a wider context in which, in post-apartheid South Africa, both sexuality and schooling are frequently cited as being in crisis. Talk of crisis in relation to sexuality has multiple dimensions including, predominantly, gender based violence, disease and teenage pregnancy. The media is resplendent with reporting on the purported teenage pregnancy crisis. For example, in 2010, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal alone, it was reported that 17 260 pregnancies had occurred, with 2 029 of those occurring in the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal (Obonjeni district) (News24, 2011). One school in the Zululand district reported 60 pregnancies (News 24, 2011). In 2009, a single school located in the South Coast district of KwaZulu-Natal reported 83 pregnancies in one year (News24, 2011). Political parties and education stakeholders routinely express their shock at these sorts of statistics. For instance, the education spokesperson of the Democratic Alliance, Tom Stokes, stated that "This is

absolutely appalling, because it means that the children born by pupils who are themselves children will not get a good start in life, and this breeds further poverty in families, communities and society; this is a vicious cycle that needs to be broken” (News24, 2011). The Education Portfolio Committee Chairperson Linda Hlongwa described the KZN figures as “disheartening” and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) expressed that “the figures were an indication that something needed to be done” (News 24, 2011). Parents and schooling governing bodies have called for ways of ending “cancer that was eating at society” (News 24, 2011). The perceived crisis of pregnancy at schools is part of a wider sense of schooling itself being in crisis in South Africa with most schools characterised by poor resources, poor teaching and poor results (IOL, 2012).

The Study

This study was carried out at an all-girls former Model-C South African high school. The learners at the school are between the ages of 12 and 18. Green Girls High School¹ is a historically white school. The school dates back to 1892 which means it has been in existence for over 116 years. The operation of the school began in 1892 in a small cottage with eight pupils. By 1894 enrolment had increased dramatically to 91 learners (Hacksley, 1998:5). Between 1892 and 1976, the school heads were all white females. In 1976, the first white male took office as headmaster and subsequently over the years the school head has been either a white male or female (Hacksley, 1998). The school was founded on the value of academic excellence “that would stand rigorous scrutiny of public examinations and preparing girls for professional as well as domestic life” (Hacksley, 1998:5). This tradition of “expecting girls to respect their own intelligence and use their brains, while also developing womanly qualities” was adopted by the school from its inception (Hacksley, 1998:5). In 1896, the school was incorporated into the Education Department of the Cape and it gained its status and recognition as a “Girls’ Public School” in recognition of its remarkable record of “educational excellence” (Hacksley, 1998:6).

In the early years of its operation the school only had classes from the lower grades to standard seven (grade nine). Miss Grey, the school’s second headmistress, advocated for the girls to attend standard eight at the brother school, Brown Boys High School so that they could continue their education to standard 10 (grade 12) (Hacksley, 1998:12). In December

¹ All names have been changed.

1902, the school had its first group of girls who wrote their matriculation/standard ten examination. The outcome, with the girls performing well, was described as a “rare achievement” (Hacksley, 197:12). Along with academic excellence the girls’ health and physical well-being was valued by the school from its earliest years (Hacksley, 1998:12). The girls were expected for example to take part in the “rank-walk”. This exercise required the girls to line up and walk around the block (Hacksley, 1998:12) to promote their physical fitness. Later formal extramural activities were offered such as the debating society, dramatic society, swimming, netball, athletics and hockey.

In 1928, Green Girls High School began to offer senior grades and this meant that the girls no longer had to attend secondary school at Brown Boys High School (Hacksley, 1998:33). Green Girls’ High was now independent from Brown Boys and this independence was marked by a change in school colours. Originally both schools used gold and navy but emerald green was chosen as the new school colour to replace gold while navy was retained (Hacksley, 1998:34). The school continued to use its existing badge. This badge is still used by the school today. The badge contains a number of significant emblems. Firstly, the city arms represent loyalty to the city, the Dutch Settlers and the British heritage which are claimed by the school (Hacksley, 1998:35). Secondly, the school badge incorporates recognition of its African context through the inclusion of the giraffe, leopard and ostrich on the crest (Hacksley, 1998). The giraffe is said to represent not simply the African context but the aspiration of the school, to produce in its pupils a girl who “towers above her peers”. Those who are awarded “Colours”, whether for academic prowess or cultural distinction or marked success in any of various sports – are granted the privilege of wearing a broad strip of emerald green braid right round their blazers and a distinctive badge consisting of a single giraffe worked in green (Hacksley, 1998:35-36). In addition, the school motto “Virtute et Opera” (translation “*We are known by our strength of character and by our good works*”) neatly sums up what the school is all about (Hacksley, 1998:36).

Central to the school’s identity is a long history of a culture of excellence which is still maintained at the school today. School assemblies are regularly punctuated with badges and awards conferred on girls for achievements of various kinds (Field notes May 15, 2012). In addition to the usual awards for sporting, cultural and academic success, learners and teachers are also given awards for things such as obtaining a drivers licence, service, punctuality, and work published in a newspaper (Field notes May 15, 2012). This links back to the tradition of excellence which expects the girls excel in whatever they do in life and to be well rounded contributors to multiple social endeavours. The assimilation into this culture

of excellence is widespread at the school and is visible in the way in which the learners take their work and other activities seriously and celebrate and recognise the achievements of their fellow learners.

In 1990, historically white public schools in South Africa started admitting black learners for the first time (Hofmeyr, 2000). Green Girls High began to admit black learners in 1991. A large influx of black learners into the school followed, mostly originating from the nearby African and Coloured townships. When I began data collection in early May 2012, the school had a total of 429 girls. While the Department of Education stipulates a standard of 1:25 for the learner teacher ratio in any classroom, Green Girls prides itself on providing learners with close attention in relatively small classes, often with a ratio as low as 1:17 which makes it on a par with the best and most expensive private schools in the country in this respect. There are 29 teachers at the school, the majority of whom (22) are white. While most of the teachers are employed by the state, the school maintains its favourable student teacher ratio by employing additional teachers from School Governing Body funds.

Former Model C schools are schools that were reserved for white learners in South Africa under apartheid (Roodt, 2011) but which began, in a limited way, to offer places to black learners in the dying days of apartheid. With the introduction of attempts to reform apartheid the education system in South Africa under the apartheid government was divided into six racialised categories: schools administered by the House of Assembly (White), by the House Delegates (Indian), by the House of Representatives (Coloured), by the Department of Education and Training (African), schools in the self-governing homelands (Africans) and schools in the 'independent' homelands (Hofmeyr, 2000; Motala & Pampallis, 2005). All these administrative structures reflected divisions based on geography, race and ideology. Political pressure in the 1990s resulted in Piet Clase (Minister of Education) introducing reforms to allow previously disadvantaged groups to access white schools (Hofmeyr, 2000) in a limited and conditional way. White schools were given the option to select from three different models: A, B or C. Model A meant that the school would become private, would receive no subsidy from the state, and would therefore be free to choose which learners to admit and on what basis. Model B meant that the school remained a state school but could admit black students up to a maximum of 50%. Model C meant that the school would receive state funding only for its staff, but could raise its own budget through school fees and enrol 50% of black learners (Pampallis, 1993 cited in Motala & Pampallis, 2005). The majority of English medium schools opted for Model C while most Afrikaans schools chose Model B. (Hofmeyr, 2000). After 1994, the model system was dismantled and a single unified state

system came into existence.

In this ethnographic study conducted at the former Model C all-girls Green Girls' High I draw on the work of Mary Jane Kehily (2002), and her concept of "student sexual cultures" as an interpretive lens. Kehily (2002) defines "student sexual cultures" as the "informal groups of school students who actively ascribe meanings to events within specific social contexts". Student sexual cultures are an important place for identity construction because in these sexual cultures learners negotiate acceptable ways of defining or saying things. Therefore when students negotiate meanings in relation to gender and sexuality they draw on repertoires that are developed and maintained within these informal friendship circles. The emphasis on student sexual cultures in this study is a way of "giving voice" as Kehily (2002) puts it, to the "school students who *receive* the curriculum but play no part in the structuring of the school as an organisation or the planning of the curriculum and the teaching of lessons". In addition to the focus on learners, the views and experiences of the Life Orientation teachers have been taken into account in the study. Teachers are also receivers of the curriculum. Although they do not take part in the formulation and design of the curriculum, in the teaching of the sexuality education curriculum their own personal views about the content of the curriculum can have a huge impact on the teaching of Life Orientation (Panday, 2008).

Redman (1994) suggests that research into pupil sexual cultures can provide insight into pupils' active engagement from an early age with sexual identity construction and the production of pupil sexual meanings. For Redman (1994), the voices of learners have been silenced in curriculum design. There is an existing literature focusing on identity construction in schools and how learners make meaning of their sexual identities in schools (see Quinlivan & Town, 1999; Redman, 2001; Kehily, 2002; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Renold, 2004). Some studies on peer cultures/pupil sexual cultures have focused on working class students. For instance Paul Willis's (1981) ethnographic work in Britain on working class male students in a high school showed that fighting and defiance of rules were central for white working-class boys' conception of masculinity while white working class girls valued marriage and romance. Both white and black working class girls were found to value beauty and fashion. Although such studies have focused on working class students, issues of gender and sexuality and how learners resist or interact with the official school curriculum are not the main focus. Other studies on student cultures within American schools show a strong concern with status and social hierarchy (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1995:12). Some studies have found a strong link between extracurricular activities and peer status (see Coleman, 1973;

Eckert, 1989; Lesko, 1988).

In the school studied, both the unofficial and official curriculum regarding sexuality were the focus of attention. During the data collection process I was interested in the talk that takes place both in the Life Orientation sexuality education classroom and outside the classroom (during break times and other moments of informal interaction). I was also interested in the significance of language practices and the role that these play in how learners create their own meanings in relation to sexuality and gender.

My argument is that meaning making needs to be understood within highly local, specific contexts. The process of making sense is an active rather than a passive one. Students do not just receive educational messages; they also interact with these messages and in this process of interaction the meaning of these messages changes from what might have been originally intended by those responsible for designing or implementing the formal curriculum.

I am interested in this study in the ways in which issues of sexuality are taken up in student (micro) cultures – or what I term here “communities or practice” -- and the implications that this has for sexuality education. The study, using ethnographic techniques, shows how students negotiate complex interactions between formal and informal school cultures in ways that can be creative or constraining – or both, at different moments. I explore the frameworks that inform the teaching of Life Orientation; the official approach to sexuality education taken at the study site; the Department of Education’s policy/approach to sexuality education and how it is different or similar to that of the school; how these policies and approaches are translated into the practice of sexuality education for grade ten learners at the study site; what characterizes student sexual cultures at the school and given the learner and teacher sexual cultures that exist at the school, how sexuality education at the school is received/taken up by learners.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study located within an interpretive framework. An interpretive approach allows for the researcher to see meaning making from the perspective of the participants while at the same time offering an interpretation of that process of meaning making by examining multiple sources of understanding through detailed and extended engagement in a particular context. The interpretive approach thus offers a “systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in

order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds” (Neuman, 1997:68). Taking this approach as my starting point I aimed to enter into the life worlds of the participants in order to gain insight into how they make sense of their experiences.

Using a theoretically directed form of thematic content analysis the approach was one of interpreting the content of a variety of ethnographic data ranging from interviews to observations to focus groups through a process of systematic classification and coding involving the identification of themes or patterns which were in part suggested by prior engagement with secondary literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278). A fuller description of the research methods employed is explored in chapter three.

Ethics

Approval to conduct the study was granted by the National Department of Education (now Department of Basic Education) and the Rhodes University Ethical Clearance Committee in 2011 (see appendix for official approval letters and the SANPAD project paper).

Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter maps the terrain of the study and locates the study within a historical overview of the emergence of sexuality education both internationally and in South Africa. The chapter introduces the study site and refers briefly to the methodology used in the study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Context for the Study describes the social constructionist approach to sexuality and gender that is taken in the thesis. The chapter also describes the approach that the thesis takes to the school as a site of competing discourses.

Chapter 3: The Research Process

This chapter provides a description of how the research was conducted including the use of a variety of data collection methods such as documentary analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, solicited narratives and observations. Reference is also made to how the data was analysed using directed content analysis.

Chapter 4: The school as a site of competing and conflicting discourses

This chapter argues that the school is a site of *competing* and *conflicting* discourses concerning sexuality. It shows that learners are not passive recipients of the messages that they receive from the formal school curriculum, but rather critically and actively interact with these messages.

Chapter 5: Learner pregnancy and homosexuality – the limits of acceptance of learner sexual agency

This chapter looks at whether learners are regarded as sexual subjects both in the formal curriculum and in the informal curriculum by critically looking at the messages that suggest that learners are sexual beings. The focus is on pregnancy and lesbianism at the school and how it is taken up both by the learners and the school educators.

Chapter 6: Multiple feminine communities of practice in a single sex school

This chapter looks at the variety of feminine communities of practice that operate at the school. It argues that the school is a site in which a variety of femininities exist and also challenges the dominant assumption about female sexuality and single sex schools as sites of empowering femininities.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Future directions for LO sexuality education in South Africa

This chapter argues for the incorporation of knowledge about student sexual cultures into the formal curriculum as a starting point for sexuality education. Missing from the official curriculum is a discourse of desire and pleasure. Although this chapter argues for the recognition of student sexual cultures, it also looks at the limitations of student sexual cultures.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Approaches to the Study

The present study is framed by socio-historical approaches to sexuality exemplified in the work of Michel Foucault (1978) and Jeffrey Weeks (1977, 1981, 1985, 1986) as well as by the literature on the construction of sexuality and gender in the context of school relations (see for example Epstein & Johnson, 1994, 1998; Holland *et al.*, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Redman, 1994; Sears, 1992; Thorogood, 2000; Trudell, 1993). The aim of the study is to provide an analysis of aspects of sexuality education and to show the implications for sexuality education of an approach which takes seriously learner cultures.

The thesis argues for a social constructionist approach to gender and sexuality in contrast to biological determinist assumptions which are shown to pervade both public discourse and educational curricula in relation to youth and women's sexuality in particular. To take a social constructionist approach to gender and sexuality is to suggest that gender and sexuality are shaped by and through the society in which we live. "There are many different social constructionist perspectives on gender; however, they all share the idea that becoming male or female is a social process that is learned through culture—in the family, in school and in social interactions more generally" (Kehily, 2002). The thesis looks at one particular influential site of becoming, namely the school and shows the multiplicity of gendered performances and sexual identities that operate in a so-called "single sex" school.

Taking the view that gender is not fixed but rather changes over time and place (see Paechter, 2003), gender can be understood as relational. This means that what it means to be male is defined in relation to what it means to be female. This relational aspect of gender categories "produces and sustains binary opposites that may be invoked in stereotypical ways: masculinity/femininity; strong/weak; active/passive; hard/soft; rational/emotional" (Kehily, 2002). This dualism produced by the relational aspect of gender can be seen as part of Western thought and Kehily (2002) argues that it has consequences for us as gendered human beings, not least of which is the normalizing of heterosexuality while the homosexual subject or homosexual practices are constructed as aberrant or deviant – what Adrienne Rich (1980) famously referred to as "compulsory heterosexuality". As Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford (2003) have shown, heterosexuality is sustained and naturalised in educational institutions which become spaces where heterosexuality is acquired (Epstein *et al.*, 2003:6). For instance, in the early years of education, the "home corner" provides children with "fantasies of the heterosexual family"; "sexual literacy" about desirable pop stars and models

is provided, while in secondary schools, the “prom or school disco” produces learners as masculine or feminine (Epstein *et al.*, 2003:6). For Epstein *et al.* (2003:6) the heterosexualisation “process is often unremarked and young people are seen generally within a discourse of ‘normal’ gender development”. Heterosexually successful learners from secondary schools often have a successful move into “heterosexual economies” in universities (Epstein *et al.*, 2003: 6). The present thesis shows the complicated relationship of the research participants to heteronormativity in which they invoke the binary even while repudiating it in their practice of lesbian relationships. The latter are constructed as a “fever” suggesting an illness that temporarily overcomes the subject but inevitably passes with time, allowing the subject to return to a state of healthy (fever-free) normality.

The work of Jeffrey Weeks (1977, 1981, 1985, 1986) work has been significant in shaping how sexuality has been studied and viewed. His work provides a detailed analysis of how sexuality as a historical concept has been formed and how it has been shaped by complex historical transformations and social forces (Weeks, 1981).

He argues that we learn from many sources at a very early stage that sex is “natural” and it is something that takes place with members of the “opposite sex” (1986:13). The implication is that sex between members of the “same sex is unnatural” (Weeks, 1986:13). As Weeks points out, the implication of this understanding is that there is an intimate connection between being male or female (having the appropriate sex organs and reproductive potentialities) and the correct form of erotic behaviour. Genital intercourse between men and women is by implication the only “natural” and legitimate form of erotic expression (1986:13). These assumptions play themselves out in the ways in which sexualities are codified, regulated, lived and organized in a variety of settings in contemporary societies.

The usage of the term “sex” can be traced back from the sixteenth century and it was used to refer to two distinct genders, i.e. male and female, however, today this concept is used to refer to “physical relations between sexes, ‘to have sex’” (Weeks, 1986:13). These additional meanings to sex suggest that there has been a shift in the way sexuality is being understood and for Weeks sexuality is a “fictional unity” that has never existed. Sex is an “invention of the human mind” (Weeks, 1986:15). Thus, for Weeks sexuality is a historical construct which brings different “biological and mental possibilities” such as gender identity, reproductive capacities, bodily differences, needs, desires and fantasies together (1986:16). The political order of the 19th century restricted academic work on sex did not regarded as a public matter but rather as properly confined to the private sphere. But by the end of the century, there was an explosion of writings about sexuality (Weeks, 1986; 2000). Historians

have used complex methods in order to reconstruct the “subjective or tabooed experience” of sexuality (Weeks, 1986:20). Weeks (1986) is against the essentialism of biological accounts of human sexuality. While he does not deny the importance of biology rather he argues that biological conditions “limits what is possible” but do not “cause” the patterns of sexual life (Weeks, 1986:25). Weeks believes that human behaviour cannot be explained in biological terms alone but needs also to be read as a “set of potentialities which transform and are given meaning only in the context of actual relationships” (Weeks, 1986:25).

Weeks argues that “sex” and “society” are not separate realms (1986:25). Instead, we must view sex not as a (natural) given but rather a product of “negotiation, struggle and human agency” (Weeks, 1986:25). In Western cultures, sexuality has been organized in a variety of different ways. Family systems or kinships have been central agents in the regulation of sexuality. But as Weeks (1986: 27) points out families are not autonomous entities but are rather shaped by wider social relations and economic forces. Work conditions and technological innovations for example have played a huge role in shaping sexual lives. In the 1920s and 1930s, artificial birth control and changing economic roles not only empowered women, but also in turn had an impact on the social organization of families. Social regulation and informal and customary patterns have played a significant role in shaping societies’ responses to sexuality (Week, 1986:29) in ways that, Weeks further argues, are difficult to change even in contemporary societies. Political intervention is another way of regulating sex which, as Weeks notes, can be achieved through a variety of legislative and moral interventions (1986:30). The history of sexuality then is not simply a history of control or repression but is rather also a history involving cultures of resistance and the production of sexualities. What is known as “sexuality” is therefore a product of many influences and sexuality does not exist outside history. Instead it is a product of history and this is what Weeks refers to as the “social construction of sexuality” (1986: 31).

Weeks suggests that sexuality regulation has been a tool of power (Weeks, 1986:36). Power does not “operate through a single mechanism of control” instead, it operates through “complex - overlapping – and often contradictory - mechanisms which produce dominations and oppositions, subordinations and resistances” (1986:37). Class, gender and race are examples of structures of domination and subordination that circulate in the realm of sexuality.

In contrast, then, to biological determinist accounts of sexuality which offer fixed binary accounts of human sexuality, the approach taken here is to see sexuality as “subject to an enormous degree of socio-cultural moulding” (Weeks, 2003:53). As Plummer (1975) has

suggested “sexuality has no meaning other than that given to it” (Plummer, 1975 cited in Weeks, 1986:54). Therefore different sexualities acquire different meanings through the discourses they are associated with. For instance, sexuality in traditional Christianity depends on certain assumptions about human nature and reproductive sex (Weeks, 1986:57).

For Weeks, it is clear that the sexual tradition has offered two sides, that is, “either sex is fundamentally dangerous, acceptable only when channelled into appropriate channels (generally procreative sex); or sex is basically healthy and good, but it has been repressed, distorted and denied by a corrupt society” (1986:81). For him, sex, “only attains meanings in social relations, which implies that we can only make appropriate choices around sexuality by understanding its political and social context. This involves a decisive move away from the morality of “acts” which has dominated sexual theorizing for hundreds of years and in the direction of a new relational perspective which takes into account context and meaning” (Weeks, 1986:81). Here Weeks poses an alternative to the dichotomy between a discourse of sex as dangerous and a discourse of sex as healthy but repressed - suggesting that we can only understand sexual practices in the context of wider social relations. Weeks therefore proposes that we understand sexual identities as “made in history not in nature” (Weeks, 1998).

In this vein, a number of studies have adopted a historical perspective in analyses of sexuality and these studies have elaborated and utilized Foucauldian themes (see Bland, 1995; Mort, 1987; Hawkes, 1996; Bristow, 1997). Michel Foucault (1976) *History of Sexuality* begins his narrative with the “repressive hypothesis”. Foucault argues that for a long time, society has supported the Victorian regime and this regime continues to dominate even today (1976:3). This regime was very repressive as it had codes for regulating the coarse. Sex was “driven out, denied and reduced to silence” (Foucault, 1976:4). This repressive discourse or “repressive hypothesis” has managed to hold up well in modern times and “a solemn historical and political guarantee protects it” and through this protection it becomes clear that there is a relationship between sex and power (Foucault, 1976:4). The married heterosexual couple had the legitimate right to sanction sexuality thus “enforce[ing] the norm, safeguard[ing] the truth, and reserve[ing] the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy” (Foucault, 1976:3). This repression was informed by economic imperatives. This meant that sexual reproduction functioned as a means for the reproduction of the labour force (Foucault, 1976:6). Any sexual practices that were not concerned with sexual procreation could not expect sanction. “Nor did it merit a hearing” (Foucault, 1976:4). Instead, they would “be driven out, denied, and reduced to silence” (Foucault, 1976:4). The

brothel was the only place in which sexual deviance was tolerated (Foucault, 1976:4). In this paradigm it has long been assumed that “children have no sex”; hence, they were forbidden to talk about it and when they were exposed to sexual talk or images, they had to close their eyes and ears (Foucault, 1976: 4).

Foucault’s contribution to the discussion on sexuality is to show how sexuality has not so much been repressed and denied by these discourses but created and produced in a particular form. He thus proposes that sexuality is a historical construct that is brought into being by and through discourses in fields such as medicine, religion, law and education. By discourse, Foucault refers to ways of knowing and understanding the world (Kehily, 2002:26). From a Foucauldian perspective, discourses function as regimes of truth and they actively create specific sexualities by turning subjects into objects of knowledge. Since the seventeenth century, Foucault argues that there has been a “discursive explosion” whereas before “sexual practices had little need of secrecy; words were said without undue reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had a tolerant familiarity with the illicit” (1976:3). In the Victorian age, in contrast, sex was seen as a taboo and the creation of the “homosexual subject” (Foucault, 1976; Weeks 1981, 1986, 1989) enabled certain disciplinary strategies to emerge in relation to sexual desire and personal relationships. Therefore, the aim of the discursive explosion surrounding sexuality was to incorporate the sexual into the field of state rationality where power can be exercised to reinforce the state itself (Foucault, 1988:150). The 18th century marked a period in which sex was regulated by the state. Sex was a “matter of public interest” and the period saw the emergence of the technologies of power to regulate sex (Foucault, 1976:23). Citizens were considered as populations that can be managed, controlled and monitored. These technologies of power served an economic and political management role as the governments believed that they were serving a “population” with its specific phenomena and peculiar variables: birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation” (Foucault, 1976:25). Sex was viewed as the central problem of the population thus things like birth rate, death rates, fertility and other sexual practices all became objects of intense scrutiny (Foucault 1976:26). Sex was “not simply condemned or tolerated but *managed*, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum” (Foucault, 1976:24). It was in the 18th century that “sex became a police matter”, and the subject of “the ordered maximization of collective and individual forces” (Foucault, 1976:25).

The policing of sex was not only done through technologies of power but also the

ordering of desires. Foucault highlights the development of “Christian pastoral” care as a way of policing people’s sexual desires. This involved the idea of the confession which aimed at self-disciplining the subject. Sinners would make a confession to the pastor and they were encouraged to give detailed accounts of “thoughts, desires, voluptuous imaginings, delectations, combined movements of the body and soul” and expose the effects of sex even in their “slenderest ramifications” (Foucault, 1976:19). For Foucault, the confession has become one of Western societies’ valued methods for truth production or as Foucault puts it, “We have since become a singularly confessing society. Western man has become a confessing animal” (Foucault, 1976:59).

Also from the 18th century sex was now a matter of “public interest” through “power mechanisms in such a way that discourse on sex became essential” (Foucault, 1976:23). During this period, there emerged a “political, economic and technical incitement to talk about sex” (Foucault, 1976:23) and this was linked through the technologies of power which reduced citizens into populations. The role of the government was no longer believed to be that of serving its citizens but was instead control achieved through the knowledge of and control of “specific phenomena and peculiar variables: birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation” (Foucault, 1976:25). Sex was seen as the core problem of the population and it was now an important role of the government to control and monitor the sexual behaviours of their populations through contraceptives, marital status and other modes of sexual control. In this period, sex is “not simply condemned or tolerated but managed” for the greater good and functioning of society.

For Foucault, power is not a top down repression which can be resisted at a bottom level. Power can be read as a “multiplicity of force relations” and a “process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, or even reverses them”, as the “support which these force relations find in one another” and finally as the “strategies in which they take effect” (Foucault, 1976:92-93). Thus “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1976:93). This understanding of power as multiple, diverse, expressed locally, diffused and productive rather than merely repressive is taken up in the thesis as a significant way of understanding learner negotiations of sex education and the production of contested knowledges about sex and sexuality in the localised context of multiple power relations circulating at the research site.

Feminist thinking on sexuality, as Stevi Jackson (1996) points out, has “conceptualized the sexual domain as a site of male power in which the erotic can be

understood in cultural terms as a product of gendered patterns of domination and subordination” (Kehily, 2002:30). This social construction of sexuality is seen as “patriarchal”, as serving the interests of men, coercing women into compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980 cited in Jackson, 1996:16). Jackson argues that these discursive constructions of sexuality have produced “very particular “truths” which have defined hierarchically ordered heterosexual relations as natural and inevitable” (1996:19). For Jackson (1996), such “truths” leave us with the problem of the relationship between our individual desires and the discourses that circulate within society. These discourses that circulate in society are also supported by theories that regard heterosexuality as unproblematic and defend heterosexuality over different forms of sexuality.

Feminist perspectives on sexuality treat sexuality as culturally mediated rather than biologically given (see for instance Rubin, 1975; Vance, 1995). Feminist analyses have also foregrounded the relationship between gender and sexuality. As Rubin puts it, “any encounter with the body is mediated by meanings that culture gives to it” (1984:276).

In Carole Vance’s work on female sexuality and desire (1984) she points out that in traditional gender systems, women are expected to please men sexually in order for them to be protected. In her analysis of sexual pleasure, Vance points out that sexuality can be said to be a struggle for women and pleasure must be understood as something that women are entitled to. Michelle Fine (1988) adds that this repression of female desire is also a feature of institutions such as schools. In the school, there exists “authorized suppression of a discourse of female desires; the promotion of a discourse of female sexual victimization; and explicit privileging of married heterosexuality over other practices of sexuality” (Fine, 1988:30). The female is represented as a victim of male sexuality (Fine, 1988:30). Thus, Fine (1988) calls for the insertion of the “missing discourse of desire” in the school curriculum and for her:

A genuine discourse of desire would invite adolescents to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable, grounded in experiences, needs, and limits. Such a discourse would release females from a position of receptivity, enable an analysis of the dialectics of victimization and pleasure, and would pose female adolescents as subjects of sexuality, initiators as well as negotiators (Golden, 1984; Petchesky, 1984; Thompson, 1983).

Eighteen years after the publication of the ground breaking work on the missing discourse of desire, Fine and McClelland (2006) in an essay titled *Sexuality Education and Desire: Still Missing after All These Year* critically examined how the abstinence approach to sex education advocated by the United States government has failed to serve the project of

empowering women, reducing unwanted pregnancy or sexual coercion of women. In this essay they show how female sexual agency continues to be undermined by these programmes, heterosexuality continues to be privileged as the norm and minorities are excluded and marginalised – for instance through the construction of the bodies of working class black women as sexually unruly and in need of disciplining (Fine & McClelland, 2006).

Louisa Allen (2004) builds on the feminist literature that has focused on the missing discourse of desire, and introduces the idea of a “missing discourse of erotics”. The missing discourse of erotics acknowledges that young people regardless of sexual and gender identity are sexual subjects who have “a right to experience sexual pleasure and desire” (Allen, 2004:152). The discourse of erotics does not discard the messages of unwanted pregnancies but instead Allen (2004) suggests that the inclusion of pleasure and desire in the curriculum requires a reformulation of the messages in the curriculum. This means that the curriculum will take into account young people as sexual subjects who have a right to knowledge about the body as related to sexual pleasure and desire rather than reproduction alone (Allen, 2004:152). She argues for an empowering sexuality education that acknowledges desire, pleasure and most importantly, sexual minorities. Allen points out that sexuality education curricula construct women as victims and ignore the possibility of women experiencing sex as good and pleasurable (Allen, 2004). Allen suggests that the incorporation of an understanding of women as sexual agents has the potential to contribute to the “sexual health and wellbeing of young people – especially those who choose to engage in sexual activities in relationships” (Allen, 2004:164). The idea of a missing discourse of erotics is taken up in chapter seven of the present study in which learners are shown to be desiring subjects, that is, they desire academic success, boys, lesbian experiences, to please parents among many others but Life Orientation takes no account of this rich life of desire in young women because they are constructed as vulnerable, one dimensional, and ideally asexual.

The thesis is influenced also by Judith Butler’s (1990) notion of gender performativity and the production of heterosexual fictions. In her work, Butler first addresses what she sees as a problem in feminist theory. She argues that feminist theory assumes that there is an already existing identity which is understood through the category of ‘woman’ which requires representation in politics (1990:2). Butler argues that the feminist goal which seeks to represents all women is at risk as it is “refusing to take account of the constitutive powers of their own representational claims” (1990:6). For Butler, the notion of woman has been complicated by many facets such as sexuality, ethnicity and others which are significant. Within this study, these facets such as the multiplicity of raced, classed, gendered and sexual

identities circulated at the research site.

Butler also provides an analysis of gender and identity. Sex is conventionally understood as biological and gender is socially constructed (Butler, 1990:8). She argues that if gender is socially constructed that means that “gender cannot be said to follow from sex in any one way” (Butler, 1990:9). In short, the distinction between sex and gender is limiting as it results in a “radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders” (Butler, 1990:9). For Butler, gender can be seen as a performance that has to be continuously repeated in order to exist, it cannot therefore be assumed to be a “stable identity”. Instead gender is an identity “tenuously constituted in time instituted in an exterior space through the *stylized repetition of acts*” (1990:191). Carrie Paechter (2003:69) draws on the work of Butler (1990), arguing that gender must not be interpreted as a “stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow”. Instead gender is an identity that is constructed through time (Paechter: 2003:69). Paechter argues that gender is performative in the way that Butler describes:

.....acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggests, but never can reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause (Butler, 1990:136 cited in Paechter, 2003:69).

For Paechter, this implies that gender is not fixed but it is socially constructed and varies according to situations and contexts hence the production of multiple masculinities and femininities enacted variously by different people and the same people at different times (2003:69). To capture this sense of gender performance in context, Paechter proposes that we use the idea of “communities of practice” (see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The notion of communities of practice refers to the idea that learning is situated in social contexts and takes place in what is referred to as “legitimate peripheral participation” in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). A community of practice refers to a group engaging in a shared practice (Paechter, 2003). In chapter six I take up Paechter’s idea of treating masculinities and femininities as communities of practice which helps one to understand not only how different masculinities and femininities are performed in different social institutions but also how they are “performed, perpetuated and changed” (2003:71).

For Paechter (2003) the “learning of what it means to be male or female in a social configuration results in shared practices in pursuit of the common goal of sustaining

particular localized masculine and feminine identities”. The identity created and maintained in the groups defines them. What is fresh about this idea is the central place of ‘practice’ as fundamental to the conception of communities (2003:71). To study the production of femininities and masculinities in localised contexts then is to study particular practices. It is in these localised communities of practice that individuals become involved in the “constant production, reproduction and negotiation of what it means to be man and woman” (Paechter, 2003). Those who do not share the meaning of masculine and feminine embedded in these communities become peripheral members of the community (Paechter, 2003:72). Therefore, in order for one to be a full member of the community one must share the core meanings embedded in those communities and engage in the practices associated with them.

These communities of masculine and feminine practice do not exist in isolation. Both local and global conditions impact on them (Paechter, 2003:75). In my discussion of the consumption of Bratz dolls merchandise in the production of middle class femininities at the school I show how consumption of an international brand is grafted onto the production of localised femininities. This discussion resonates too with Paechter’s (2003:75) description of how group members engage in “boundary work” to shore up the dividing lines between those who are within a community of practice and those who are defined as outside of it. However, as Paechter (2003) points out too, one can have different memberships in different communities of practice so that one’s performance of gender shifts fluidly depending on the practices that one engages in at any particular moment.

In contrast to the binary logic which maps masculinity and femininity neatly onto male and female sexed bodies, the ontological starting point for this thesis is thus that of the existence of multiple masculinities and femininities diversely associated with sexed bodies of varying types. Gendered identities moreover intersect with raced, classed, sexual and other identities to produce multiple femininities. In ways that depend on the details of context, these ways of being masculine and feminine are hierarchically ordered. Some forms of masculinity and some forms of femininity are reified and exalted in a particular time and place while others are rendered marginal and possibly even vilified.

Femininities are social productions crafted in context. As Bhana and Pillay point out (2011:66), there is little research in South Africa into the production of different femininities in education contexts. The focus of attention on the country’s epidemic of violence against women and children can have the unintended consequence, as Dunne, Humphreys and Leach (2006) point out, of positioning girls as passive victims who have no agency in relation to the social production of gendered identities. A heightened focus on male violence has tended to

render femininities invisible or one-dimensionally reduced to the idea of women as passive victims (Reddy & Dunne, 2007).

Bhana's (2003) ethnographic work situated in four South African primary schools shows how four common teaching discourses (making difference biological; children are children: gender doesn't matter; and just kids: still young) legitimate the early years of formal schooling as a gender-free arena (see also Tobin, 1997; Francis, 1998; Yelland, 1998; Epstein, 1999; MacNaughton, 2000; Grieshaber & Canella, 2001). Bhana (2003:43) further argues that these discourses construct children as "passive" and "innocent". She suggests that gender equality can begin with teachers in the early years of schooling understanding how specific discourses inform their understanding and how these discourses constrain efforts towards social justice (Bhana: 2003:44). In order to achieve gender equality for young children, teacher training institutes need to challenge the "truths" which assume that children are ungendered (MacNaughton, 2000).

Gender and education research in South Africa has often focused on the problem of male violence in schools including sexual violence directed against girls, and male learners and educators who prey on female learners (see for example Human Rights Watch, 2001). In this context some authors (see Morrell, 1998) have argued that single-sex schools may provide a space in which newly empowered forms of femininity can emerge without the constant threat of violence and harassment. However this form of analysis rests on the assumption that violence will be absent when males are removed from a context. Missing from this account is a sense of the structural nature of gender based violence and ways in which unequal gender relations are perpetuated in relations between women as much as between men and women, and in institutions like schools and school curricula, in policy and practice, and in ways that do not depend on the conscious choice on the part of members of these institutions to perpetuate them (Bhana & Pillay, 2011). In common with Bhana and Pillay's (2011) work on constructions of femininities at a single sex South African school, here I illustrate that constructions of femininities are socially complex and variable. Girls are shown to be active agents in the construction of gendered identities and the idea of the single-sex girls' school as a place for the production of uniform gendered and sexual identity construction is questioned, as is the notion of girls as victims of violence and sexual predation but never perpetrators. Because the overarching gender order prevails with its attendant elements of violence and inequality no matter what types of body are actually present at any given time and place, girls are not necessarily or automatically made safer by the temporary absence of boys from one space of their lives.

Schools are complex social spaces which, as Kehily (2002) points out, can be understood in different ways. Firstly, we can understand the school as a social space where micro-cultures exist in any particular combination (Kehily, 2002:3). Secondly, a school can also be understood “as networks of social relations where competing discourses and institutional arrangements provide a mediating context for possibilities as well as constraints” (Kehily, 2002:16). Kehily (2002:27) further argues that a school can also be understood as a discursive field in which a number of discourses are in play which offers competing and sometimes contradictory understandings. Kehily also argues that a school can be understood as a site for the production of heterosexualities (2002:32). The “school can be understood as a site where a nexus of discourses in relation to sexuality are articulated and struggled over; moral/religious, medical, political and cultural” (Kehily 2002:53). All these definitions provided by Kehily suggest that a school is not just an institution with educators, learners and the curriculum. A school is a social space where competing and sometimes contradictory discourses exist, a social space where informal cultures exist besides the school official culture. All these “discourses and cultures also make up the school and are negotiated and contested as learner and teachers make their own meaning from them” (Allen, 2007:223).

Valerie Walkerdine (1990:20) argues that in the 19th century, “science was used to calculate and produce knowledge of the population on an unprecedented scale”. This knowledge production was intimately tied up with ways of managing the population and as a result, the school was seen as a site of “disciplining” the population (Walkerdine, 1990:20). Hence the emergence of compulsory schooling which was seen as a site for the development of “good habits” (Walkerdine, 1990:20). The classroom is thus as much a place of grooming, disciplining and inculcating values as it is a place for the transfer of items of curriculum knowledge and content. In schools learners are not only monitored but also silenced – deviant ways of seeing are disciplined and sanctioned. But as Walkerdine points out silencing also is resisted (1990:30). Forbidden discourses are suppressed and constructed as deviance or illness (Walkerdine, 1990:30-31) but silencing is never total. While learners do internalize the school’s way of doing things and learn to conform to what is expected out of them, resistance also surfaces in multiple interactions.

Paechter (2004) points out, since schools are “fundamentally modernist institutions which privilege rationality and the mind and marginalize the body and its desires”. It is common for sexuality to be treated as a discomforting and unwelcome presence in the context of the school. This dominant view of the school is a common feature of Anglophone countries where “education of the mind” is given priority while issues of sexuality are viewed

as issues that need to be controlled because they are a distraction (Allen, 2007:223) from the life of the mind. The combination of these discourses with notions of child development in Western psychology serves to position the student as non-sexual. But this positioning happens at the level of official school cultures and practices. Alongside the official culture informal cultures exist, each governed by its own informal rules, norms and discursive practices. While, in the sexual domain, official school cultures and the discourses that describe and produce them might assume that students are sexually innocent and in need of protection, in informal pupil cultures, an active and knowing sexuality may manifest itself in peer relations and informal day-to-day exchanges between pupils and teachers (Kehily, 2002:27). My interest is in the tensions/congruence between the official cultures of sexuality and gender at the research site and informal pupil sexual cultures.

Epstein and Johnson (1998) focus on the ways in which sexuality and schooling are connected through public discourses, notably the construction of children as “innocent” or “asexual”. For Epstein and Johnson (1998:2) schools are sites in which sexual and other identities are “developed, practiced and actively produced” and it is in schools that learners, educators and other beings (parents, etc.) are “‘schooled’ as gendered and sexual beings”. Schools are tasked not only with producing “academically achieving young people” but also “upright moral citizens” (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). For Epstein and Johnson (1998), therefore, schools are political projects. The state designs a curriculum that it deems “appropriate” for learners based on its political and ideological vision (also see Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

The construction of children as non-sexual, as Epstein and Johnson (1998:96) point out is “deeply problematic”, leading to the implementation of sexuality educational programmes that treat sexuality as an “adult matter” and fail to take into account the significance of “student sexual cultures” (1998:97). Student sexual cultures “deconstruct the idea of childhood innocence and put a question mark against the forms of “‘protection’ that are justified in these sorts of curricula (Epstein & Johnson, 1998:97).

Louisa Allen (2007) focuses on the way “the official school culture marks out certain student sexual positionings” (Allen, 2007). Allen (2007) highlights that there is “a gulf between schools’ perceptions of sexuality education and young people’s lived realities” (also see Allen, 2001, 2003, 2004). She concludes that the contradictory nature of sexuality education works against achieving its goals because the official school culture denies students as sexual agents. In contrast, if a young person’s sexual agency is recognized then “a discursive space is opened for a sexually responsible subject” (Allen, 2007:231).

However, as Epstein *et al.* argue, it is wrong to assume that there is no place to resist in educational institutions. Schools are “also sites of cultural struggle” (Epstein *et al.*, 2003). In this study I look for both moments of resistance and conformity to the dominant norms reflected in the state’s sex education goals. I am interested in how wider discourses circulating in society concerning the threat of youth sexuality manifest in a variety of purported crises from teenage pregnancy to HIV/AIDS impact on how the purposes of sex education are understood at the level of the study site which positions itself as enlightened and rooted firmly in constitutional values of tolerance and respect for diverse experiments of living.

Walkerdine (1986) suggests female sexuality, manifest in girls’ engagements with popular culture, is seen to constitute a potential threat to the moral order of a school. The recourse to notions of childhood innocence in pedagogic discourse has the effect of turning displays of sexuality into something which is forbidden, hidden and subverted (Walkerdine, 1986:73 cited in Kehily, 2002: 34). This helps to explain why the body of the pregnant learner represents a particularly discomfiting presence in the school setting and why despite relatively low numbers of learner pregnancies at the research site, learner pregnancy emerges as a focus of attention in discussions about sex education with educators.

Educational research suggests that through participation in school routines pupils learn to conform to, or resist the official culture of the school (see for instance Rosser & Harre, 1976; Willis, 1977; Apple, 1982; Curry, 2001). As a variety of authors have shown official school cultures are highly gendered (Griffin, 1985; Lees, 1986; Connell, 1987; Weiner & Arnot, 1987; Arnot & Weiler, 1993; Kenway & Willis, 1998; Gordon *et al.*, 2000) and infused with unequal gender power relations. Research has drawn attention to sexuality in schools with particular emphasis on the heterosexist structure of school relations (Kehily, 2002:35; Trenchard & Warren, 1984; Sears, 1992; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Britzman, 1995; Epstein & Johnson, 1998) and how sexual hierarchies in schools marginalize and stigmatize homosexuality through the curriculum, pedagogic practices and pupil cultures (Kehily, 2002:35).

The present thesis discusses conscious efforts at the research site to instil in learners the value of tolerance for diverse forms of human sexual expression but how at the same time heterosexuality remains the assumed desirable norm. The thesis therefore shows how sexual identities at the research site are created through on-going processes both at the level of the institution and of the day-to-day lived practices of the individuals who make up the institution that is the school. Schools, the argument here suggests, are “sites for the production of

gendered/sexualised identities rather than agencies that passively reflect dominant power relations” (Kehily, 2002:36). This argument has potentially far-reaching implications given the widely acknowledged crisis in sexual relations in South Africa with large numbers of women victims of sexual violence and coercion. If schools are sites for the production of the very identities that are implicated in this crisis then it follows that they might also become sites for the production of new forms of sexual citizenship and more just gender relations. This conceptualization of schools as sites for the production of gendered/sexualised identities represents a break with earlier approaches that viewed the school as merely reproducers of dominant modes of class, gender and racial formations – the ideological state apparatuses of Althusserian structuralism. The theoretical shift from reproduction to production takes into account Foucauldian insights into relations of power in which social categories are produced in the interplay of culture and power in the micro cultures of local practices at sites such as schools (Kehily, 2002:36).

The specific focus of the thesis is on sexuality education as a component of the Life Orientation learning area at the research site. Life Orientation was introduced into government schools in South Africa in 2002. Before that no sex education was taught in South African schools. Life Orientation was predated by the non-examinable subject “Guidance” which did not formally include a sex education component (see MacLeod, 2009). In 2002, a new curriculum was introduced by government, Curriculum 2005 (C2005). Although Curriculum 2005 has undergone a series of reforms (see Harris, Lawn & Prescott, 1978; Holt 1979; Jansen & Christie, 1999; Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999; Chisholm *et al.*, 2003) the new National Curriculum Statement remains an accurate reflection of the core principles of government’s approach to education, embedded in and guided by the principles of the new Constitution.

According to the Department of Education, the purpose of Life Orientation is to:

... guide and prepare learners for life and its possibilities and equip learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society. The holistic social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical development of learners is the concern of Life Orientation, with a focus on self-in-society. Health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development and movement, and orientation to the world of work are specific focus areas of Life Orientation in the General Education Training (GET) Band (Department of Education, 2003).

As has been the case in other parts of the world, the introduction of sex education into South African schools in the Life Orientation curriculum has not been without controversy. Research on sex education in South Africa has focused mainly on three themes: teachers' perspectives and experiences of teaching learners about sex, the implementation Life Orientation lessons, and, to a much lesser extent, students' perspectives and experiences of sex education. With respect to the first, teachers' perceptions and experiences, Mathews *et al.*, (2006) investigated the factors influencing whether high school teachers implemented HIV/AIDS education. The findings revealed that many teachers had implemented HIV/AIDS education in 2003 and female teachers were more likely to have implemented than male teachers. Mathews *et al.*, suggested that training is likely to improve the implementation of HIV/AIDS education by raising awareness among the teachers. Effective training, they argued, would result in greater self-efficacy and would therefore make teachers more comfortable about delivering HIV/AIDS education (Mathews *et al.*, 2006). Their findings suggest that it is important not to rely on external parties to provide HIV/AIDS awareness education but that it is important that teachers must play a significant role.

Ahmed *et al.*'s (2009) study provides an understanding of educators' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours with regard to sexual and reproductive health promotion. Most participants felt that sex education is something that should be taught in homes as it is a burden to teachers and the content of what they are expected to teach is not congruent with their personal beliefs and attitudes. A minority of participants acknowledged that sex education is important as in some homes sexuality is not a topic that is discussed openly. Some principals in the study stated that some teachers are not good examples to learners as they are constantly absent from school and often struggle with having to talk about sex even if it is to convey messages of abstinence and safe sex. In common with Matthews *et al.*, (2006) Ahmed *et al.*, (2009:52) argue that it is important that teachers become comfortable about teaching sex education and that sufficient training needs to be given to educators so that they do not end up giving mixed messages to learners.

Similarly, van Deventer (2009: 141) also focused on the teachers' perspectives on Life Orientation and also concluded that there is a need for teacher training to enable teachers to teach Life Orientation as an integrated whole. She further argues that there is a need for government to take into account that beliefs and values take time to change and in order to implement transformation, they need to be cautious about the challenges that educators face when teaching learners about sex (van Deventer, 2009:144).

Helleve *et al.*, (2009) explored Life Orientation teachers' perceptions and practices in

relation to teaching HIV/AIDS and sexuality from a cultural perspective. Using Wendy Griswold's (1987) concept of the "cultural object", this study investigated how teachers respond to the perceived cultural differences between local community values and the content of their teaching. The authors argued that the teacher who teaches Life Orientation can be viewed as both a receiver and a creator of meaning. Teachers negotiate both cultural and personal domains when undertaking such work (see Mbananga, 2004; Ahmed *et al.*, 2006). However as Helleve *et al.*, (2009) argue many school-based programmes on HIV/AIDS and sexuality are often based on universal rights-based principles. A mismatch results when teachers do not view students as individual rights-bearing subjects with independent values and interests (Helleve *et al.*, 2009: 201). Instead, they found, whatever the formal aim of the curriculum might have been, the goal of the teachers was to deter students from being sexually active. Helleve *et al.* therefore suggest that there is a need to take into account not only learners' perspectives but also the various groups that learners (and teachers) are part of – what Kehily (2002) refers to as "student sexual cultures".

Dhevina Panday's thesis *Teacher's perspectives on the implementation of Life Orientation as a learning area* (2008) revealed that teachers are not always negative about having to teach children about sexuality. Her participants acknowledged that the knowledge imparted had the potential to build learners self-esteem, contribute to learners' holistic development and assist in curbing the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa (Panday, 2007:17).

While a number of studies have focused on the perspectives and experiences of educators in relation to Life Orientation sexuality education, very few studies have aimed to listen to the voices of the learners and their perceptions and experiences with sex education. Theron (2008) and Jacobs (2011) are exceptions. Theron (2008) considered the voices of grade nine learners in a township school and found that were very positive about Life Orientation which was viewed as meaningful and useful. However, participants felt that the curriculum should be more contextually relevant and that learners should be consulted in order to determine such relevance (Theron, 2008:45).

Jacobs (2011) also focused on the perceptions of learners regarding their experience of Life Orientation in order to make recommendations for improving Life Orientation teaching. This study found that most learners felt that the subject was not effective. Jacobs (2011:221) argues that the curriculum makers were very optimistic about the outcomes of the subject. She further noted that the envisaged learner as stated in the National Curriculum Statement is far removed from the real learners she encountered in her research. The

envisaged learner is “one who will act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. The curriculum seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate...” (Department of Education, 2003:3). In contrast to this ideal learner, Jacobs paints a picture of learners who are involved with drugs, alcohol abuse, are victims of violence and sexual abuse, and face a variety of other acute challenges (Jacobs, 2011:220-221).

These acute challenges notwithstanding, learners in Jacob’s study saw Life Orientation as a “free” period, a time for them to socialize. However she does note a difference between the perceptions of learners in a former Model C school setting who tended to make negative remarks about the subject while students from previously disadvantaged schools were more positive about the impact of Life Orientation on their lives (Jacobs, 2011:221). Many learners in Jacobs’ study felt that topics such as AIDS were “over-taught” (Jacobs, 2011:221) in contrast to Theron’s (2008) findings where learners valued HIV/AIDS teachings. It must be noted that both studies were not focused specifically on sex, gender and sexuality education but on Life Orientation more generally.

A third category of literature on Life Orientation education in South Africa is a literature that focuses on sex and society more broadly rather than on the school context more specifically. Mitchell, Walsh and Larkin (2004) argue that information on sexuality is often imparted to children based on assumptions about children being ‘in need of protection rather than as young people who have a right to relevant information about their own bodies and their sexuality’. They refer to this as “the politics of the innocence” (Mitchell, 2004:36). For Mitchell *et al.*, (2004:36) a discourse of youth innocence constructs young people as unknowledgeable about their own sexuality and as ideally “pure” suggesting that sex is to be viewed as a contaminant. They argue that if young people were to be constructed instead as “knowers”, this would provide them with the means to make informed decisions regarding their sexuality (Mitchell, 2004:36). They argue that it is dangerous to silence young people’s sexuality as they end up engaging in sex without the practical and social knowledge they need to do so in a way that is in their own best interests.

In the chapters that follow I take up these core ideas to examine constructions of learner sexuality in the formal curriculum aims of the Department of Education, in the way in which the curriculum is taken up by/refused by educators at the study site and in the ways in which learners take up these messages. I argue that student sexual cultures are multiple and that in many senses the idea of the study site being a ‘single sex’ school is a misnomer.

Multiple sexual and gender identities circulate at the school located and constructed in a variety of learner communities of practice. I show that despite its commitment to a relatively enlightened and tolerant approach to sexuality education, the school continues to feature elements of a troubled and uncomfortable relationship with features of learner sexuality that test the boundaries of tolerance including learner pregnancy and lesbian sexual practice at school. Sexuality education moreover remains constrained by social discourses that equate sexuality education with the disciplining of youth sexuality and continually reinforce the idea that sex is to be equated with danger, contamination, disease and risk. I argue that if the wider aim of the construction of a society in which sexual relations are founded upon relations of justice and equality are to be realised then learner sexual agency, and in particular the sexual agency of girls, needs to be recognised and fostered and that existing approaches instead undermine the possibility of girls' agency in sexual relations. Existing sexuality education is failing learners. As such, I argue for sexuality education informed by an acknowledgement of the erotic, of desire and the goal of inculcating decision making based on genuine choice and rooted in the reality of learner experiences rather than informed by adult discomfort with youth sexual subjecthood.

Chapter 3

The Research Process

This study employed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. A qualitative methodology according to Creswell (1994: 1) is “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting”. This methodology encouraged the respondents to offer focused analysis of their experiences and perceptions with regards to the Life Orientation sexuality education curriculum (Lincoln & Guba 1994). Qualitative methodology therefore has a two-fold objective: on the one hand, qualitative research techniques attempt to construct social reality as is experienced by the people being studied (Neuman 1997; Creswell 1994). On the other hand, qualitative research emphasises the importance of social context for understanding the social world in which participants are located (Neuman 1997).

Operating within an interpretivist paradigm the aim of the study was to understand meaning-making in student sexual cultures and the opinions and views of the learners towards Life Orientation sexuality education. As Durrheim and Terre Blanche (2006) argue, an interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to understand the subjective thoughts of the participants and make sense of those. Therefore the use of qualitative methodology provided insight into the perceptions and experiences being explored. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, direct observation, focus groups, solicited narratives written by the participants, social networks (Facebook and Twitter) and instant messaging (blackberry messenger and WhatsApp).

The research site was a former model C girls’ high school in South Africa. The majority of the girls at the school are boarders. The girls come from different social backgrounds. The school is located in the centre of a small town and the town is surrounded by various (mainly white) residential suburbs and townships (mainly black and “coloured”). Some of the girls come from different provinces in the country and as a small percentage come from as far afield other African and Asian countries. However most are drawn from the province and the town itself.

My focus was mainly on grade 10 learners as it is in grade 10 that the bulk of sexuality education is taught in South African schools. The school has three grade 10 classes with a total of 89 grade 10 learners.

My visits at the school began in early May and continued until the end of August 2012. Consent letters were distributed to the grade ten learners. However two grade 12 learners, one grade 11 learner and one grade nine learner approached me and asked me if they could take part in the research and they were included in the study as key informants.

In my first meeting with the school principal on the 19th of January 2012 (field notes, January 19) the principal mentioned that he was worried about teenage pregnancy at the school. A second meeting was held with the Life Orientation Subject Head on the 12th of March 2012.

From these meetings more was learnt about the following at the school:

- There is an increase on teenage pregnancy among the girls at the school every year.
- The school is worried about what they teach the girls and what the girls are actually doing (behaviour).
- The favoured approach of the school was to distribute condoms at the school which aroused controversies and clashed with the Department of Education's approach or view towards sexuality education. This resulted in the Department of Education sending a nurse to the school to educate the girls about sex. The school felt that this did not work as the nurse took a moral and religious position to sexuality education.

I proceeded with the research with learners using five main data collection methods: document analysis of learning materials and policy statements, direct observations, focus groups, in-depth interviews and solicited written narrative accounts.

Document Analysis

The learning materials used in the Life Orientation sexuality education classrooms were gathered and analysed along with other documentary evidence including policy documents, curriculum documents and statements, national policy declarations and the like.

Observations

I employed direct observations as a method of data collection in order to understand how sexuality education is taught at the research site and how students respond to the messages received in the classroom. In the field of social and behavioural sciences, observations are seen as one of the most important methods of data collection as they help the researcher to note things like body language and gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of participants and which would otherwise be obscured (Angrosino, 2005:729). Observation is also viewed as “the most powerful source of validation” in qualitative research (Adler & Adler, 1994:389).

Participant observation is grounded in the establishment of rapport with the host community which requires the immersion of the researcher in the everyday life of the community (Angrosino, 2005: 732). My aim at the research site was to become part of the furniture and after several weeks at the research site I began to achieve this objective as was evident in this exchange with one of the participants:

Anda: Andisiwe why are you wearing the visitor’s badge?

Andisiwe: I am visitor Anda that’s why.

Anda: No Andisiwe you are one of us now! (Field notes, May 2012)

For me that was a great moment, a moment I had been longing for.

I began with observing at the site in early May 2012 and observation continued until mid-August 2012. However, in the third week of May 2012, the girls began with their assessments and mid-year examinations and immediately after the examinations, they went on winter vacation. In total I spent eight weeks observing at the research site. Most of the time, I attended the Life Orientation Subject Head classes (grades eight to 12 English and Life Orientation). This teacher is referred to as Mr Jones in the thesis. I also observed two lessons by Miss Dibakoane, the school counsellor and Life Orientation teacher. I spent break times with the girls and I also was also allowed to be present at the staffroom when the staff had their tea. Throughout the research process, I tried to immerse myself in the school culture by attending a wide variety of school activities such as the fire drills, school assemblies, Equal Education Campaign classes -- just to mention a few.

In-depth interviews

After the winter break, I returned to the school to observe Life Orientation classes. The focus of Life Orientation lessons was no longer on sexuality education but had shifted to educational and environmental themes. At this stage I began with interviews and focus group discussions. The interview questions were open ended and the in-depth interviews complemented the information gained from my review of documents and directed me to areas considered important by the participants (Hansen, 1998). In the interviews, I was interested in the participants' opinions and personal experiences of sexuality education taught at the research site. The interviews encouraged participants to discuss issues freely with as much depth as they believed was necessary. The primary aim of the interviews was to verify, validate and comment on data obtained from the literature review and my direct observations of Life Orientation sexuality education classes. However, I made sure that I did not limit participants' responses but rather they were welcomed to say as much as they wished. Where participants did not provide clear or adequate answers, a probing technique was employed to extract the detailed information required. A tape recorder was used to record each interview combined with note taking before and my written reflections were recorded after each interview. The interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks in the month of August 2012. The interviews were conducted after school at Mr Jones's registration class, the school library and the fountain quad. These were all individual interviews. A total of nine learners were interviewed, two of whom were grade 12s and seven of whom were from grade 10. The school headmaster (Mr Walker), Life Orientation Subject Head (Mr Jones) and the school counsellor/Life Orientation teacher (Ms Dibakoane) were interviewed making a total of twelve in-depth interviews including the learners.

Focus groups

Three focus groups were conducted at the school. The use of focus groups assisted in obtaining more detailed data in an interactive setting. In the focus groups the girls voiced issues that were not covered in the interviews. Two of the groups were made up of grade 10 learners and one was made up of grade 12 learners. The focus groups were conducted during term three during the months of July and August 2012. The grade 12 focus group was conducted after school. The two grade 10 focus groups were conducted on a Saturday in the school hostel dining room with the permission of the school matrons. An announcement was

made in the school assembly and the participants signed up in a register indicating their availability. The grade 12 focus group was made up of 10 participants, one grade 10 focus group was made up of seven participants and the second grade 10 focus group was made up of 10 participants.

Solicited Narratives

Narratives are commonly used in educational research (Marshall & Case, 2010:493) based on the understanding that human beings ubiquitously represent their experiences both to themselves and to others in the form of stories. For Marshall and Case, storytelling is a way in which people represent themselves to others and also make sense of their lives (2010: 493). In early 2013, I returned to the research site to follow up on points that needed clarification following initial data interpretation. As part of the follow up process I solicited written narratives from selected participants on the topic of lesbianism at the school. I also asked the girls to narrate their experiences of Life Orientation sexuality education.

Data processing and analysis

The collected data was analysed using qualitative techniques. Firstly, the tape recorded interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed to allow for cross-referencing between the participants as well as identification of significant themes. All gestures, sounds, pauses were also transcribed. Directed thematic analysis was conducted on the basis of themes emergent from the theoretical framework and literature review. Data was extracted through analysis of participant's beliefs, opinions, ideas and attitudes. Therefore a categorisation process combined respondents' statements under corresponding topics or themes. The observations, narratives, interviews and focus groups were coded using line by line coding and coding by incident (observations). After coding the narratives and observations, memos were written which aided in the analysis chapters.

Directed qualitative content analysis is one of a variety of forms of content analysis. Content analysis is widely used as a qualitative research technique (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1277). Qualitative content analysis is a tool used to analyse textual data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). This method of analysis focuses on "the content or contextual meaning of the text" (Budd, Thorp & Donohew, 1967; Lindkvist, 1981; McTavish & Pirro, 1990; Tesch, 1990). The goal of qualitative content analysis is to "provide knowledge and understanding of

the phenomenon under the study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1993:314).

Directed content analysis is used to “validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The validation or extending of the theoretical framework helps to determine the initial codes and the relationship between the codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Using existing research/theory I used concepts gained from my review of the relevant literature as initial codes and then developed operational definitions for each concept /category (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Coding began with predetermined codes and data that did not fit with these codes was coded later to allow for the emergence of new themes and insights not present in the initial literature review. The strength of this method of analysis is that allows for theory to be extended as new codes emerge in the process of analysis. The drawback is that given immersion in an existing body of theory, the researcher might look for supporting evidence in the data instead of allowing for the emergence of non-supporting evidence. To avoid this bias, both evidence that supported and did not supported the existing theoretical categories was taken to account. The discussion in the analysis shows data that supports the existing body of theory, as well as allowing for the emergence of new data or data that provides new insights into existing knowledge.

Limitations to the study

I experienced some difficulties in getting to know the girls. These difficulties were a result of the teacher/learner constructions that exist at the school. When I arrived in the classes, the girls would stand up and greet me “Good morning Miss Andisiwe” which is what is expected by the school authorities. During informal conversations in the classroom or during break time the participants would call me “Sis’ Andisiwe” – a sign of respect and distance between us. In order to break down some of these barriers and allow the girls to be freer around me, I decided to add them on Facebook. I started sending them messages and writing on their Facebook walls. Facebook and BBM instant messaging then become part of my data collection. The use of Facebook and BBM helped me to establish rapport with the girls and was also helpful when it came to soliciting narratives from the participants. They became comfortable with telling me about what was happening in their lives and this flowed over into chatting to me in the classroom in a more open way. However, they still viewed me as an elder and not as their peer at the school site while interacting more freely with me outside of school.

Although I started communicating with some of the girls on social networks and instant messaging, it is important to note that I established rapport with one section of African girls. Five of the girls were boarders and two day scholars. All these girls were in the same friendship circle except for one day scholar who is in matric and a different friendship circle. Other racial groups (Coloured and White) distanced themselves from the researcher reflecting existing racialised friendship circles at the school. For instance, I noticed that during break times, the friendship groups were organized along racial lines. The White girls all spent their lunch break at the fountain/school quad area, some African girls spent their lunch break at the hostel dining hall, sports field and by the Greenies tuck-shop and the Coloured girls sat by the Fountain. One day at the research site, I went to the fountain/quad area to introduce myself to a group of Coloured girls. These girls were not welcoming and they spoke Afrikaans which seemed a deliberate ploy to exclude me as I did not understand the language. The White girls with whom I spoke with during the Life Orientation class expressed that their parents would not approve them taking part in the study as the sex topic at their homes is silenced. Some African girls kept a distanced but the seven girls, I was very close with. These are the girls I was friends with on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and BBM. This group of seven girls also visited me on campus during the winter break and they openly spoke to me about their lives, partners, school and family (field notes, June 2012).

During my observations of Life Orientation classes, I felt that the teachers were feeling uneasy around me. They gave the impression of seeing me as an expert in the field who was there to judge them. For instance, Mr Jones (the Life Orientation Subject Head) would come to me after each lesson and ask me if the information he passed on to the learners was accurate or would ask me if I was getting enough data. Miss Dibakoane on the other hand would ask me to add my views on the particular topic being discussed in the class. After the lesson, I would tell the teachers that I am attending their classes only as a researcher who is there to learn. Due to the heavy emphasis on extracurricular commitment at Green Girls, most of the grade 10 learners whose parents/legal guardians consented to them taking part in the study were not able to make it to the interviews.

These limitations notwithstanding, immersion in the study site provided me with rich opportunities to gain insights into aspects of diverse learner communities of practice. In the following chapter I examine numerous documents and pieces of legislation that have sought to give voice to the desire to inculcate constitutional values through the public education system. These include for instance the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995), the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy

(Department of Education, 1997) and the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996) which emphasizes education as a fundamental right to which one is entitled as stipulated in the Constitution. I show how these principles have been translated into practice in one particular sphere of the curriculum by describing the Life Orientation policy documents and the teaching materials offered by the state which are meant to shape the teaching and learning of Life Orientation sexuality education. I am interested here in how the goal of inculcating the values of democracy and human rights are translated into sexuality education in the Life Orientation curriculum in particular.

Chapter 4

The school as a site of competing and conflicting discourses on sexuality

Introduction

From the beginning, the aim of the government of national unity was to reconstruct and develop the state into a liberal democracy. This meant changing all the government processes, judicial systems and state institutions such as education, health, law and other public spheres to be in line with the democratic principles of the constitution. The education system under apartheid rule was unequal across all racial groups and in 1994 it was changed with the aim of providing an equitable and non-racial educational system. The purpose of changing educational policies by the democratic government was to create a common purpose among teachers, students, principals and school governing bodies, and this common purpose would focus on “democracy, liberty, equality, justice and peace” (Naidoo, 2005:17) which did not exist in the previous education system. One important aim of this approach to learning is to ensure that the next generation is educated in the values of democracy. Inculcating a democratic culture is part of the purpose of the democratic constitution and the values it expresses as the preamble to the Constitution clearly states: to “heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). It is upon these constitutional values and goals that the current state schooling system is meant to be premised.

Life Orientation, the focus of the current study, is one example of how new school materials and approaches are meant to reflect these post-1994 efforts at transforming education in South Africa and to inculcate constitutional values in learners. As the Department of Education says, the aim is to expose “learners to their constitutional rights and responsibilities, to the rights of other and to issues of diversity” (Department of Basic Education, 2011:8). Education department goals notwithstanding, in this chapter, I argue that the school is a site of *competing and conflicting* discourses. In so doing, I describe the values of the Constitution such as respect, rights, duties, responsibilities, tolerance (including tolerance for sexual diversity) that are embedded in the Life Orientation sexuality learning area and how these are translated into practice at the research site in pursuit of the goal of preparing the learners at the school for “good citizenship”.

The research site where I gathered my data is a school which in many ways embodies a “best practice” example of genuine attempts to inculcate constitutional values in both its formal and informal interactions with learners. However, the school’s approach, for instance its adoption of the value of tolerance to sexual diversity and its belief in offering a supportive environment to pregnant learners, is not simply uncritically accepted by the learners or indeed by teachers. Instead, participants in the educational moment interact with the messages embedded in the curriculum, and the teaching of these messages. In doing so, they draw on their prior experiences and existing subjectivities in relation to sexuality thus making the classroom a site of competing discourses.

The “new Constitution” and the “new citizenship”

The apartheid government was premised on a system of inequality. Its policies favoured the White minority while putting the Black majority at a disadvantage. For example, education was marked by vast inequalities. In the period of 1990-91 R930 was spent on an African pupil while R3 561 was spent per White pupil (South African Institute of Race Relations, 1992:195). These inequalities did not only exist in the educational policies but also other spheres such as health and social welfare. Under apartheid rule while White South Africans enjoyed the rights of full citizenship Black South Africans were disenfranchised and lacked the most basic of democratic rights. Education in the country reflected this discriminatory legal framework.

The new government assumed responsibility for creating equal citizenship and this was done by changing the previous policies, dismantling the homelands systems and incorporating them into the new South Africa and creating programmes that would benefit the previously disadvantaged groups (Enslin, 2003). The birth of democracy not only led to changes in formal political policies and processes but also had an impact on the political agenda in relation to the education system. In the previous system, education was a privilege for White people but after 1994 the new government was faced with the challenge of creating a “non-discriminatory and non-racial network of public schools” (Asmal & James, 2001). The new Constitution of 1996 laid the foundation upon which the existing government operates and also created institutions to ensure that the rights and the principles and values of the Constitution are translated into educational policies and practices in the state schooling

system. The Constitution in the Republic of South Africa is regarded as the supreme law of the country and is founded on the following values:

- (a) human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms;
- (b) non-racialism and non-sexism;
- (c) supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law;
- (d) universal adult suffrage, a national common voters' roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

In addition to these the familiar liberal values, a range of socio-economic rights are included such as access to water, health, and education. Discrimination based on gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, marital status, ethnicity, belief, culture, language, colour, conscience and birth is prohibited (see chapter 2 of the Constitution of 1996). The gender and sexuality rights enshrined in the Constitution have led to it being widely regarded as one of the most progressive and liberal constitutions in the world (Enslin, 2003; South African Government Information, 2009). The provision for the recognition of diverse sexual identities and for same sex marriages is an example. As Deborah Posel (2004) has pointed out, the constitutional allocation of rights on sex and gender has changed the idea of sex being a private matter to being a publically enforceable right in South Africa. These sexual rights affirmed in the Constitution and its accompanying Bill of Rights made room for the revision of many of the country's pre-1994 laws including laws relating to gay, lesbian and transgendered citizens, laws relating to women's rights in the workplace, women's reproductive rights, censorship laws and marriage laws (Posel, 2004:55). Equality is perhaps the most fundamental founding principle of the Constitution which states that citizens are:

- (a) equally entitled to the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship; and
- (b) equally subject to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The Constitution paints a picture of the new citizen as a "democratic citizen". In doing so it draws from the experiences and values that emerged within the anti-apartheid struggle which included a sense of participation and citizen empowerment as fundamental to democratisation. The new Constitution thus envisages active citizens

who will strive to overcome the past and actively participate in democratic processes (Enslin, 2003:75-76).

Translating the new citizen into educational policies

State processes, in particular, schools, play a huge role in the production of citizen identities (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). School curricula are designed by the state and the state decides what can be included in the curriculum and what cannot be included in the curriculum thus making public schools a political project (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). Therefore schools do not only aim at producing learners that are academically achieving but also pupils who are “‘upright moral citizens’” (Epstein & Johnson, 1998:6) that are moulded in accordance with affirmed state identities. The democratic citizen embraced in the Constitution thus makes an appearance in concrete education policies and practices. The aim of translating the Constitutional values into the curriculum is to breed a culture of democracy and citizens who value democracy, and have internalised “values of equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and honour” (James *et al.*, 2000:4). In doing so the state hopes that the incorporation of democratic principles into education will “bring South Africa in line with international standards of the recognition of human rights” (Sayed, 2000; Waghid & Engelbrecht, 2002). The approach, therefore, is not simply about including the previously disadvantaged black majority into the existing education system but rather to transform that system into one that actively fosters values of diversity and equality. This approach to education is referred to as “inclusive” in that it “embraces the democratic values of equality and human rights and the recognition of diversity” (Engelbrecht, 2006).

In the following paragraph I offer a critical examination of the translation of constitutional values into the practice and experience of Life Orientation sexuality education at the study site. I am interested in particular in issues of pregnancy and lesbianism which I see as boundary topics, testing the limits of a policy of enlightened tolerance and exposing both continuities and ruptures in adult approaches to learner sexuality. Ultimately the latter favour abstinence only and the body of the pregnant learner as well as learner practices of lesbianism expose continued discomfort with the reality of learner sexual agency even in a context which seeks to confirm such agency.

The textbooks

The schooling curriculum in South Africa has gone through many reforms but for the year 2012, the Life Orientation curriculum did not include a prescribed textbook which the teacher and learners had to use. Instead the teacher was given the freedom to teach without necessarily adhering to the textbook as long as the teaching is demonstrably in line with the overall spirit of the policy document. However, there are still textbooks in use by some teachers.

Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 10 by S. Matthee and R. Muire (2005) and the grade 11 textbook titled *Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 11* by S. Matthee and R. Muire (2006) are used by Life Orientation teachers as one of their resources for teaching across all grades. Both these textbooks cover different sections and each section has individual and group activities which the learner is expected to complete as part of the formal assessment of the Life Orientation learning area.

It is in the first section of the grade 10 textbook that sexuality and sexual rights are covered. Sexual rights and gender orientation, as mentioned, are important values in the post-1994 Constitution (see section 9.3 of the Constitution). However, the textbook approaches sexual rights differently compared to the Constitution. For instance, the Constitution prohibits discrimination based on gender orientation and also makes provision for same sex marriages. In the Life Orientation textbook *Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 11* (Matthee and Muire, 2005), activity 25, the focus is on sexual behaviour and responsibility while the activity is titled *sexual behaviour and my rights*.

The textbook does not deal with issues of sexual rights afforded to citizens by the Constitution, or how society has taken up these sexual rights and same sex marriages and other challenges with regards to sexual identities such as the killing of lesbians in South Africa. Its approach is to assume that heterosexuality falls within the public realm while homosexuality falls within the private realm. In their study on homophobic incidents and experiences in a South African school context, Butler *et al* (2003) argue that the curriculum lacks knowledge on “alternative lifestyles” thus reflecting and reinforcing the “heteronormative belief”: gay and lesbian youth do not exist in South African high schools” (2003:17-18). Nevertheless, we live in a society where same sex relationships are visible and at the same time they are challenged in society making it difficult for sexual identities other than heterosexuality to be expressed. Although the Department of Education’s policies purport to embrace the liberal views of the Constitution in practice the approach reinforces

normative moral prescription and underplays tolerance for sexual diversity. Thus the approach in the textbook differs with the Constitution's approach which integrates gay, lesbian and other sexual minorities into South African citizenship rights. This approach is counterproductive from the perspective of the broader project of creating a tolerant democratic citizenry because it completely erases the experiences of sexual minorities in school life. This approach adopted by the Department of Education through its officially sanctioned teaching materials positions young people as ideally non-sexual, providing little in the way of accommodation for, and acknowledgement of, students as sexual beings.

Instead the focus is on "irresponsible behaviour" that might lead to sexual intercourse and on how one can make responsible decisions about sexual intercourse (see Matthee & Muire, 2005:25) – by which is meant abstaining. While there are vague references to the right to diverse forms of sexuality, the main underlying assumption is one of heterosexuality and accompanying assumptions about heterosexuality being "biological" and men and women's sexuality being very different such that men initiate and persistently desire sex (Hird & Jackson, 2001:27-28) while women are recipients of unwanted advances that must be warded off. The text book thus situates itself firmly within a paradigm in which sex is something natural that can be enjoyed between two married heterosexual people with the implied assumption that same-sex sex is the exception and less "natural" (Weeks, 1986). For instance, the picture of the family below and that of the adolescent relationship reinforce the idea of heterosexuality being the norm. A "family" consists of a mother and a father and a

"relationship"

consists of a male and a female partner.

Choose one of the following relationships and write a role play and then present it to the class.



Adolescent and family

Consider:

- the needs of the adolescent in the family
- concerns of parents about the adolescent
- conflict management skills



Adolescent and peers

Consider:

- qualities of a positive relationship
- qualities of a negative relationship
- the importance of communication
- loyalty



Adolescent and sexual relationship

Consider:

- each other's expectations
- emotions
- behaviour
- difference between love and a 'crush'
- problems in the relationship
- how to solve relationship problems
- communication
- respect for self and others
- the right to say no
- the right to protect yourself
- assertiveness

Solving problems in a relationship

- Identify the problem
- Focus on the problem, not the person
- Talk to each other about the problem
- Both should be willing to solve the problem
- Listen to each other
- Discuss and think of the consequences (communication skills)
- Find an agreement that suits both parties
- Aim for a win-win solution

From Matthee, S and Muire, R (2006). *Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 10*. Florida Hills: Vivlia Publishers and Booksellers.

The textbook exercise is not alone in its focus on the consequences of “irresponsible” sexual behaviour. The national media is awash with claims about high rates of teenage pregnancy among school learners which has occasioned something of a moral panic in this regard (see for instance News24, 2011). A variety of studies have taken up this claim and have discussed the consequences of pregnancy for teenage mothers (see Department of Health, 1998; Ncayiyana & Ter Haar, 1989; Nash, 1990; Preston-Whyte, Zondi, Mavundla & Gumede, 1990).

On the other hand, same sex relationships, sexual rights and public prejudice towards same sex relationships as is evident in assaults on lesbians as reported in the media (News24, 2010; News24, 2011) are not taken up at all in the textbook. Although the Constitutional values are clearly stated in this module, it is important to note how issues of gender are framed from a heterosexual perspective. Where issues of gender are covered, reference is only made to the “opposite sex” once again reinforcing an idea of sexuality as biologically determined, binary and opposing. The textbooks often seem far removed from the realities which learners are exposed to both inside and outside the school premises. While learners end up being able to pay lip service to the constitutional value of tolerance there is little in the way of an attempt to really inculcate tolerance and to confront head on some of the difficult examples and controversial topics that might serve to tease out how challenging “tolerance” is as a practice of citizenship in a democracy. Instead the focus is on the familiar issues of teenage responsibility (by which is meant abstinence) and the dangers that sex poses from the point of view of disease and pregnancy.

Effect of unsafe practices (Formal assessment activity) LO 1 AS 3

Work in pairs. Do a survey in the community about the effect of unsafe practices.



Activity

- List unsafe practices in your workbook.
- You and your friend should choose one unsafe practice.
- Go to different people and ask them the following:

Each other: What would be the impact on you if you behave like this?

Parents: How would it affect you or feel like if your child behaved like this?

Neighbours: How would you be affected or feel like if your neighbour's child behaved like this?

continued ...

As the accompanying picture shows, the focus is on the consequences of unsafe practices such as engaging in sex which leads to pregnancy – in other words heterosexual sex (Matthee and Muire, 2005: 40).

The picture shows different snapshots of young people engaging in practices which are described as unsafe and the implication is that sexual expression of

any kind is risky. For instance behind a boy and a girl pictured kissing is a snapshot of a pregnant girl, the implication being that behind the expression of sexual desire including kissing lurks the ever present risk of pregnancy. The implication is that a discourse of abstinence-is-best is reinscribed in the guise of a more comprehensive approach to sexuality education.

Other snapshots are those of drinking and smoking and a parent scolding her daughter possibly for wanting to go out or for the way she is dressed (wearing jeans and a top that shows off her waist and stomach). This image raises the spectre of the recurrent theme in sexuality education which is the focus on young women being responsible in their dress and behaviour for inviting risky and dangerous sexual exchanges with men.

In the background an indistinct sketch appears to be of two boys holding hands which would seem to associate being gay with other negatively interpreted practices and risky behaviours. This activity requires learners to conduct research by asking their parents, religious leader and other children the effect of these unsafe practices on young people (Matthee & Muire, 2006:40). How young people end up finding themselves in such situations is not addressed and the ways in which they can protect themselves should they decide to engage in these activities is not considered.

The text books devote considerable space (see pages 35 – 84 of *Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 10*) to the question of democracy and active citizenship through participation. Learners are enjoined to become active agents for social transformation. For instance, one activity requires learners to create a poster which raises awareness about issues such as poverty, crime, food, discrimination, abuse, violence, HIV/AIDS and date rape (Matthee & Muire, 2005:39). This exercise links with the first aim of Life Orientation which is to provide learners with the knowledge that will enable informed decision making and also to teach them about their responsibilities (Department of Education, 2011). This section not only covers active citizenship but also touches on the institutions which are designed to deal with the violation of these rights. However, the effect of the approach is to undermine rather than to foster agency by removing the possibility of real choice including choices of which educators and parents may disapprove.

The message that is sent out is to refrain from sexual activities as they have undesirable consequences for young people rather than being one of real agency and decision making. In so doing, the textbook does not provide young people with information that can equip them to make better decisions or in the case of the pregnancy picture, it fails to give them knowledge on how to protect themselves to prevent pregnancy and nothing is said on

ways to become sexually responsible citizens. For example, information on using and obtaining contraceptives as well as where to access relevant information about how to practice sex safely and enjoyably in an environment of mutual respect and equality is not provided.

In this sense there is a highly selective approach being taken in the textbooks towards the incorporation of constitutional values into Life Orientation sexuality education. For instance, the Constitution of 1996, section 27(a) states that one has the right to reproductive health care and the right to freedom of sexual expression but these values and tolerance towards those who decide to act in ways that the dominant views frown upon, are not given voice at all. Instead the focus is exclusively on the negative effects of sexual activity at a young age.

In addition, the textbooks paint a picture of gender as having to do with two opposite sexes and reinforces heteronormative assumptions about sex, gender and male desire. The issue of the anxiety aroused in society by the allocation of sexual rights in the Constitution is not addressed and in this sense the aim of seeking to “expose learners to their constitutional rights and responsibilities, to the rights of others and to issues of *diversity*” (Department of Education, 2011) is downplayed.

It is clear that far from constructing learners as sexual citizens who have legitimate sexual desires and who engage in legitimate sexual practices but who have the right to be fully informed in order to take decisions about their own sexuality, the main issue of concern in the textbooks is teenage pregnancy and the need to impart a sense of sex as holding dangers of various kinds for young people and for girls in particular. This approach draws from a discourse of victimization of the teenage girl. A discourse of victimization, as Fine argues, presents female adolescent sexuality “as a moment of victimization in which the dangers of heterosexuality for adolescent women are prominent” (Fine, 1988:31). Feminist writers have pointed out the deficiencies in this approach to sexuality. For instance, Vance suggests that such an approach to sexuality which presents young women as victims of male desire, neglects female subjectivity and young women’s desire to engage in sexual activity (Vance, 1984). This discourse also erroneously assumes that if females delay sex until marriage, victimization can be avoided (Fine, 1988).

Secondly, the textbook also draws from a discourse of protection which frames sexuality education as predominantly being about the need on the part of young people for protection from dangers and risks of various kinds. This discourse assumes a taken-for-granted association between young people’s sexuality and negative consequences (Fine,

1988). It draws from an essentialised construction of sexuality as appropriate only within particular age categories and therefore proposes that young people should not give expression to sexual desire and that such desire is in any event illegitimate (Allen, 2007). This approach to sexuality education presents sex to young people as danger and disease (Macleod, 2009). This emphasis is not limited to the textbooks that teachers draw on. It is also evident in the approach that is taken by representatives of the Department of Education in their interactions with teachers as one educator explained when asked what the goal of LO sexuality education is:

According to the curriculum? It is to try to reduce pregnancy in schools ... that's the primary goal even if it's not stated in the curriculum it's very, very apparent at any of the meetings that I go to with the representatives of the department of education (Mr Jones, Interview 120726_001).

It is clear that there is a big disjuncture between the implementation of sexuality education in South African schools – even the most enlightened among them -- and the values of the Constitution. While South Africa's constitution has been hailed as a pioneer in the field of gay, lesbian and transgender rights, same sex marriage, respect for diverse sexual orientations, and tolerance for, and understanding of, the challenges faced by non-heterosexual learners and ways to overcome them are seldom uppermost in the minds of those who implement the policies from the Department of Education through to individual schools, teachers and writers of learning materials. The dominant approach constructs young people as innocent and lacking sexual agency. The idea that young people can be “sexual subjects” (Allen, 2005:64) and especially that young women who express sexual desire, are exercising agency rather than simply being acted upon, is seldom entertained without being accompanied by victimisation, danger and disease interpretations.

School practices and good citizenship

In the case of the particular school that was the site of the present study, in preparing the girls for good citizenship, the constitutional value of tolerance is emphasized but it is espoused alongside what is, for the school, the equally important value of “excellence”. As stated in chapter one, the culture of excellence dates back from the inception of the school. From the beginning, the school aimed at grooming its learners not only academically but also for their

future station in life (Hacksley, 1998). However, school cultures do not remain static. As the political climate of the country changed this was reflected in changes in the official cultures of schools across the country. As shown by Epstein & Johnson (1998), national identities play a role in shaping school identities. Epstein and Johnson (1998:5) point out also that in the context of the post-colonial state education is typically seen as a central part of nation building. The state shapes national identities through its control over educational processes such as the content of the curriculum, policy documents, and the code of conduct that governs the school and what it regards as essential that young people must learn (Epstein & Johnson, 1998:5). In the South African context the stated priority of the Department of Education is for learners to grow up in an environment that values the principles of democracy and therefore to become democratic citizens.

In traditional understandings of how power works in institutional settings such as the school, power is treated as exercised by the school and its officials over the learners such that the school determines what messages to impart to learners and these are imparted in a one way process of knowledge transfer. In this framework, certain types of knowledge are legitimised over others and those with power are in a position to dictate what is permissible and what is not permissible in the school. For instance, the teachers are expected to produce learners who value democracy and the Constitution and learners are expected to internalize these values and to go on to embrace them in society. The school, moreover, is an instrument of state power and is not only a space in which the formal content of the curriculum, and its teaching and learning takes place.

At the level of the formal curriculum, knowledge of sexuality that is intended to be transmitted to learners is designed by the state and the intention is that teachers of Life Orientation will transmit this knowledge to learners. In this sense *both* teachers and learners are receivers of the curriculum. But power seldom operates in this unidirectional way. The school is also a site where knowledge, for instance, of sexuality, is exchanged and transmitted not only from teachers to learners but also among learners and between the school and the context in which the school operates.

In the Life Orientation learning area, teachers have been given some freedom to define the exact content of what they teach as long as it remains within certain (constitutional) parameters. At Green Girls' High this has given the school the opportunity to weave together a quite expansive conception of tolerance with its existing emphasis on building on the culture of excellence that already exists at the school. The culture of

excellence at Green Girls High School is palpable as I discovered when I first entered the school:

In the entrance, it is visible that the school prides itself in excellence. This is evident in the posters that are all over the building. These posters proclaim “What is Excellence?” “Excellence”, “Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way”. This serves as a constant reminder to the girls that once you are inside the school building, you work hard to become a student that excels in whatever you do (Fieldnotes May 03, 2012).

This culture of excellence was further explained by the school principal, Mr Thomas Walker. He mentioned that the learners are encouraged to “push very hard in their academics”. To this end the school has established a partnership with New England University (Interview 120727_001) which, it is felt, will help to ensure that this culture of excellence at Green Girls’ remains strong. This culture of excellence is not only limited to academic excellence but also excellence in other spheres of life and school activities. Despite the focus on academics, the school does recognize other abilities that the girls have. Compulsory participation in extra-curricula activities monitored by the teachers reflects the goal of producing well-rounded rather than purely academic citizens. Those who excel in sport and cultural activities are recognised through the awarding of merit badges and school colours.

While “excellence” might be thought to constitute one strand of the official school culture, it is interwoven with a second conspicuous strand which has to do with the focus on building and inculcating a culture of tolerance at the school. In its emphasis on tolerance the school sees itself as promoting a core constitutional value and its approach to sexuality education is heavily influenced by this goal. This culture of tolerance is evident in the Wider Educational Programme. One of the ways in which the school seeks to put into practice the value of tolerance is through the Wider Educational Programme which aims at preparing the girls for the future by bringing in different voices to speak to its learners. This makes their exposure to sexuality education very broad allowing them to gain information from a variety of sources such as law, medicine, religion and many more and also allowing sexuality education not only to be limited to the Life Orientation classroom.

Both the culture of excellence and the school’s enlightened approach to sexuality practices aim at ensuring that its learners have enough information to make decisions and to be critical thinkers in all spheres of their lives, including when it comes to matters of sex and gender. These two strategies at Green Girls High are part of the enlightened approach to

sexuality education which the school has adopted. The emphasis on both tolerance and excellence (by which is meant rationality, criticality and the achievement of the full possibilities of human potential) at the school extend the boundaries of the usual danger and disease approaches to sexuality education through the inclusion of a variety of dimensions such as health, religion, social and political contexts, and enlightened decision making among others. However, for some commentators the enlightened approach that Green Girls advocates and practices, based on rational decision making does not necessarily represent a radical departure from the existing hegemony which precludes and forecloses certain (unsanctioned) decisions and options even while promoting “decision-making” as its credo. For Paecther (2004) schools can be understood as “fundamentally modernist institutions which privilege rationality and the mind and marginalize the body and its desires”. This is the dominant view of schools in Anglophone countries where the aim is to control youthful sexuality among learners as it is believed to be a distraction from the main goals of the schooling system. While at Green Girls High School sexuality is not a topic that is shied away from, the focus remains on teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and STDs. When sexual identities other than that of heterosexual are addressed it comes in the form of “tolerance” for “difference” as one learner describes: “Like you just learn to respect the person is a really really good person it’s just that what they do which is against your beliefs. Like its ok let me put it past” (Aphiwe Focus Group 100525_002). There is little by way of discussion of the place and legitimacy of sexual desire across a range of spectrums of sexual expression and an attempt to undo the notion of homosexuality as “other” and heterosexuality as the norm. Instead the idea is to tolerate the (abject) other.

Sexuality education, even in its enlightened and tolerant manifestations, remains an attempt to regulate sex based on a sense of discomfort with youthful sexuality and on a set of prescriptions about what is and is not appropriate with regard to sexual expression as expressed by Thulisa:

You are still expected to act in a particular way because at school public displays of affection are not allowed and now we would be in a public space where everybody else is around and the teachers are around. I mean if you just start displaying your affection with your boyfriend in front of a teacher, it would obviously mean that you don't respect your teacher enough. I mean you don't even respect their authority. So we are expected to behave the same way (Interview_100527_001).

Learners are encouraged to show respect for gender and sexual orientations which might differ from their own or from dominant norms in society. In this sense ‘tolerance’ is more theoretical than lived.

Nevertheless even the small ways in which the school has attempted to reach beyond the “danger and disease” lexicon in its approach to the education of its learners has often proven too much of a departure for elements of the state machinery. For instance, the response to the issue of learner pregnancy at the school reveals how the Department of Education and the school’s policy on sexuality education differ. The school emphasises the value that it places on enlightened decision making and tolerance for diversity but at the same time exhibits a sense of anxiety about learner sexuality. When I interviewed the school principal (January 19, 2012) to discuss sexuality education he chose to emphasize that the school has been challenged by an increase in the number of pregnancies among its learners – which had doubled compared with previous years. As Epstein and Johnson (1998:14) have pointed out, public debates often draw the boundaries of sexuality education “for what is possible or permissible in schools”. In this case the widely reported public panic surrounding teenage pregnancy frames the school’s priorities concerning sexuality education. Given that learners are, in the tolerant atmosphere of Green Girls High, exposed to open discussion of how to avoid risk and keep them safe, as the principal expressed, (January 19, 2012 interview) there is some puzzlement on the part of the principal and the teachers as to why learners continue to fall pregnant. In other words, learners are provided with the information that they need in order to make the decisions that the school would approve of but, puzzlingly, still make the “wrong” choices.

For the school, being able to accept that enlightened democratic decision making sometimes results in decisions that not everyone agrees with, is not the point. Rather, the response is to try to find additional ways of overcoming the barriers to “right decision making” and “right choices” such as using contraception and avoiding pregnancy. A pregnant learner is not quite what the school has in mind when it envisages its ideal enlightened, rational decision making, and excellent product. Failure of enlightened decision making moreover is situated at the level of the individual, rationally-choosing learner rather than being located in a wider social context. Yet one of the reasons that learners give for failure to use contraception is that they are reluctant to go to the clinic to obtain contraceptives because they will be judged by the middle aged nurses at the clinic who are

often from the learners' own communities thus calling into question both privacy and reproductive rights.

Like you know as a teenager going to the clinic to get contraceptives and like you are in fear of what the older people are gonna think or okay now that you are sexually active or you gonna have babies...you know the stigma that like older people have toward sexuality (Zee, Focus group 100521_001).

The principal confirmed that many of his learners come from very conservative homes where parents are in denial concerning the fact that their daughters are sexually active. The school's response, in a demonstration of its enlightened and tolerant approach to sexuality education, was to approach the Department of Education to have a nurse to come and speak with the girls about sex. The school also applied for permission to distribute condoms at the school in order for those who are sexually active to avoid the stigmatisation and negative social sanctions which they feared experiencing if they were to seek contraception at the public clinic.

This aroused severe anxiety and an immediate regulatory response on the part of the Education Department. A district nurse was sent to the school to speak to the learners but in contravention of the enlightened norms favoured by the school, this individual took a moral-religious approach to sexuality driven by a message of abstinence which evoked a negative reaction from the learners (January 19, 2012 interview with the school Principal) and which the school felt contradicted its own preferred approach.

Lending further complexity to the domain of sexuality education at the school are divergent official policies and pedagogic practices advocating different principles which enter the classroom as itself a space in which competing discourses meet. Students do not come into the classroom without any knowledge of sexuality; they come with knowledge gained from various sources. For instance, the principle, Mr Jones raised the issue of the religious background of many of the learners making teaching sexuality education in the critical, enlightened way favoured by the school, difficult:

It's very, very difficult because a lot of it is down to organized religion and you know, the absolute acceptance of religious text and, unfortunately religion teaches people not to think critically. In fact it demands that they accept blindly and do not question a text and, a lot of the sort of acceptance of gender roles and what not is, is religious in nature you know. It's because God says that's how it ought to be and you know it says so in the bible or it says so in the Quran or wherever,

whichever religious text and you may not question otherwise you don't go to heaven and that's very, very difficult to overcome. Because as soon as you start to get the girls to think critically about their religion you are entering a mine field potentially (Interview 120726_001).

So the school's dominant culture of rational, critical thinking subjects, enlightened thinkers with a capacity for autonomy in decision-making is not the only discourse the girls draw from. Indeed this clash of values is one which is found in the Constitution itself which recognises the right of everyone to practice the culture of their choice and to exercise freedom of conscience, religion, thought and opinion while at the same time insisting on for instance tolerance towards ways of life that do not sit comfortably in some cultural and religious settings. Therefore the classroom emerges as a space in which competing discourses meet and also a space in which the girls must actively negotiate rather than simply passively receive messages in the curriculum. As Allen puts it, "all these discourses and cultures also make up the school and are negotiated and contested as learners and teachers make their own meaning from them" (2007:223).

The school thus emerges, as Kehily (2002:53) has described, as "a site where a nexus of discourses in relation to sexuality are articulated and struggled over: moral/religious, medical, political and cultural". As Epstein and Johnson point out, different levels of contestation over the sexual interact (1998:14) and this is evident in the conflicting approaches evinced by the school and the Department of Education as well as by learners themselves. While the different parties see their approach as rooted in constitutional values what this contestation demonstrates is that how those values are interpreted remains an arena of perpetual dispute. At this nexus sexuality emerges as a contested object of knowledge, "constructed through multiple discourses which cohere or contradict as they constitute meaning" (Allen, 2005:64). The learners themselves are often caught in the nexus between their own experience of themselves as sexualised beings and other elements of desire including the desire to fulfil the hopes of parents who have heavily invested in their education and the desire to embody the ideal rationally choosing, academically successful subject capable of delayed gratification that is hailed in the official cultures of the school.

I think we as teenagers we need to protect ourselves and not being out there doing all this kind of stuff that put you in risk because you still got a future ahead of you and you still need to think about that and the money, I mean the money that goes

into this school thing that your parents have to pay it is just not worth it (Tina, Interview 100520_001).

A prevalent social discourse portrays girls as victims of male desire and in need of protection, as a way of processing in a socially acceptable way the evidence of female desire that is written for instance on the bodies of pregnant learners. But learners also contest the terms of the dominant official discourses, and insist on claiming their capacity for sexual agency in contradiction of the widespread representation of female learners in particular as being preyed upon by sexually appetitive boys:

Aphiwe:..... For instance if I have sex with the boy it's not like they raped me I chose to have sex and people will always see the boy as a bad person but I actually [Pamela starts speaking]

Pamela: But sometimes the boys are willing to wait for you to be ready but sometimes you the one who is in the rush and you like "No do it now do it to me right now!" Boys are good people (Focus group 100525_002).

Learners are not oblivious to how they have been positioned in state approaches and also in the content of the teaching which they receive. They indicate a sense of encountering a lack of understanding for the complexity of the situations they find themselves in and the decision-making that is required of them. A discourse which constructs them as innocent and abstemious while at the same time demanding their rationality and enlightened agency, fails to interact with or provide a space for the exploration of the real life situations that they find themselves in and the real life choices that they are making.

When it comes to sex lessons we are taught to say no to unprotected sex, alcohol, drugs and parties which have any illegal substances. When a child is faced with the situation; he/she never thinks back to class discussions or refer back to study notes. Maybe it would be different if we were taught how to say no and how to resist temptation rather than being told to say no. Ok, let's say you do say no; on the real, how many guys would easily take no for an answer? (Narrative 4, May 30, 2012).

For them, the curriculum becomes irrelevant as it does not provide guidance on how practically to negotiate their way in the situations that they are faced with. It also evident that

the curriculum takes a starting point that it knows the needs of the learners and then imposed solutions on them. The realities, complexities and negotiating that takes place at the school indicates that there are many aspects that are ignored in the curriculum and the curriculum does not help assist the girls when they find themselves in complex situations where choice, desire and the disciplining compulsions of the dominant discourses surrounding female sexuality meet. These complexities are further explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Learner pregnancy and homosexuality – the limits of acceptance of learner sexual agency

Sexuality and schooling are commonly represented through the prism of crisis in South Africa – an association most clearly seen in the public outcry that surfaces intermittently in relation to teenage pregnancy (see News 24, 2011), to HIV /AIDS and to the sexual coercion and harassment of girls at school (see Human Rights Watch, 2001; Mail & Guardian, 2004; Modisaotsile, 2012). Teenage pregnancy in South Africa among school learners is said to be a problem facing most schools (Ncayiyana & Ter Haar, 1989; Nash, 1990; Preston-Whyte, Zondi, Mavundla & Gumede, 1990; Department of Health, 1998). In a report compiled by The Human Sciences Research Council, the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga said that “pregnancy is amongst the major concerns that pose a serious threat to gains achieved in public schools thus far. Teenage pregnancy undermines the Department’s efforts to ensure that girl children remain in school, in order to contribute towards a quality life for all, free of poverty” (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod, & Letsaolo, 2009). An array of experts cited in the media agrees that teenage sexuality is in crisis and that this crisis needs to be dealt with immediately. In this context the main focus of Life Orientation sexuality education has been on protecting learners from these perceived dangers and threats which include not only teenage pregnancy but also sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS and sexual assault (Panday *et al.*, 2009:99; Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Angie Motshekga emphasizes that the “teenage pregnancy battle” requires the active involvement of all stakeholders such as government departments, key organisations in the non-governmental sector, the research community, the religious sector, community leaders, parents and learners to effectively fight it (Panday *et al.*, 2009). Although learners are included as stakeholders however, they are excluded from the development of the curriculum. Nevertheless the expectation is that they will take classroom teachings on sexuality seriously and that in this way the battle will be won.

The exclusion of young people from curriculum development is based on the underlying assumption that sexuality is an adult matter and that the role of sexuality education is to protect children.

The post 1994 government strongly advocates democratic principles such as tolerance, non-discrimination and respect in particular for non-heterosexual identities despite strong disapproval of non-heterosexual identities in many sectors of South African society as indicated by the brutal rape and killing of lesbians as reported in the media (see News24, 2010; News24, 2011). Many regard homosexuality as “un-African” (Deacon, Morrell & Prinsloo, 1999). In addition, Butler, Alpaslan, Strümpher and Astbury (2003:6) point out that these strong anti-homosexuality sentiments in South Africa are compounded by “strong patriarchal Christian values” which view homosexuality as “wrong and sinful”. In this context, people who strongly disapprove of the constitutional rights of homosexuals are seen as “upholding religious beliefs and, therefore, something to be proud of and actively encouraged” (Butler *et al.*, 2003:6).

In educational contexts, these societal views notwithstanding, constitutional rights have been translated into educational policies with the aim of cultivating a democratic culture in the next generation of citizens. However, gays and lesbians in South Africa have reported homophobic attitudes perpetuated both by other learners and by teachers (Butler *et al.*, 2003). “Paradoxically “homophobia and discrimination against gays have been and remain unquestioned features of African and white schooling” (Deacon *et al.*, 1999:169 cited in Butler *et al.*, 2003). Green Girls High school’s has adopted an enlightened approach to sexuality which focuses on abstinence, tolerance for sexual diversity, support for pregnant learners and also ways of protecting oneself from risky activities, should a learner decided to be sexually active. In this chapter I am interested in whether learners are viewed as sexual subjects both in the school’s official culture and the informal cultures at the school. I focus on two areas, that is, pregnancy and lesbianism. I am interested in whether the Life Orientation curriculum (teaching material) and the official school culture recognizes young people as sexual subjects and in what the messages in the school official culture and Life Orientation curriculum material are that suggests or imply that young people are considered as sexual beings. How does the official school culture and Life Orientation curriculum construct the girls? Given that pregnancy is a visible outward sign that someone is sexually active, how does the school respond to learner pregnancy and what does this tell us about overt and covert assumptions concerning youth sexuality? Also, with reference to lesbianism, how is the school official culture’s message of sexual tolerance and the creation of an environment in which the girls can take up multiple subjectivities related to concrete practices and learner experiences? I also focus on the complexities around teaching with regard to both lesbianism and pregnancy in the classroom.

Sexual agency

With regards to lesbianism and pregnancy at the school, it is important to understand how young people have been positioned or understood both in the school's official culture and also the Life Orientation teaching material. To understand or unpack the way learners have been positioned, it is important to understand what we mean when we talk of sexual agency. Anthony Giddens defines agency as the power to transform (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000:970). Agency is also the power to act and also be able to act on behalf of others. Sexual agency "is that the experience of pleasurable safer sexual practice is aligned with a subject's exercise of power" and allows one to have control over their sexual situation (Allen, 2007:224). To regard one as having sexual agency refers to one being able to have the power to negotiate sexual activity. Allen (2007:224) points out that identities that are being reproduced by the schools' official cultures and also the Department of Education learning materials and policies (in the context of the research) plays a huge role in dictating whether young people can exercise their sexual agency.

The curriculum which is designed by the state does not sufficiently acknowledge young people as sexual agents. Instead there is a strong focus on protecting young people from sexual activities because sex is constructed as dangerous, risky, a harbinger of disease and rendering girls in particular, vulnerable to behaviours that are not in their own interests. This is evident in the enormous emphasis that is given to such topics as unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Excluded or de-emphasized are topics relating to pleasure, negotiation of sexual debut, negotiation of contraception use, information about contraception availability, abortion, the morning after pill and many other issues which might be of real benefit to learners (see Jackson, 1978; Thomson & Scott, 1991; Measor *et al.*, 2000; Hirst, 2004).

While the official school culture at the research site is one of tolerance towards the idea of learner sexuality, there are in practice limits to the extent to which the prevailing discourse of sex as threat, danger and disease is unsettled at the school. In the textbook used at the research site for instance, there is a strong focus on the dangers of sex, particularly to girls as can be seen in the excerpts below:

What is rape?

It is a violent sexual act on a person. Rapists force sex on people by threatening, hurting or killing them if they resist.



The thing that I fear most is being raped. I would feel humiliated and dirty. It would feel as if everyone knew what happened to me. If I get pregnant then it will feel like the end of the world.

Ntombi's story

My brother's friend Thando asked me to go to a disco with him. I have met him once before and liked him. He seemed fun to be with.

After the disco when he drove me home I realised that he was taking me to his place. When I asked him about it he said that we wanted to show me his music collection. When we got inside his room he grabbed me and started kissing and touching me. I tried to open the door but it was locked.

I started screaming but I knew there was no one who could hear me and come and help me. He raped me. It hurt a lot. I started to cry and he told me to get out. I had to walk back home angry, crying and hurting all the way.



Questions to address in the panel discussion:

- Does it only happen to girls?
- Who is affected?
- What is date rape?
- How can it be prevented?
- What can the consequences be?
- Where can you go for help?
- Which procedures should you follow?

From Matthee, S and Muire, R (2006). *Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 10*. Florida Hills: Vivlia Publishers and Booksellers.

Teenage pregnancy

Sexual abuse

Rape

10. What if ...?

Although we try to make right decisions, sometimes we make decisions for the wrong reasons because we lack self-control, have poor self-esteem or cannot protect ourselves.

The class is invited to take part in a panel discussion in the following TV programme:
Our youth and the challenges we face

Three topics will be discussed over the next weeks, once a week.

The topics will be:

Week 1 19:00–20:00 Rape – What can I do?

Week 2 19:00–20:00 Teenage pregnancy – My future?

Week 3 19:00–20:00 Sexual abuse – Who will believe me?

Lungea's story

At the age of 15 while still in Grade 10 I was deceived by William, my boyfriend. William said he would marry me if I bore him a child. He was 25, passed Grade 12 and was already working. I believed him. When the child was born he disappeared from the scene. I was left alone with a baby to bring up. My father said I no longer welcome in his house. I had to go and live with my aunt in a rural area. Life was very hard because I had no one to support my child and me. My child and I had to depend on my aunt's small pension.

I often wonder how I could believe William and where he is now. I have no education, no training and there are no jobs in the area. Before William I was doing very well and everyone had high expectations about my future.



Questions to address in a panel discussion:

- Who is affected?
- Is the baby also affected?
- Why does it happen?
- Do different cultures have different views on teenage pregnancy?
- What are the consequences for your future?
- Can it be prevented? Justify your answer.
- Where can you go for help?
- Are there 'laws' or 'rights' that can protect or support the people involved? Explain.



Thobeka

Thobeka had an uncle who used to give her presents and hugs when she was little. Recently he has started to give her longer hugs and started to touch her in a way that makes her feel uncomfortable. Last night when he visited her parent's house he put his hand up her skirt and touched her private parts. Thobeka felt very uncomfortable and told him that she does not like it. He started laughing and said that in time she would like it but that she must not tell anyone because no-one would believe her.

Questions to address in the panel discussion:

- What is sexual abuse?
- Are there different kinds of sexual abuse?
- Who are the victims?
- Who are the abusers?
- How can it be prevented?
- Where can you go for help?
- Which 'laws' or 'rights' can protect the victims? Explain.
- What can happen to someone who is found guilty?

11. Help please!

Individuals design an information pamphlet. List the names of people, organisations and institutions with their contact numbers and physical addresses where you will be able to find help, support or information. Use an A4 size paper.

Copy the following peer assessment into your workbook and complete it:

Peer assessment

Names: _____

Did we:

	Yes	No
• find at least 10 relevant contacts?		
• set out the information clearly on the pamphlet?		
• follow instructions?		
• design an attractive pamphlet?		

From Matthee, S and Muire, R (2006). *Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 10*. Florida Hills: Vivlia Publishers and Booksellers.

These pages focus on the dangers that young women face in heterosexual relationships and depict women as always acted upon rather than having agency in their own right. This is not to say that women are not in reality exposed to such dangers but is rather to highlight how the textbook focuses exclusively on danger and risk, presenting young people and in particular girls as vulnerable. Other aspects of sex and sexuality are not considered including the realms of desire and erotic pleasure.

Although some parts of the textbook focus on relationships most of the content on gender and sexuality focuses on the negative consequences of engaging in sexual intercourse at a young age. The logic behind this discourse is that young people's sexual behaviour has a huge impact on the social and economic wellbeing of the country and protecting young people from finding themselves in such situations is seen as having benefits for everyone rather than for the individual alone (Allen, 2007: 225). One aspect of the negative burden on

the state that is sometimes mentioned in this context in South Africa is that of child grants which are portrayed as a result of early sexual engagement leading to the birth of children who become a burden to the state.

Furthermore, this discourse which aims at protecting young people from undesired outcomes reinforces the idea that “sexuality is something that should inspire trepidation and should not be freely enjoyed” thus positioning young people as vulnerable (Allen, 2007: 226) and lacking the agency to make appropriate decisions regarding to their sexuality.

This approach is counterproductive in that it denies learners the very sexual agency which would make empowered decision making, self-efficacy and informed choice possible. The latter relies on being taught ways of engaging in safe sexual practices if a person chooses to be sexually active as well as having the self-confidence and sense of self-worth that is required if one is to assert one’s choices and desire for safety within a relationship. Instead, the curriculum is concerned mainly with how to control and negate the learners’ sexual desires in order to avoid pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The reality that young people are sexually active and that they lack the necessary information on how to protect themselves from unplanned pregnancies and contracting sexually transmitted diseases is side-stepped. This approach adopted by the Department of Education in the teaching materials such as the state textbooks paints a picture to the learners that they are vulnerable beings and that sex will harm them. It rests on the assumption that learners are “sexually innocent” and conflicts with the reality of learners’ lives in which some *are* sexually active and *do* experience pleasure and desire in relation to sex. This approach reinforces the denial of young peoples’ sexuality in favour of adult sensitivities (Jenks, 1996). Because adults have a hard time coping with the idea of learners having sexual experiences, this discomfort causes erasures in the way in which sexuality education is practiced to the detriment of the development of sexual agency in learners.

While the official school culture does acknowledge that young people are sexual beings, there are also limitations to the schools’ approach. While espousing a culture of tolerance and acceptance, expressions of sexual desire at school are not regarded as appropriate as we see in this story describing an incident that took place at the girls’ hostel:

I made coffee for myself and Mr Jones. While we were chatting Miss Stone [middle age, maybe in her early fifties] kindly asked to speak to Mr Jones.

Miss Stone: “What must I do with my naughty kids?”

Mr. Jones: “Which naughty kids?”

Miss Stone: “The grade eights.”

Mr. Jones: “Which grade eights?”

Miss Stones: “The two girls who were caught at the hostel watching pornography?”

Mr Jones: “Oh, I will mention that in the staff meeting. Anyway, do you want me to talk to them?”

Miss Stones: “No I will talk to them in class. I can’t believe they can be horny at a very young age?” (Field notes, May 08, 2012).

In this excerpt Miss Stone’s take on the incident that took place at the hostel shows that she finds it difficult to deal with the fact that the girls have sexual desires. At the same time, although the school’s enlightened approach to contains elements of both abstinence and comprehensive approaches to sexuality education, there are limits to the extent to which expressions of sexuality on the part of the learners are accepted, with some who “can’t believe” that the students are sexual at “such a young age”. Thus, the school is decidedly not a space in which the girls can freely express their sexuality. There is a seeming contradiction between the disbelief that adults experience when faced with evidence of youth sexuality, on the one hand, and the fact that the school does acknowledge that young people are sexual subjects by teaching sexuality education on the other.

This disjuncture, between the official school culture and concrete practices and experiences is seen also in relation to how the school addresses issues of lesbianism and sexual identities more broadly. For instance both Miss Dibakoane and Mr Jones covered a lesson titled *Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation*. The lesson was a one day lesson taught in the two grade ten Life Orientation classes respectively. Both the teachers focused on the differences between sex and gender, different sexual orientations and the challenges of coming out faced by non-heterosexual people (Field notes May 08, 2012). After the lesson on gender and sexual orientation, the girls were given homework in which they had to act as an agony aunt. In the exercise, the learners were expected to advise a boy who is facing challenges with coming out:

Exercise / Homework May 14, 2012

I don't want to be gay! Why can't I be straight?!

8 November, 2005 - 4:04am — Shenlong the Arcane

As the title says I don't want to be. I'm not homophobic, I have gay friends, and I'm gay, but I want to like girls why do I have to like guys? It hurts, I just don't want to be gay, the discrimination, the not being able to have kids or adopt or marry. I've wanted a wife since I was little but I'm not interested in girls. It sucks. My town has pretty much pushed all queer people and liberal-ness into hiding. I want to be like my straight friends. I've been clinging onto being bi like it was the last part of me. I just want to be straight.

The following day, the learners submitted their written responses and Mr Jones emphasized the significance of accepting and acknowledging sexual identities other than heterosexuality alone. Although the majority of the girls themselves espoused the attitude of tolerance towards difference that Mr Jones affirmed, one girl expressed strong disapproval of the idea that there is “nothing wrong with being gay”:

“There is nothing wrong with being gay” that’s a fat lie! God created Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve. If you really didn’t want to be gay I’m sure you would’ve found a way to change it. I am not trying to pick on you or anything, it’s just a personal opinion because at the end of the day it’s your choice to choose to be straight or gay and hopefully you will use my opinion and other peoples’ opinion as well as your morals and values to make your choice and if you choose to be gay better get ready for all the criticism and discrimination that will be coming your way. It’s your choice. (Zandile Maqubela, Grade 10 pupil)

While Zandile is clearly distancing herself from the idea that being gay is something that we should show tolerance towards even if we disagree with it she is careful to frame her remarks within the dominant framework of human rights and constitutional values that the school assiduously inculcates. Her remarks affirm the right to choice, the importance of being exposed to alternative views and making a considered choice, weighing up the balance of evidence and differing views. Importantly, she also evokes the language of consequences which draws off the school and the government curriculum’s own language emphasising the (negative) consequences of engaging in certain kinds of sexual behaviours.

Most of the girls draw from heteronormative assumptions in their construction of what is normal and acceptable with regard to sexuality. The majority of the learners that took part in the study come from communities in which heterosexuality is the unquestioned norm. Such societies can be described as “heteropatriarchal”. A heteropatriarchal society is a society where the “social power structure creates and maintains the heterosexist binary of masculinity and femininity and the associated social expectations (gender performances) determined according to biological sex” (Elder, 2003). This kind of society presents itself as the “original” and “correct” form of sexuality from which all other forms of sexuality have diverged. But as Akhona describes families in this milieu are not only opposed to gay sex but to their daughters engaging in any form of sex at all:

Many black parents are against homosexuality and amazingly enough, some are also against heterosexual relationships until you're 21 years of age. When a girl below the age of 21 is seen with a boy she would be beaten up..... (Narrative, June 2012)

The construction of heterosexuality as the only form of “normal” and acceptable sexuality goes hand in hand with the construction of young people as sexually innocent. Stevi Jackson (1982) points out that this notion of innocence denies young people “access to power and justifies them as powerless”. As pointed out by E.K Sedgwick (1994), “the family has been the key figure in this conventional gender order” (1994:6). Those who transgress these boundaries are punished by their families while those who accept the imposed boundaries are promised rewards and receive the approval of their families as Bulelwa describes:

Bulelwa: My mum recently said to me “Bulelwa you are not going to have sex until you are 21, you not have a baby until you are 21 and I will buy you a car at 21 whatever car you want when you are 21 but I won't have a child who is a lesbian.” She told me that I am not having sex.... (Focus group 100525_002)

Even though Bulelwa is a boarder and lives at the school, her mother checks on her and constantly reminds her how she is expected to behave.

Many learners pointed out that their parents are not comfortable talking about sex. As Inga put it, “sex has always been a heavy topic when I grew up still is...” (Inga, Narrative May 2012). Nevertheless these parents expect that their values in relation to sexual abstinence before marriage and heteronormativity will be reinforced at school and that their children will be discouraged from engaging in sexual intercourse. Some parents also rely on religious institutions to reinforce this message as Linda explained:

I was in Grade Six and at church right they had the true love waits thing and then my mom asked me what is happening there and then I explained to her that they are telling us about sex and like the bible and like that kind of stuff. And then she is like okay well then just know whatever they tell you take into account and what not and then that was that... (Interview 120723_001)

For its part, the official school culture in relation to sexuality does not only affirm tolerance for sexual diversity but also seeks to create a supportive environment for the pregnant learner. Given their community and family backgrounds, on their arrival at the school some girls are shocked by attitudes of tolerance towards homosexuality, for instance, which sometimes takes the form of visible lesbian practices in the school context. Sihle explains that when she first arrived at the school the most shocking thing she encountered was the range of sporting and cultural activities on offer. She was “oblivious to the sexual identities surrounding me” and “assumed that everyone was into boys”. While she noticed that some of the older girls were “more tomboyish than the others” she did not take this to be a form of sexual identity or practice. She slowly became aware that this was not the case as she explains:

When I finally started noticing that Green Girls was full of girls with varying sexual identities and views was probably near the end of the year in grade 8. I wasn't into listening to rumours and things like that but after some time my ears opened up to hear what was being said. I have to admit I was shocked; being lesbian seemed to be a big deal to me at the time. I thought what are these girls doing? What will their parents think? Don't they want kids? (Sihle, Narrative, May 2013).

This shock and disapproval of homosexuality is also expressed by some learners in the Life Orientation classroom:

Girl 6: “How is it possible to be gay?”

Girl 7: “Grade 8’s here at the school are suddenly becoming lesbians.”

Girl 8: “and bisexuals too!”

Girl 9: “Being a lesbian here at school it's a status thing.”

Girl 10: “Most girls become lesbians when they are here at school and when they go to New England University (a university next to the school) they become straight and date man.

Girl 11: “The thing is, there are no boys here at school and Brown Boys School (brother school of the girls’ school) is located far away from our school.” [Note this conversation took place in the class while the teacher was teaching.] (Field notes May 08, 2012).

In this conversation that took place while Mr Jones was teaching, we can see the discourse of heterosexuality at work. The learners in the classroom are finding it difficult to accept the teacher’s position of tolerance and acceptance. The girls are also critical of those whose sexuality are fluid rather than fixed suggesting an insistence on biologically determined sexual preference rather than sexual practices being chosen, and socially determined. They are critical of those who practice lesbianism at school but then are straight once they leave and are eager to distinguish between “real” lesbians and those who only play the role of lesbians possibly due to an absence of boys, possibly to be different or gain attention, while at school.

To be honest I feel there is probably only three out of the whole school who are actually lesbians. I say this because you find out that these girls are only lesbians here at school but when they are out and about in the real world they are suddenly straight. (Siviwe Narrative, May 30, 2012).

However the distance between the school culture and the learners’ home cultures may not be as wide as it first seems. Mr Jones himself not only discussed the difficulties that sexual minorities face, but explained to the girls that being homosexual is not a choice. Similarly, officially, in the school’s approach the stigmatisation of pregnancy is disavowed. On the other hand, it is clear to the learners that pregnancy is not exactly regarded as a desirable outcome for a Green Girl.

...like when you think pregnancy at GG it is like they are trying to decrease it. I know the school want to decrease it that is why they have like condoms in classes.

They supply classes with condoms but then they want to decrease pregnancy in the school. So they know you are having sex so it is like if you gonna be having sex please just be safe, you know. So pregnancy isn't, not that they are ja get pregnant whatever, but then they don't judge you the way like I think most people like some people in society will judge you, the way they will be like you are so young you are already pregnant, like how old are you, you shouldn't be pregnant, like they don't judge you like that. They try and support you; they see the other side (Linda Interview, 120723_001)

Although the official school culture recognizes the girls as sexual beings by providing condoms at the school and also providing support to the pregnant learner, there are challenges in the Life Orientation lessons especially if the lesson is focused on teenage pregnancy. Some of the learners find it difficult to express their views about the matter as they do not want to offend a pregnant pupil given the high premium that is placed in the school on tolerance and a caring approach. This can have the effect of closing down debate since learners with contrary views fear being seen as outside of the dominant ethos of the school.

Sino: When we have it, it's awkward. When we are talking about sex and not having sex and teenage pregnancies and right behind you there is a pregnant teenager. So you feel like "I probably should not comment on this one".

Everyone: Ja ja ja! (Focus Group 100525_001).

And teachers themselves are sometimes at odds with the official school culture which purports to accept that young people are sexual subjects. Akhona recalled an incident in which a pregnant learner was prevented from hiding her pregnancy by an insensitive teacher who seemed to want to shame her publically:

...one of the girls who was pregnant who we were walking with was wearing a drimac and that is just not allowed, you can't be in a drimac in formal uniform. Then one of the staff members called her aside, well she didn't really call her aside, he just pulled her back. It was almost like 'wow, why are you doing that so unnecessarily and so rude you know? And then she was actually trying to hide her tummy with the drimac ... (Akhona Interview 120724_001).

Other studies support the finding that many teachers express strong disapproval of pregnancy among learners. Masuku's (1998) study revealed that some educators strongly believed that the school is a place for learners and not for pregnant girls thus confirming the dominant construction of learners as asexual. Teachers are not trained to deal with pregnant learners because the focus is on preventing pregnancy rather than creating conditions of tolerance and acceptance. As Bhana, Clowes, Morrell & Schefer (2008) point, the South African School Act of 1996 is not clear on how teachers or schools should deal with pregnant learners (2008:78). To effectively prevent discrimination against pregnant learners in practice – which is one of the goals of the South African Schools Act of 1996 -- it is imperative that teachers are trained to deal with pregnant pupils in the school. Failure to do so, results in pregnant girls being powerless and also facing discrimination both at the school and also in the family. Teachers sometimes unwittingly perpetuate stigmatisation and allow their own views about pregnancy and learner sexuality to infiltrate their behaviour and attitudes which reinforces stereotyping, discrimination and stigmatisation on the part of peers. Pregnant learners themselves often feel that their pregnancy is a sign of their deserving humiliating treatment and therefore they have little recourse to being able to complain to parents or school authorities when they are treated badly by teachers as Akhona explains:

They haven't been able to do much because it has been mainly the black girls and in black families it is almost as if you can't go home and tell your parents that a teacher did this, she humiliated me in class, meanwhile what she did was also wrong you know because falling pregnant at this age is really not acceptable (Akhona Interview 120724_001).

In a context in which black Xhosa girls described family attitudes that see falling pregnant as a source of shame in the family, pregnant learners are unlikely to be able to seek family support when they face discrimination at school.

Thulisa: Imagine now if you pregnant, I don't think you would be really fit to carry a baby and the whole us black girls being pregnant at a really young age, it is also, it is also a really huge problem. Because our families, you get to put shame on your family and some girls you can't even come to school because you have to stay and look after your child. Because you are a responsibility and now suddenly you coming and bring another responsibility into the family.... (Interview 100527_001).

Pregnancy is often unwelcomed as it has both economic and social implications for the family of the pregnant girl (Preston-Whyte & Zondi, 1992). In some cases, the daughter is resented by the family (Pauw, 1994; Kazembe, 2009; Omoni, 2009). In isiXhosa communities teenage pregnancy is unwelcome because it brings shame to the family in the community, has the potential to cause conflict between the families and causes stigmatisation of the pregnant teenager due to community disapproval of premarital sex (Pauw, 1994; Kazembe, 2009; Omoni, 2009). The stigma is sometimes severe as it results in the family of the pregnant teenager losing respect in the community (Pauw, 1994) and the extent of embarrassment to the family can sometimes result in the teenage girl being rejected or instructed to leave the family (Boult & Cunningham, 1996; Nxumalo, 1997).

In the context of stigmatisation and victimisation as well as the constant association that is drawn between sex and danger/disease, for many learners pregnancy is, as Tina puts it, “very scary”, representing the antithesis of the school’s education goals:

It was very scary for me because honestly speaking I feel like the whole teenage pregnancy is really, really, really bringing down our system in education and stuff because more girls are falling pregnant and STI’s and stuff like you that (Tina, interview 100520_001).

While there is a recognition that “some” girls do fall pregnant, this is not what is expected of the ideal Green Girl. Being sexually active and being an academic achiever are regarded as antithetical to one another. It is simply unthinkable that a high achiever would also be a sexually active learner – or at least a sexually active learner who “falls from grace” by allowing herself to become pregnant.

Sibu: maybe like my friends like going out and in a girl’s school going out is associated with boys and sex all the time. So if I am with people who like going out even if I do not go out sometimes things are associated with you and the type of people and here maybe someone is pregnant and people are like “I didn’t expect that from her” so we have that expectation of that particular person sort of thing going on.

Kush: Oh she is pregnant and oh wow! If you were top in grade and hard working person and then you fall pregnant and then it’s like “Wooooow bra! That is scary!” And it also depends on what grade you are in. Like in grade 8 it’s like “WHAT? It

was like what? You just a kid!” and then in grade 9 it’s like “Whuuu” and in grade 10 it’s like “Wow wow that’s scary!”, in grade 11 it’s like “Oh oh ok!” . In grade 8 it’s like “Oh she is older” and in grade 10 it’s like “Oh she is in my grade! Ah that’s strange. It could be me!” It’s very scary and then as you grow older it becomes more and more “whatever” (Focus Group 100525_001).

To be a pregnant learner thus contradicts both the idealised views that families have of their daughters and the official school culture’s construction of the ideal Green Girl. Learners themselves imbibe these values and express them in their construction of pregnancy as something to be feared and avoided at all costs. Here what is evident is that some girls are denied sexual subjecthood in their families and communities and for some, to avoid such treatment from their community members, they opt for abortion. As the data shows, there seems to be an on-going fear for the girls that they will fall pregnant while at school. This fear is a result of premarital pregnancy being unacceptable in some families which is an attitude that is shared by teachers. In this context termination of pregnancy becomes an important option for learners at the school. Here again, while termination of pregnancy is legal in South Africa including for minors, and does not require the knowledge or consent of parents or guardians, a social context of silence and stigmatisation can result in counterproductive outcomes. Learners who are afraid to seek safe and legal abortions in the public health sector for fear of discovery and humiliation may put themselves at risk in order to prevent pregnancy at all costs given the emphasis that is placed on undesirability of learner pregnancy and the incompatibility between pregnancy and excellence in the construction of the ideal Green Girl. Unsafe abortion once again results in re-stigmatisation and reconfirmation of a hierarchy of those who are exercising their rights and “doing it the right way” and those who are not. Asked how termination of pregnancy is viewed by learners at the school, Inga responded that:

it depends how you did it, cause I know there’s a, there’s a group of girls who apparently they, they, they, they take their babies out, like you know the hanger? A clothes hanger? Like a hanger, right?

With the hook.

Apparently they straighten like know the wire ones out and then they, I don’t know how...

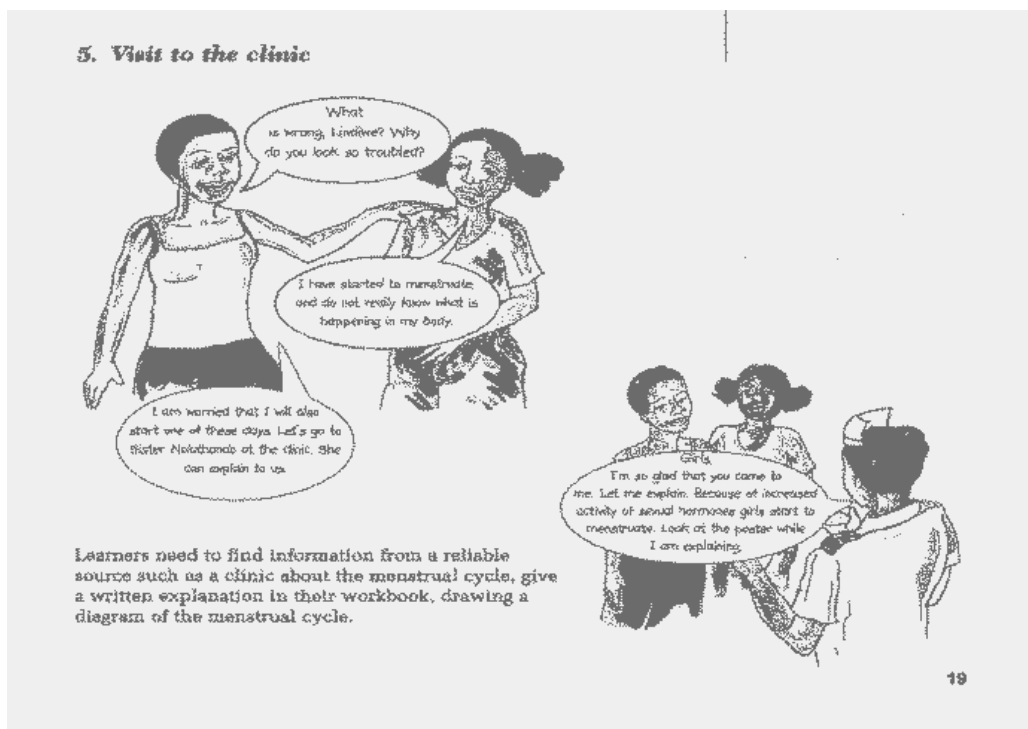
How it works, and they pull their kids out.

.... Or I know this other girl, apparently she hit her stomach a lot, like a lot, constantly and then her child came out and then when the foetus came out she held it in her hand and she took a picture of it, and she put it on her Mixit profile picture.

So I don't know, there's a lot of it is, I guess if there's some people who, who, who, who go to clinics, they do it like the proper way.

So -those people it's like okay, it's fine, it's like we accept that, cause that's like if, if you're pregnant and you don't want to keep the child, you are within your rights to terminate the pregnancy (Inga Interview 100527_003).

Inga raises important issues that need to be taken into consideration for sexuality education programmes that place a premium on the avoidance of pregnancy at all costs but have little to say about the rights of citizens to reproductive health and justice. In the Life Orientation textbook *Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 10* by S. Matthee & R Muire (2005) the clinic is constructed as a positive space in which young people are well received by the clinical team.



From Matthee, S and Muire, R (2006). *Life Orientation for the Real World Learner's Book Grade 10*. Florida Hills: Vivlia Publishers and Booksellers.

However, in practice learners often do not experience public clinics as positive spaces where they can go and seek help with matters related to sexuality without fear of being victimised and stigmatised. Other research has shown that nurses do not feel comfortable with giving

contraceptives to adolescent girls as they believe this encourages them to be sexually active, results in girls dropping out of school and causes financial strain for families of pregnant girls (Woods & Jewkes, 2006:113). As a result nurses may encourage girls to avoid sex when they came to the clinic to seek contraceptives instead of providing the service that the girls are seeking and which would protect them from disease and pregnancy (Wood & Jewkes, 2006:113). For Woods & Jewkes (2006), this approach adopted by the nurses in their study reinforces the stigmatization of adolescent sex which diminishes rather than enhances the capacity for sexual agency which is so central to empowering learners to make decisions in their own best interests.

If the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996 makes it legal for minors have safe abortions without parental consent in the public health sector, it becomes important to ask why illegal and unsafe abortions continue to take place in school contexts. There is a need for the state (the Department of Education in partnership with the Department of Health) to reconsider the option of providing youth friendly clinics or medical services with staff that are dedicated to helping rather than judging young people as some young people. In this way not only would safe procedures be available but also important services such as counselling and check-ups that are part of the right to reproductive health that the Constitution provides.

Conclusion

State identities have played a huge role in shaping school official cultures by dictating what is and not permissible at schools. With reference to sexuality education, this chapter has shown how competing and conflicting discourses are at work in the production of sexualities and sexual knowledge in school contexts.

Clearly, the approach taken by the nurse representing the Department of Education and health workers in the public clinic setting, draws off a discourse of young people as sexually innocent. For the school, this approach prevents young people from accessing their right to reproductive health care which is precisely what is needed if the goals of preventing pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (the main stated goals of the Department of Education) are to be achieved.

On the other hand, the approach adopted by the school, by accepting that some learners require contraception, has the implication of accepting that young people are sexual subjects, and contradicts the socially dominant idea that a good youth is a sexually innocent youth (Allen, 2005:62). In the context of schooling the combination of “student” and

“sexually active” is a discomforting one, translating, Nash (2001) argues, into a “signifier of resistance to education”. The sexually active learner does not fit comfortably with the identikit of the model (disembodied) academic subject (Nash, 2001 cited in Allen, 2005:62). Therefore sexually active young people are constructed as “problems” that need to be solved (see Aggleton & Campbell, 2000:268). A good student who has correctly imbibed the values of good citizenship will delay sexual activity and exhibit appropriate restraint rather than outwardly expressing sexual desire. The pregnant learner’s body thus emerges as a graphic demonstration of the failure to live up to this ideal. As a literal embodiment of the limitations of a discourse of sexual innocence it is not surprising that the pregnant learner evokes such moral outrage and consternation. But the repudiation of lesbian desire in the school context shows that the consequences of pregnancy such as interruption of schooling are not the only reasons why the sexually active teenager is troubling to educators. Instead it is sex itself which sits uncomfortably with adult constructions of teenage pupils.

Therefore, in order to have effective sexuality education that speaks to young people, we need to offer them services that speak to them and most importantly, programmes that acknowledge that young people are sexual subjects. This implies that there is a need to move away from the dominant adult discourse that finds it difficult to accept that young people are sexual subjects and is “naïve and ignorant of contemporary youth culture” (Allen, 2005:63). In this discourse young people’s sexuality is seen “requiring restraint” (Allen, 2005:64). Such discourse positions students in a particular way that might dilute the effectiveness or desired outcomes of sexuality education.

The teachings of danger and disease that are evident in the Life Orientation curriculum have serious implications for goal which the Department of Education aims to achieve, that is, to reduce teenage pregnancy and ensure that girls remain at school. As pointed out by Jewkes and Christofides (2008:1) “Political positioning around teenage pregnancy has often been based on an incomplete understanding of the problem and failure to grasp the challenges that need to be tackled in effective intervention”. The inability of stakeholders to take into consideration the voices of young people about themselves as sexual beings has serious implications for the aims of sexuality education as the current approach has the ability to cause both teenage pregnancy rates and rates of unsafe abortion to increase instead of decreasing. Also, it is important that the Department of Basic Education moves away from the prevailing gender norms construct idealized femininity as “passive”, “docile” and “physically controlled”. In this dominant conception, “nice” girls do not fight, swear, drink, smoke, are not sexually active and are not physically competent or expressive but as other research has

shown alternate varieties of femininity abound in school settings (see for example Jackson, 2006; Currie *et al.*, 2007; Osler, 2006). Challenging the notion of an all-girls school as ‘single sex’, I go on to explore several prominent communities of feminine practice at the research site in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Multiple feminine communities of practice in a single sex school

Introduction

Research on gender and education has focused mainly on the production of masculinities. For instance, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere the debate has focused on boys “underachievement” and the production of masculinities in schools (see Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 1996; Kehily & Nayak, 1996; Epstein *et al.*, 1998; Skelton, 2001; Renold, 2002; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Pascoe, 2007) while in South Africa the debate has focused on violence and gender inequalities with a specific focus on boys (Morrell, 1998). At an international level, the research on girls has focused on how they construct themselves and how they are constructed (see Walkerdine, 1991, 1997; Williams, 1997; Walkerdine *et al.*, 2000) and how different discourses positions girls (Davies, 1993; Hey, 1997). The experiences of girls in schools and the reproduction of femininities in South African schools have been neglected with a few exceptions (see Bhana, 2008; Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Reddy & Dunne, 2007). As Bhana and Pillay point out (2011:66), there is little research in South Africa into the production of different *femininities* in education contexts. A heightened focus on male violence has tended to render femininities invisible or one-dimensionally reduced to the idea of women as passive victims (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). This chapter focuses on the production of femininities in a single sex former Model C girls’ high school.

During the transition period in 1990, the Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) was tasked to make recommendations for single sex schools for girls and amongst the recommendations made by this team was that single sex schools for girls must be established in the public school system (Morrell, 2000). Although the GETT made this recommendation for single sex schools for girls with the aim of redressing gender inequalities and empowering girls in the public school system, single sex schools remain an elite project that exists in urban (formerly white) areas and to date there is not a single single-sex school that exists in a township (Morrell, 2000). This means that township residents who attend single sex schools are commuting to urban areas where these schools are found.

Although there were drastic changes brought about by the newly elected democratic government in 1994, single sex schools continue to be a domain for the construction of privileged middle class identities. In addition to providing coveted access to middle class life

paths, for girls, these schools hold another promise. Research has shown that girls in South Africa are not safe in coeducational schools with reports of pupils being attacked in school hallways, toilets, classrooms and schoolyards (Leach & Mitchell, 2006). Human Rights Watch (2001) has provided evidence of sexual assault, rape, harassment and physical assault in South African schools. It has been argued that structural conditions inherited from the past and patriarchal cultural practices along with persistent economic and social problems faced in townships contribute to the pervasive problem of violent masculinities at African working class township schools (Morrell, 1998). It is in this context that Morrell (1998) considers single sex schools for girls as a potential site for the construction of empowering femininities.

However, Bhana and Pillay (2011) point out the dangers that inhere in the assumption that single sex schools are a space in which girls can be protected. Their study conducted in a former Model C girls' high school in South Africa provides evidence that there is conflict and violent contestation at the school which exist both in the form of physical and verbal fights over boys (2011:66). These conflicts and violent contestations are complex and intertwined with issues of race, sexuality and ethnicities (Bhana & Pillay, 2011:66). Their study also shows that there are a variety of femininities that exists at the school (Bhana & Pillay, 2011). Bhana's work on femininities in a coeducational working class primary school (Bhana, 2008) similarly shows how violent femininities can inhere in single sex schools and makes the point that the absence of boys in these schooling environments is not in itself a protector against violence.

Drawing from the work of Bhana and Pillay (2011), this chapter focuses on the production of femininities at Green Girls High School. A history of inequality, poverty and violence has configured African working class girls as passive victims of violence and sexual predation while African boys have been associated with violence and sexual aggression (Bhana & Pattman, 2009). This view of African girls as passive and victims of violence has fragmented our knowledge about their schooling experiences thus creating an "analytically unhelpful dichotomy" (Bhana & Pillay, 2009) and constructing single sex schools in South Africa unproblematically as spaces for the protection of girls from violence and the continued production of passive femininity. This chapter argues that the single sex school at which the study was conducted is a site in which a variety of femininities are reproduced, contested and struggled over. These varieties of femininities at the school challenge the dominant construction of girls in the Life Orientation textbooks. To show this, I begin this chapter by looking at how these young women are positioned by the Life Orientation materials and in the official school culture and then proceed to look at the different femininities that exists in

the informal student sexual cultures and show how they are reproduced, contested and struggled over. These different forms of femininities that exist at the school challenge conventional femininity in the LO learning materials thus making the school a site in which multiples femininities exist which intersect with issues of class, gender and sexuality.

Constructions of femininity in sexuality education programmes

Historically, formal schooling has been criticised for viewing learners as blank slates who are not aware of their gendered identities (MacNaughton, 2000). Childhood moreover, is conventionally associated with sexual innocence. In the context of these sorts of assumptions, sexuality education is often designed with the aim of protecting children from danger (Bhana, 2005). Female learners are depicted as powerless victims of male sexual predation and female sexuality is constructed as opposite to male sexuality. While the (often unstated) aim is protection, Bower (2003) argues that this construction in fact nurtures gender based violence because it perpetuates unequal power relations through its reinforcement of gender stereotypes. For instance, femininity is associated with “gentleness and a lack of power” and masculinity is associated with “strength and being in control” (Bhana, 2005). These traditional constructions of femininity and masculinity as binary occlude the existence of a variety of femininities and masculinities. Traditional understandings of femininity and masculinity thus persistently present female sexuality in images of victimization and provide little allowance for active versions of feminine sexuality, and for multiple identities and experiences that are negotiated in complex process both at and away from, school.

Excellent subjects: the official school culture of Green Girls’ High School

The school is a site in which a variety of gender discourses compete. The official school culture aims at producing particular identities that are in line with the school’s dominant understanding of its own identity. But the official school culture vies with informal cultures and is taken up in these informal cultures in a variety of different ways including varying levels of refusal, resistance, accommodation and acceptance, thus providing the girls with multiple possibilities as to how to position themselves in relation to the prevailing gender discourses that exist in any particular context depending on other aspects of their experience

and identity. At Green Girls' the official school culture positions girls as multifaceted subjects who excel in various fields as described by Linda:

.....if you are clever it is like talk team material you know like if you are in the top 10, it is like okay you are one point for GG, because GG is like more, I think it focuses more on academics. But then again also if like, I think the most perfect girl is like the all-rounder, the one plays like a competitive sport like hockey and then netball and then they are also very clever, they are in the top 10 and they also like involved in school events, like with service and stuff like helping people and all of that. So if you like have all those different qualities then you are like perfect basically for GG (Linda, Interview 120723-001).

The ideal Green girl is seen as one who, according the current headmaster, is “a “multifaceted” young woman who is willing to go out and conquer the world” (Interview 120272_001).

The discourse of excellence is central to the formal institutional culture of Green Girls' High and to how the school functions. The official “culture” of a school has to do with what is promoted and also prohibited by the school. The official school culture of excellence hails subjects (learners) to conform to this culture. Learners are expected to want to excel in academic, cultural and sporting activities. Teachers, in this context, are tasked with the surveillance of excellence in part through monitoring activities and in part through the public acknowledgement of learners who do excel and therefore embody the dominant school culture's expectations. The school staff are under pressure to reproduce young women who excel in many different ways and also maintain the school's reputation for academic excellence as shown below:

Mr Jones Grade 08 English class

In this class, the girls were expected to read their books. It was a quiet lesson. The girls who were making noise were warned by Mr Jones that they will lose their merits or go on detention or write a colourful essay (Field notes, May 11, 2012).

The school culture also monitors the behaviour of the girls. If they work hard and follow the school rules, they are awarded with merits but if they disobey the school rules they lose their merits (demerits). The girls must at all times display acts of excellence. Conformity to these expectations is rewarded while deviation from them is sanctioned. Therefore, while it is

possible to eschew the dominant school culture's expectations and normative constructions of idealised femininity, there are social costs associated with doing so.

A second dominant strand in the official culture of the school has to do with tolerance for diversity in the context of democratic citizenship – what might be termed a discourse of democratic sexual citizenship which is influenced by pre-eminent discourses circulating in the wider culture concerning gender equality, democratic rights, human rights and the recognition of sexual diversity. The approach which the school takes to issues of sexuality, gender and other challenges faced by young women such as teenage pregnancy, pressure from partners to engage in sexual intercourse and family issues is characterised by a determined commitment to being seen to be open-minded and forward-thinking. This commitment is nowhere more evident than in the approach which the school has chosen to take to some of the issues raised in the Life Orientation Sexuality curriculum. Current thinking among the school's leadership is that traditional values and approaches to Life Orientation are counterproductive, failing to achieve valued aims of Life Orientation sexuality education. There is awareness that some teachers experience discomfort when teaching the subject which is also viewed as unproductive with regard to achieving the aims of sexuality education (Mr Walker, Interview 120727_001). The school has tried to actively to move away from ways of thinking that construct young people and in particular girls as passive subjects that need to be protected and as sexually innocent (Ringrose & Renold, 2010). The school replaced this way of thinking with teachers who are comfortable with, and passionate about, teaching the subject and making sure that the content is “relevant to the girls” (Mr Walker, Interview 120727_001). There is an awareness that traditional norms which view learners as children in need of protection and sex as a potential contaminant of youthful innocence make it difficult for the teacher/adult to speak to young people about sex. The curriculum requirement for teachers to address matters of sex and gender in a full and frank manner is embraced.

The leadership at the school are thus adopting an enlightened approach to sexuality education which positions learners as capable of becoming sexually responsible citizens rather than as children in need of being warned and protected (Macleod, 2009). The school culture in the context of a wider transition to democratic citizenship positions the girls as subjects of the new democracy, striving for personal success but also in the process of becoming sexually responsible citizens who are astute, aware, enlightened and capable of respect for sexual minorities. This image of the new ideal Green Girl is a powerful projection of expectation that the learners are aware of as one participant explains:

has taught me the importance of individualism and like just being yourself with that open mind though, the tolerance but most importantly the individualism and how you can succeed more on your school career (Focus Group 100521_001).

It is the identity to which they for the most part conform when they are at school. But it is by no means the only set of expectations that circulate in their lives.

Femininities as communities of practice

The way the official school cultures positions its learners does not for a moment define the whole of how they construct their identities. Alongside the dominant culture of the school with its particular precepts and expectations, there exists a variety of student sexual cultures. In these students sexual cultures there are many forms of femininities that exist and when learners choose which group(s) they form part of they are choosing also forms of femininity to which they are willing to subscribe or which they are willing to be associated with. Participants in friendship groups develop shared identities – shared assumptions and ways of being, shared interpretations of what they see and experience refracted through group membership. The identities of these groups and their members are mutually constitutive of one another. Some learners take part in more than one group which lends further fluidity and complexity to their forms of identity construction. The latter emerges as a constant struggle between different imperatives depending on the context in which they find themselves. I treat these forms of femininities as communities of practice. The concept of “community of practice” was established by Lave & Wenger (1991) from a number of ethnographic studies that focused on apprenticeship to see how apprenticeship might contribute to the theory of learning. Lave & Wenger (1991) were interested in the learning that takes place within a social context which they labelled “legitimate peripheral learning”. This concept was further developed by Wenger (1998). Communities of practice are the informal communities that exist in formal institutions; everyone is part of such communities which change over the course of their lives (Wenger, 1998). Paechter (2003) argues that treating masculinities and femininities as communities of practice helps us to understand how certain femininities/masculinities are performed, perpetuated and changed.

The way in which one experiences the world and our engagement in the world is meaningful (Wenger, 1998:53). Paechter (2003:72) proposes that “localised communities of masculinities and femininities practice are involved in the constant production, reproduction

and negotiation of what it means to be a man or a woman”.. Those who do not share these meanings of masculinity and femininity embedded in these communities become peripheral members of the community (Paechter, 2003:72). Therefore, in order for one to be a full member of the community of practice of masculinity and femininity within a particular context one must share, participate in and give voice to the core meanings embedded in those communities.

These communities of masculine and feminine practice and their associated identities do not occur in isolation; they are affected by local conditions which are in turn affected by global conditions (Paechter, 2003:75). In the school context, communities of femininity are affected by the official school culture, media, popular culture, the political context and the society at large (Paechter, 2003:75). Paechter refers to how members perform “boundary work” which makes sense of the intersections of local masculinities and femininities with wider conceptions and practices of masculinity and femininity through the boundary work of members whose memberships span different communities (Paechter, 2003:75). At Green Girls’ four prominent communities of practice that I identified during my fieldwork I call the “hostel girls”, the “day girls”, the “green fever girls” and “feminine aggressors”. Members of these communities of practice proffer differing versions of what it means to have a feminine gender at Green Girls and at the same time their identity changes depending on the context (classroom, community, church and other environments) in which they find themselves.

Hostel Girls

The majority of the boarders at the school come from the Eastern Cape Province. The remainder are from the rest of the country with a small fraction originating from abroad. Almost the entirety (95 per cent) of the boarders are Black African girls. Some come from middle class backgrounds while some come from working class backgrounds. But regardless of their background, these “hostel girls” are seen as well off girls, hardworking girls who receive academic colours, sports awards and cultural awards – they embody Green’s culture of excellence. In short, these girls can be labelled as the achieving girls as Viwe’s narrative confirms:

Okay I am hostel girl and when we are not doing our work – as we are dedicated students, yes we are..... (Viwe's Narrative, 2012).

A variety of authors have discussed the preoccupation with academic success in the production of middle class femininities and they argue that this preoccupation can be read “as an attempt to maintain a class position, that is, to guard against downward mobility” (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001:24). Pregnancy is particularly threatening to the project of producing middle class success. As this work shows, girls who are in pursuit of confirming, establishing or maintaining middle classness constantly put themselves under pressure to display their class attributes in the context of the ever present danger of ‘falling’ that is perhaps the most prominent characteristic of middle classness – a class that is by its nature situated in the fragile ‘middle’, constantly aspiring to ascend and constantly fearing decline. In the context of Green Girls High, the hostel girls enact their achievement-oriented middle class femininity – a performance for which the day scholars provide the audience.

A: What makes you different from the rest of the girls at school? What do you believe in? The hostel traditions etc?

N: Lmao, what makes us different is the fact that we are more “posh” so to say.. We aren't as “common” as the day girls. We are more behaved and well kind of have more money... There are really no traditions except for making a noise only.. :]Y

A: Lol tell me more!

N: Lmao... We are people of double standards... The reason of us being “posh” is cause we live together so we have to put on these acts 24/7...

A: Lol go on Nelly into details, I like this story :)

N: Lmao... No man Andisiwe! /_. We all are a majority of girls from the Mthatha area, we sort of all want to impress everyone. Its constant competition and we don't have the proof to disprove and prove our theories... So we tend to keep our lies going faking people and trying to fit in... As daygirls they know the situations and they think since they are from here they can sort of let themselves go.. (BBM Chat 06/06/2013).

From the above conversation it is clear that some hostel girls have to pretend as if they are from a middle class background so as to fit in the group with the rest of the middle class hostel girls that come from the Mthatha area. In order for them to be viewed as the “hostel girl” that is able to keep up with the standards, they have to appear as middle class or ‘lie’ so that they are not only recognized by the other hostel girls as girls who belong in the hostel

friendship circle but also achieve this recognition from the day girls. For day girls to be able to pass as middle class is much more difficult. Their economic realities are highly visible for example in the clothing they wear on school casual days, the location of their homes and the lifestyles of their parents. Most day scholars come from working class backgrounds and the majority of them come from the nearby black township, while a few live in the Coloured Township. A minority live in the predominantly white suburbs and are middle to upper middle class. Their visibility makes it much more difficult for them to pass as middle class than the hostel girls unless their background is genuinely and securely middle class.

Day scholars are an easy target as some of them do not have the economic means to subscribe to some of the things the hostel middle class girls subscribe to such as following the Bratz fashion trend. Bratz dolls are American fashion dolls which are skinny, put on make-up and each doll has a particular fashion trend of their own (Bratz, 2013). Bratz dolls were released in 2011, they have the passion for fashion and they are internationally recognized and among the bestselling teenage brands (Bratz, 2013). Bratz targeted consumers are adolescent female teenagers. Bratz dolls create an image of an ideal girl with a particular sense of style and fashion. Bratz dolls put a “greater emphasis on fashionability and ‘urban cool’ and arguably (in their ostentatious makeup and bling jewellery) sexualised hyper-femininity” (Francis, 2010). The aim is to help shape or direct teenage girls to a particular sense of fashion and femininity. The inability of some daygirls to subscribe to the Bratz fashion trend makes it easy for hostel girls to display their class attributes to those who do not belong to their class. The display of the accoutrements of Bratz fashion makes it easy to see the difference between the middle class and working class girls as it requires one to have economic means to follow the fashion trend. But for the hostel girls their distinctiveness is marked not only by their clothing and academic achievements but by the fact that they are in other ways, in their construction of themselves, a cut above regular teenage girls. As Viwe explains,

.....other girls whom they are not cool, they talk about the typical teenage topic, boys, clothes, lame stuff, other girls clothes and more boys. Well the topics are not so specific like that I mean we talk about politics, the future, the past and evolution and a lot more (Viwe's Narrative, 2012).

The character of these girls displays the constraints of gendered and class discourses which afford them the benefits of the middle class culture and taste but also limited ways in which they construct their feminine identities (Reay, 2001). The focus on material things such as the Bratz culture and academic achievement locks them in a corner in which other alternative forms of femininity have little room for manoeuvre. This identity that they subscribe to constantly puts them under pressure to display their class attributes and ensure that they are visible at the school at all times for instance at prize giving ceremonies, through their involvement in sport and cultural activities and the purchasing and display of Bratz materials (such as pencil cases, Bratz school packs and other branded items). Financial means is the key for one to live this life hence, Nelly emphasizes that “We are more behaved and well kind of have more money” (BBM Chat 06/06/2013).

Similar to *Jackie* a teenage magazine in Britain, Bratz can be seen a “system of messages, a signifying system and a bearer of a certain ideology; an ideology which deals with the construction of teenage ‘femininity’” (McRobbie, 1978:263). This ideology becomes powerful through mass media and through the marketing of merchandise. Bratz contains messages of how an ideal teenage girl should look like in the twenty first century. The assimilation into this Bratz culture by the hostel girls becomes visible through the long weaves and braids which represent the Bratz dolls’ long hair, the clothes they wear (vintage style, funky styles and the latest style), pencil cases and school bags. Most of the hostel girls like taking pictures together and posting them on facebook, twitter, blackberry instant messaging and WhatsApp instant messaging. In these pictures these young girls are wearing different fashion styles which are similar to how the Bratz dolls dress up. Successful membership of this culture assumes that all the boarders can be skinny, middle class, buy Bratz branded items and keep up with the latest fashion trends. At the same time, for boarders who come from a middle class background, these Bratz practices for them are a way to express status and wealth while some working class hostel girls have to comply with the (classed) requirements of this culture in order to be recognized as a “proper hostel girl”, that is, as girls who fit in the culture that is embraced by most hostel girls.

These Bratz accessories and fashion style adopted by some hostel girls tells us about the role that globalised consumption patterns play in shaping gender identities and bringing subjectivities into being and also how the girls are influenced by global conditions in constructing their feminine identities.

Day Girls

Day girls make up the majority of the school population. Most of these girls come from the surrounding Black township, Coloured Township and from the predominantly white suburbs. There seems to be unity among this group of girls. They spend most of their time together both in the classroom and outside the classroom. It makes sense for them to stick together as they all walk together to the taxi rank, they spend the weekends together and they have a lot in common. During break times most day girls are found at the Greenies tuck-shop. The school structure also makes it possible for the day girls and boarders not to spend time together during break times. For instance, the boarders have to go to dining hall for break (first and second break) and the dining hall does not cater meals for day girls. Greenies tuck-shop is open to everyone and this is the spot where most day girls spend their short 20 minute breaks. The unity that exists among these girls can be easily observed. They spend most of their time gossiping about what happened over the past weekend with their boyfriends, the latest news in town and plans for the upcoming weekend. Most of these girls display conventional heterosexual femininity. They mostly have a common home and family experience in which the word “sex” is a taboo and homosexuality is regarded as completely unacceptable in their families.

Green fever girls

The term “Green fever” is used by the girls at the school to describe someone who is a lesbian at the school. These girls are regarded as not having been born with the “fever”; they get the fever when they arrive at Green Girls High School. A group of grade 10 learners who attended Green Girls Primary school noted that when they were in their final year at primary school, proceeding to Green Girls High School the following year, they would ask each other “You going to be a lesbian?” (Focus Group 100521_001). This question posed by primary school seniors indicates that there is another gender identity which is recognized by these young women as a possibility at school. Lesbianism at the school is regarded as an experimental phase rather than a permanent identity. After matriculating from high school green fever is expected to subside and the individual to return to heterosexual practice. As one participant put it:

Here at Green Girls we are like “whatever, it’s just a stage, next year she will date a man and she will be fine” you know! So that’s how we view it well most of us sometimes” (Focus Group 100521_001).

The term “fever” is used to highlight the expected fluidity of the adoption of a lesbian identity at the school which serves to underline the girls’ assumption that heteronormativity is the more “normal” or expected sexual identity. Lesbian girls at school are often seen as being in a moment of confusion and immediately when they find themselves, they will return to the normally accepted identity as explained by Aluta:

Homosexuality at a girls’ school is quite inevitable even if it may be experimental. At GG I could say that I only know one true lesbian and she remains as one today. All the other girls went back to liking boys and even some who were tomboys transformed into girly girls. This just shows that some people at GG don’t get homosexuality; some think it’s a joke and finally, I think the GG fever is exactly that, it eventually goes away (Aluta, Narrative, May 2013).

Although in the informal cultures lesbianism is viewed as a fluid identity and there is a sense of tolerance towards those who choose to experiment with sexual practices that are alternative to the dominant heterosexual norm, few of the girls encounter the same tolerance in their home environments. As Alungile, a grade 12 pupil explained, her mother expressed shock and disappointment at her behaviour.

Alungile: Well recently my mum found out about you know, my my ways and the first thing she said that “I never gave God an instruction to make you like to to characterize you”...so as much as she is not for it but then she is kinda disappointed maybe it’s a way I was supposed to turn out she is in no room to judge but then she said a lot of stuff! But she needs to calm down and wait for me to get to an age where I can make that decision and I know that it’s a decision that I am going to stick with and ja! (Focus Group 100521_001)

For girls like Alungile who are day scholars, when they are at school they are lesbians but when she goes back home she faces challenges as homosexuality is not acceptable. For Alungile, her membership spans across various communities of practices and her gender performance also changes depending on the context she finds herself in. Although this

particular identity is said not to be stable, junior girls that arrive at the school are under pressure to follow the trend so that they can feel welcomed at the school. As noted by Ziviwe below:

The GG fever/trends we all know it as. All because poor grade 8's and 9's want to fit in to the status quo (Ziviwe, Narrative, May 2012).

Not only do junior girls desire but this identity is also viewed by some girls as part of their Green identity as expressed by Anele:

You know it is a norm, it is a stage at GG, you just have to, if you don't go through that stage you were never from GG that is our thing. If you have never, you know it is a norm I guess, it is nothing out of the, we don't look at the person funny, we just laugh about it and ja and move on. It is nothing that after five years of high school we will bring up and be like "I have a deeper secret." It is not a secret exactly, like everyone knows. Not the juniors and all that but then like, maybe the grade knows, maybe the teacher know, it is nothing new. We are just a family like that, put it that way (Anele, Interview 100526_001).

For the girls, lesbianism is more of a ritual that is part of their school identity rather than being a personal identity that defines who they are. As Siviwe explains moreover, it is usually very much an identity that is restricted to the school setting with girls who have lesbian relationships at school but outside the school environment they are straight.

Feminine aggression

In South Africa schools, girls and women are positioned as victims of violence and public schools as sites where violence takes place. This on-going violence in schools is performed by males and such acts are understood as the violent expression of masculinity (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997). What is evident in the South African literature is the strong focus on a purported crisis of masculinity which has resulted in boys being seen as inflicting violence on girls so that schools are environments that are not safe for girls (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Bhana (2008) argues that this view about girls as passive victims that are acted upon fragments our knowledge about girls and their schooling experiences. At the research site, the girls revealed their engagement in violent acts in a Grade 8 Life Orientation lesson that

focused on bullying. The girls were recalling their experiences of physical fights at Green Girls Primary School:

Girl 1: "I don't know how it started but my friend and I ended up in a cat fight in a social at Primary school."

Girl 5: "I also fought for a guy in a social in primary school."

Girl 6: "My friend ended up in a cat fight and I ended up fighting too, helping my friend out."

Girl 2: "I got into a fight with some guy and I ended up bleeding." (Observations Day 07, May 11, 2012).

The excerpt above challenges the dominant view about girls being passive at the school and also challenges Morrell's (1998) argument that single sex schools are safe environments for girls. It challenges the assumptions that boys are always the aggressors. A similar observation was made by Nalini Pillay (2009) in her dissertation that focused on aggression and violent behaviour in a single-sex school. The data from her study also challenges Morrell's (1998) argument about single sex schools as safe environments for girls. Bhana (2005) in her study on violence and poverty in a primary school also confirms that girls' displays violent acts and that these may help them regain their agency.

Contrary to assumptions that are made about single-sex girls schools being asexual spaces, girl-on-girl violence can also take a sexual form. Thulisa describes the practice of senior girls asking for sexual favours from junior girls:

You know because last year we had a problem in one of the hostels where I think some of the girls in the higher grades they were asking for sexual favours from the girls in the lower grades and they went to report that. But I think that many kids are scared to report because you know that once you report they gonna come back for you and then they gonna attack more. So it is one of those things that you know I cannot report and stuff like that because I am scared you know of the bully and stuff like that (Thulisa, Interview 100520_001).

Juniors also fear reporting the senior girls because they assume that they will be constantly bullied or victimized by senior girls. Here we see powerful girls taking advantage of those

who are not strong enough to defend themselves.

Conclusion

Just like other spaces such as church, home and others, schools “are important sites in the making of gender power relations” (Bhana, 2005:101) where multiple femininities and masculinities are produced (Skelton, 2001; Frosh *et al.*, 2002). The multiple structures (institutional structure and the informal culture) that exist at the school shape and produce different forms of femininities. This challenges the discourse of protection and victimization in the LO textbook material that constructs girls as victims that need to be protected from boys. Not all girls are victims of male violence. Girls are also victims of female harassment and are also perpetrators of violence.

This chapter has also shown that the so called “single sex” school is really a site for the production of multiple (raced and classed) femininities and that these are the subject of change and contestation. In the context of Green Girls’ the school can be said to be a site in which femininities are empowered as the schools becomes a liberating environment in which multiple femininities become visible in the student cultures as options for the girls to explore rather than being hailed by the straitjacketing constrictions of singular constructions of ideal femininity. These forms of femininities that exist in the student sexual cultures are also challenged, contested and reproduced both in the student sexual cultures and also in their home communities. Rather than having a single identity learners have to change their identity depending on the context they find themselves in. Not only do their identities change but the feminine groups that they form part of also change depending on the context. However, as much as multiple communities of practice provide the possibility of multiple and fluid performances of gender and sexual identities, group membership comes with its own constraints and expectations of conformity. Dominant expectations in society in relation to what girls ought to be like, the power of global merchandising, the expectations of parents and educators as well as the disciplining gaze of peers all combine to put limits on the idea of the rationally choosing, experimenting, agential sexual subject.

Chapter 7

Future directions for LO sexuality education in South Africa

In spite of [the] longstanding recognition of the importance of pupil cultures to educational processes, relatively little work exists on either sexual cultures themselves or their impact on the effectiveness of sexuality education. However, the work that exists gives a sense of the need for sexuality education to take pupils' sexual cultures as its starting place and to recognise the relations that built into these powers. - (Redman, 1994)

And LO, I'm sorry! I get more knowledge from listening to my friends than actually listening to LO! (Aphiwe, Focus Group100525_002)

The sexuality of young people remains a political battle in most nations. Research in the United States shows that sexuality education, although introduced in the 1900s in schools, remains a political battle as to which approach is the best between advocating total abstinence or a comprehensive approach to sexuality education that accepts that students are sexually active. This is also the case in South Africa. Young people's sexuality is constantly reported on in the media. In South Africa, HIV/AIDS, sexual violence and teenage pregnancy are dominant themes in the public discussion of youth sexuality which is commonly presented as in crisis. In South Africa, often state policy with respect to sexuality education and the official and informal approaches at schools differ. State textbooks issued to schools vaguely discuss the issue of young people's sexuality. The common approach is a top down approach that is imposed on the learners who are at the bottom of a hierarchy in the formal education system. Learner sexuality is constructed as a problem that needs immediate attention. The views of those that are viewed as "problems" are often neglected in these discussions and in the formulation of teaching materials. Little is known about what young people themselves think. Instead young people are constructed as victims of multiple threats, dangers and crises and are therefore in need of help and instruction.

This approach is problematic as it assumes that learners are not curious creatures who have existing knowledge and experiences concerning sexuality (Johnson, 1996). The dominant discourses (innocence, protection and victimization) that the curriculum draws from are often ignorant of, or blind to, the detail of student sexual cultures. Yet, it is these student sexual cultures that offer an entry point into understanding young peoples' sexuality –

a starting point from which LO sexuality education can be approached in a more meaningful way. Missing from the official school sexuality education curriculum is an acknowledgement of the pleasures of sex, a discourse of desire and the legitimacy of youth erotics which would enable young people to express and discuss their desires and experiences in a more meaningful way. Michelle Fine (1988) in her work argues that missing from the formal school sex education curriculum is a “discourse of desire”. To introduce and make space for this missing discourse of desire would be to invite young women to explore what is (sexually) desirable and not desirable to them and would allow for the possibility of young women to legitimately be initiators and negotiators of sexuality (see also Golden, 1984; Petchesky, 1984; Thompson, 1983). This approach advocated by Fine (1988) allows young people to be active sexual subjects rather than passive recipients of sexual instruction and adult protection of their sexual innocence. Allen (2004) contributes to this body of literature by introducing the notion of a “missing discourse of erotics”. This missing discourse of desire and pleasure in the curriculum or a “discourse of erotics” as Louisa Allen (2011) puts it, opens us to other sexuality aspects that are ignored in the formal curriculum. This discourse includes other sexual minorities such as gays, lesbians, transgendered citizens and people with disabilities (Allen, 2005). This discourse also caters for the different cultural and religious backgrounds in which these young people come:

A discourse of erotics would involve the acknowledgement that all young people, whatever their gender and sexual identity (transgender, intersex, female, male, lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual or something else), are sexual subjects who have a right to experience sexual pleasure and desire. Including this discourse within programmes is about creating spaces in which young people’s sexual desire and pleasure can be legitimated, positively integrated and deemed common place. The presence of such a discourse would also involve a right to knowledge about the body as related to sexual response and pleasure and may include the logistics of bodily engagement in sexual activity (Allen, 2004: 152).

Those who oppose acknowledging youth sexuality as a starting point for sex education fear that to do so would be to encourage young people to engage in sexual activities and thus to expose them to the dangers of sexually transmitted disease, sexual predation and unwanted pregnancy.

In this chapter, I conclude by surfacing the views of young women concerning their experience of the formal sex education curriculum in the context of other aspects of their

identities, experiences and desires. My argument is that in order for sex education to achieve its aims including the aim of empowering young women to negotiate sexual relationships that are in their own interests, the content of student sexual cultures needs to be taken into account in the teaching of the formal curriculum. We need to be taking far more seriously the views and opinions of young people with regard to what they need to learn from sexuality education. The emphasis on a discourse of protection is, I have argued, counterproductive since it constructs young women as passive victims incapable of sexual agency. I emphasize instead the importance for young women to have access to legitimising accounts of feminine sexual desire and pleasure including the possibility of non-predatory loving relationships between members of the “same sex”. We need to begin to make spaces for learners to articulate in embodied ways their own desires and experiences and to understand the difference between forms of sexual experience that are an expression of their own desire and those that are unwanted, imposed or coerced (Tolman, 2002). We need, in short, new ways of approaching sexuality education which takes young people's voices and experiences as their starting point rather than imposed sexual models that make assumptions about young people's sexuality which are often fuelled by adult anxieties and prejudices.

Inga: Life orientation class isn't really open about it right, it's like what's in the text book, so if the text book tells us about, ah people being ready, people being old enough

Emotionally ready that's what they say.

The classes wouldn't really go into a full on.

Sometimes you'll see that the teacher tries to go on further and talk more about the subject but then like we said to you the other day, can we mention that?

Inga: Like we said the other day, that, it's like, even though the teachers try to, to, to broaden the, the, the subject know, there's lots of people in the class who who are gonna to be offended, or gonna take it like personally and stuff like that, and maybe if a teacher says like, cause obviously, people have their opinions, and maybe the teacher expresses his or her opinion, and says that sex is bad for you if you're under a certain age, then there's lots of people in the class will be like 'no but no I know, I have a friend who's doing this or I'm doing this, and you know, it's like, as much as people some people want to talk and be open and loud, and ja, ja, ja, engage in the topic, there's lots of people who aren't so then at the end of the day the, the, the, the entire class's atmosphere just drains out and no one just really wants to talk in the end (Interview 100527_003).

The learners further state that some lessons are not detailed in the classroom, that is, the teacher does not further elaborate on the topics thus leaving them with not enough information on how to deal with such issues when they come across them:

Landa: And when they tell you about sex it's always in black and white and it's like this happens and this happens like you don't get to hear the emotional part of it which is why when most teenagers have sex go into it emotionally and that's when things, problems and implications and we don't get that from our parents or school and also.

Nkosazana: Like no one tells us anything if you have to be emotionally ready or not like no one tells us anything. So when people start having sex at random ages and they don't know if you are emotionally ready for that or if you actually need to be emotionally ready. We don't know. (Focus Group 100525_002)

For some learners, Life Orientation is irrelevant to their lives as they feel it adopts an approach that informs learners of their problems and also provides solutions to their problems rather than soliciting their views on what those problems might be and inviting them to find solutions that make sense to them in the light of their own experiences and desires. The existing curriculum has been formulated on the basis of no engagement or limited engagement with young people. In short, for Luyolo LO is an imposed solution to learners' problems:

Life Orientation is nothing to me, first of all the subject tries to "know" your situation and gives you "solutions" that for me are really unrealistic. Life Orientation to me is just an easy "A", just a bore of a subject and waste of time (Luyolo, Narrative, May 2012).

This is similar to Jacob's (2011) research findings that indicate that learners state that LO does not address their needs.

Some learners' appreciate the teachings on tolerance with specific reference to teenage pregnancy and sexual identities as teachings become an eye opener to the broader issues that the learners themselves face:

Landa: Like being in an environment with all these people like pregnant people, homosexual people everything, you start to learn more about them. Like you know when you meet a homosexual you are like "Oh my gosh she is lesbian, I'm scared!"

Oh my gosh she is attracted to girls what am I gonna do?” Like if you hang around with them you will start you will start seeing that they are not attracted to every single girl they see and with pregnant people it not like how we are taught that pregnant people are moody like you learn more about what they are.

Thandolwabo: And through being friends with the pregnant people you learn the fact that because you did this, this is what happened and this is what happened so you learn not to have sex now or use protection if you are having sex.

Aphiwe: Like it also puts you out there you will know what to expect in a bigger world because honestly when you go out there to varsity there is gonna be more lesbians than here and there is gonna be more pregnant women [*Thandolwabo laughs*] but if you have been in this conservative shelf your whole life and then when you have to be exposed to real life then you will get a shock because they will be just coming at you (Focus Group 100525_002).

They learn from the experiences of their peers that fall pregnant at the school and try and understand the context within which they fell pregnant. Secondly, they are aware of the dominant discourses that perpetuate prejudice and have adopted the value of the importance of tolerance in order to adjust in other spaces where non-heterosexual people are visible. Here we see girls acknowledging the importance of Life Orientation teachings from the school and also the experiences of other girls as lessons to be considered in the future.

Furthermore, Life Orientation has been very helpful to some of the girls as they used the classroom teaching to be agents of change in their families and also work on academic success which is part of the school identity:

Nicky: So LO has kinda helped me enforce an open mind on my family member because like I know with my parents they wouldn't want me to be a lesbian but then they are taking it up now 'cos nowadays like jaaa!

Ziyanda: With me LO has taught me the importance of individualism and like just being yourself with that open mind though, the tolerance but most importantly the individualism and how you can succeed more on your school career or if you like grounded and know who you are...so like I was like chaffed into finding myself in order to be grounded and be an individual (Focus Group 100521_001).

On the other hand, some learners suggest that Life Orientation content must be context specific that is, take into account the challenges and needs of learners in single sex schools, co-ed schools and also the background and location of the majority of learners who attend the

school. Anele feels that the content of the teaching assumes that learners are all the same and does not take into account their backgrounds and lived experiences:

It should but then that depends, like schools in the township, like it doesn't really need to be covered. Because they aren't faced with the same challenges as schools maybe, same sex schools. It is different challenges. So I think like an LO syllabus should be different depending on the environment that you are in. Like it should be different from, like at GG and Brown Boys, should be different from maybe Langa High and maybe Seymour Girls and St. Johns because we are all surrounded by different people. And same sex schools will not have the same challenge, like the people won't face the same challenges as the co-ed schools. Like co-ed schools face maybe crime and drugs and teenage pregnancy, whereas B-Phase homosexuality we phase parting, we face dating all the men. It is not about the LO syllabus exactly but then it is the challenges that, like different schools face at different times. And a child from Seymour Girls won't have the same challenges as a child from GG, because maybe of the financial position. You know it all goes back to those things like you can't really teach a person how to handle your situation sometimes, so ja (Anele, Interview 100526_001).

Below, Aphiwe explains that her learning about sexuality comes from various sources and the emphasis is on the friendship groups:

Aphiwe: I suppose I would have learned these stuff but I have learned about these stuff from reading the magazine and watching TV and from listening from my friends who talk. And LO, I'm sorry I get more knowledge from listening to my friends than actually listening to LO!"

Bulelwa: Ja LO is boring!

Nkosazana: Ja LO is a nice chilled lesson.

Aphiwe: Yes a nice chilled lesson. [they all speak at once I can't hear what they are saying] (Focus Group 100525_002).

In this conversation, the emphasis is on the learning that takes place amongst friends and that Life Orientation is a space in which these young women connect more with their friends instead of listening to the lesson or engaging with the teacher. What is also evident here is that most of the learning takes place in these unrecognized peripheral spaces and as Wenger (1998:11) points out, that such learning is not academic but can inform "our academic investigation, organizational and educational systems that we design". In these communities

of practice learning takes place through participating in actions and interaction which are embedded in history and experience and these actions and engagement “reproduces and transforms the social structure in which it takes place” (Wenger, 1998:13). Therefore the recognition of the informal dimensions of sexuality education can help us understand what young people know about their sexuality and what they desire to learn from the curriculum.

At present, a curriculum that does not meet their needs is resisted in a variety of forms; sleeping, laughing, and protesting their ignorance can all be seen as forms of resistance to the formal curriculum. Dissatisfaction with the curriculum was pointed out by Zizo in a focus group. She states that although Mr Jones tries out new methods of teaching the class, the reaction and resistance amongst the learners towards the subject is still the same:

“You know like there are certain people in your group that listen attentively but and then you see them zoning and then you like [they are all laughing] and then the thing is he doesn’t get why we are not as enthusiastic like [laughing] “LO is so important” (Focus Groups Transcription 100521_001).

This lack of enthusiasm for the subject is not only amongst high school seniors but a trend amongst all learners at the school. It seems that there is a huge dissatisfaction with the curriculum and this is expressed by Liyanda a grade 10 pupil when she says:

Ms Andisiwe I am sure we are going to watch one of those American movies that say “do not do drugs”. (Field notes July 16, 2012).

This resistance and dissatisfaction is in sharp contrast to the many animated discussions I witnessed in informal student sexual cultures and which points to the need to take the latter seriously in order for the formal curriculum to be able to succeed in its aim of creating sexually responsible citizens. Curriculum design and the teaching of sexuality needs to recognize the student sexual cultures and take into account the desire and pleasure that exist in the unrecognized sexuality education curriculum. While learners seem to desire to know so many things and to be eager to participate in discussions that are relevant to their lives and experiences, they find in LO sexuality education repetition and little that challenges them to

think in new ways or provides them with genuinely new insights.

Nokuzola: I didn't study for my LO exam. Zizo told me that, like um the things she studied. We were waiting for a taxi in the morning [everyone laughs] and I was like "dude tell me, tell me" and she was like telling me and I was like let me absorb this and when I got here it all flashed down and I wrote my paper!

Everyone: Jaaa!

Ziyanda: I think, the thing is in grade 8 all the things were new to us, they were exciting to us and as years went by, it's been continuing and it's the same and that why we are losing interest. Although we are introduced to new things but they always go down to last year's things.

Sibu: I feel that we are too mature for LO, that's the problem!

Nicky: Yeah!

Sibu: We know everything! And it's like we don't see the point that

Everyone: Ja ja ja ja!

Sibu: of some of things that are going on now in our LO class. Like LO gym, we don't need that in our lives but like hey we have to go to it! It's kinda boring you know! Yes like we are too OVER this! (Focus Group 100521_001)

Here, the grade twelve learners highlight the repetition of the curriculum in all grades. When the curriculum was first introduced to them, it was interesting and challenging but as they progressed to other grades, the curriculum did not address their changing needs and interests hence Sibu states that she feels "we are too mature for Life Orientation, that's the problem". This links with Luyolo's statement above that Life Orientation is an easy learning area in which to obtain good grades. Besides the irrelevance of the Life Orientation curriculum as pointed out by some learners at the research site, some learners feel that the talks about sex in the friendship groups are more interesting than the actual sex talks that take place in the Life Orientation classroom. Below, Linda describes the sex talks amongst her friends:

Linda: It's so different! [They all laugh] It's totally different! It's totally different! When we talk about it, oh! This is the time we make it juicy! You see we make it sound, we make it sound.. They make it, they they make, they really really spice it up. Sugar coat it not really but ja! They they talk about the personal side and how

it leads, it makes you want to listen! You just sitting and listening to what they are saying and then you hear and you like “Oh my gosh!”. They make it seem cool then also wow and then really like Oh my gosh! Oh okay! But then really when you talking to your friends it’s very more chilled and there is nothing you can’t ask. You ask everything you want to ask and you are not sacred and you not like, you don’t hesitate to like to ask when you with your friends. And then it’s like different when you with your teacher or parents cos then it’s like “this is not appropriate right now” and so then you like ‘I’m not gonna ask that at all’. So ja! So with friends it’s more relaxed! (Focus Group 100525_001)

From the above, the atmosphere in the peer groups is different from that of the classroom. The learners are not afraid to further ask questions from their peers because of the environment under which the talks take place and the people they are having the conversation with. Also, the above excerpt directs us to the missing element in the Life Orientation curriculum, that is, educational content that is informed by the needs and interests of learners.

The main outcome of my argument therefore is that besides the formal curriculum that exists at the school, there also exists an unofficial curriculum that is not recognized by the state. This unofficial curriculum is what Kehily (2002) refers to as the student sexual cultures. Student sexual cultures are an important place for identity construction because in these sexual cultures learners negotiate acceptable ways of defining or saying things therefore when students say something they draw on sexual rapporteurs. Student sexual cultures refer to “the meanings ascribed to issues of sexuality by students themselves within peer groups and in social interaction more generally” (Kehily, 2002:1). The sexuality education that exists in these student sexual cultures is not recognized by the formal curriculum yet it is the space in which young people make sense of their sexuality and construct their sexual identities. The recognition of student sexual cultures by the formal curriculum would direct us to the ways in which young people make meaning of themselves and how they construct themselves as gendered subjects. As pointed out by other researchers, the recognition of informal cultures can be seen as the starting point for the construction of a more relevant learner-centred sexuality education (see Measor, 1989; Holland *et al.*, 1990; Redman, 1994; Thomson, 1994; Lupton & Tulloch, 1996; Epstein & Johnson, 1998). This would allow us to move away from the “politics of innocence/protection/victimization” to a “politics of knowers” (i.e. democratic citizens who are empowered sexual agents demanding justice in their relations with others and with state institutions). Such an approach moves away from imposed solutions to active teaching and learning in which learners engage actively without the fear of expressing their desires.

The call for the missing discourse of desire in sexuality education is on-going. At an international level, a plethora of research has uncovered the absence of such discourse in sexuality education (see for instance Measor, Tiffin & Miller, 2000; Allen, 2001, 2004; Tolman, 2002; Connell, 2005; Keily, 2005; Abel and Fitzgerald, 2006). In common with other researchers such as Michelle Fine (1988) and Louisa Allen (2004) I have argued for the missing discourses of desire and legitimate youth erotics to be incorporated into the sexuality education curricula of South African schools. The idea of desire in sexuality education is described by Fine as a discourse “that invites adolescents to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable, grounded in experiences, needs and limits. Such a discourse would release females from receptivity, enable an analysis of dialectics of victimization and pleasure, and would pose female adolescents as subjects of sexuality, initiators and as well as negotiators” (see also Golden, 1984; Petchesky, 1984; Thompson, 1983). Such an approach would allow young women in particular to develop a greater sense of agency generated through the acknowledgement of their own experiences (Fine, 1988). Although this discourse is absent in the formal curriculum, Fine (1988:35) points out that this discourse is present in the “lived experiences or commentaries of young women”.

In short I am arguing for new ways of approaching Life Orientation sexuality education which allow young people's voices to be heard. The incorporation of these discourse of erotics, desire and pleasure does not insist that young people should experience things in a particular way but instead it creates a space in which young people's sexual desires and pleasure can be “legitimated and positively integrated” with the state designed curriculum (Allen, 2005: 148). To direct the attention of young people to safer sex messages is not the same as policing the sexuality of young people.

The recognition of sexual cultures would make the Life Orientation class a space in which young people can further explore their subjectivities and a space in which young people can articulate their desires without fear or judgement. Such spaces would allow us to move into an environment where words such as “lesbian”, “gay”, “transgender”, and “pregnant” are not taboo or cause for discomfort or social sanction. In such a space young people might learn how to protect themselves and gain the knowledge and power to become agents for the production of more just sexual relations in society.

In order for the state to further explore young people's sexuality and also protect them, it is important that it changes the curriculum to one that empowers young people and “listens to and works with the meanings and experiences of gender and sexuality revealed by the adolescents themselves” (Fine, 1988:36). This approach opens a room in which the policy

makers can understand young people's sexuality and also design curricula that meet the needs of young people when it comes to issues of sexuality and gender. This approach also creates room for the recognition of the different challenges that young people face in different contexts as expressed by Anele above. Acknowledging the different situations that these young people face in different environments allows us to see that a "one size fits all" approach is not viable. Instead the context in which these young people find themselves in needs to be acknowledged by the policy makers/curriculum designers along with the limitations of educators' own particular background and experience when it comes to being able to relate in a real way to learners' needs.

Although I advocate for the recognition of informal cultures, it is important that we also need to take into account the limitations of the informal cultures. As noted by the learners at the research site that there are also dangers in relying on information from friends. For instance, Landa expresses that:

"if we all learned about sex from our peers we would be all sexually active right now! The thing is friends won't tell you it's sore and they will be like 'Oh ja you broke you virginity, it's sore but it's so nice!'" (Focus Group 100525_002).

Although desire and pleasure exists in the informal cultures, there seems to be certain parts these spaces are not liberated zones free of the constraining strictures of dominant norms and expectations. For instance, Landa's comments raises issues of emotional preparedness, pain and other issues related to sexual intercourse which are not always highlighted in peer conversations in which there is sometimes pressure to conform to the hip construction of sex as pleasurable and desirable which has the effect of silencing alternative experiences. What this shows us is that the responsibility of educators is to be able to listen both to what is voiced and what is silenced in order to play a leadership role in fostering just social relations rather than merely mirroring social mores.

Redman (1994:) points out that "pupils' sexual cultures raise wider, and perhaps more intractable, questions that focus on pupils' active engagement, from a very early age, in the production of sexual meanings, practices, power, power relations and identities, and on school significant cultural sites in which sexualities are produced, reproduced and contested". An approach which is attentive to such cultures gives us an understanding of how young people understand themselves as sexual subjects and how they construct themselves as gendered

subjects. Most importantly, this approach directs us to the desire and pleasure that young people want to learn about which is missing in the formal curriculum. An empowering approach allows young people to value sexual minority groups and also have sufficient knowledge should they decided to be sexually active. In addition, this approach paves a way in which young people do not fear to discuss issues in relation to sexuality.

It is clear that the denial of learners' sexual agency or framing sex as inherently negative, risky and dangerous when in reality it may feel pleasurable, fun and wanted makes it difficult for young people to make informed decisions and to exercise agency. As Allen (2007:222) has argued, "a young person who views themselves as positively and legitimately sexual is typically in a much stronger position to act in ways that support their sexual well-being than someone who considers their sexuality as inherently 'wrong'". A discourse of sexual innocence does not serve the end goal even within the limited framing of sexuality provided which is to produce sexually responsible adults (Sears, 1992; Haywood, 1996) – let alone adults capable of experiencing sexual desire in all its manifestations with joy and fulfillment.

References

- Abel, G. & Fitzgerald, L. 2006. “‘When you come to it you feel like a dork asking a guy to put a condom on’: Is sex education addressing young people’s understandings of risk?”. *Sex Education*. 6 (2): 105–19.
- Adler, P.A. & Adler, P. 1994. “Observational techniques”. In Denzin, N., K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Aggleton, P. & Campbell, C. 2000. “Working with young people—towards an agenda for sexual health”. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*. 14(3): 283–296.
- Ahmed, N. Flisher, A.J, Matthews, C. Jansen, S. Mukoma, W. & Schaalma, H. 2006. Process evaluation of the teacher training for an AIDS-prevention programme. *Health Education Research*. 21(5):621-632.
- Allen, L. 2001. “Closing sex education’s knowledge/practice gap: The reconceptualisation of young people’s sexual knowledge”. *Sex Education* 1(2): 109–22.
- Allen, L. 2003. “Girls want sex, boys want love: resisting dominant discourses of (hetero) sexuality”. *Sexualities*. 6(2):215-236.
- Allen, L. 2004. “Beyond the birds and the bees: constituting a discourse of erotics in sexuality education”. *Sex Education*. 16(2): 215-167.
- Allen, L. 2005. *Sexual subjects: young people, sexuality and education*. London: Palgrave.
- Allen, L. 2007. “Denying the sexual subject: schools’ regulation of sexuality”. *British Educational Research Journal*. 33(2):221-234.
- Angrosino, M.V. 2007. “Recontextualizing Observations: Ethnography, Pedagogy, and the Prospects for a Progressive Political Agenda”. In Denzin, N.K and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research Third Edition*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Apple, M. 1982. *Education and Power*, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Araujo, M. 2008. *The effects of Sex Education on Adolescent Sexual Risk Taking Behaviour*. MA thesis. Stanford University.
- Arnot, M. & Weiler, K. (eds) 1993. *Feminism and Social Justice in Education: International Perspectives*, London: Falmer.
- Asmal, K & James, W. 2001. “Education and Democracy Today”. *The MIT Press*, 130(1):185-204.
- Bhana, D. & Pillay, N. 2011. “Beyond passivity: constructions of femininities in a single sex South African School”. *Educational Review*. 63(1):65-78.
- Bhana, D. 2003. “Children are children: Gender Doesn’t Matter”. *Agenda*. No. 56, pp. 37-45.

- Bhana, D. 2005. "What matters to girls and boys in a black primary school in South Africa". *Early Child Development and Care*. 175:2, 99-111.
- Bhana, D. 2008. "'Girls hit!' Constructing and negotiating violent African femininities in a working class primary school". *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. 29(3): 401-15.
- Bhana, D., & R. Pattman. 2009. "Researching South African youth, gender and sexuality within the context of HIV/AIDS". *Development* 52. no. 1: 68-74.
- Bhana, D., Clowes, L., Morrell, R., & Schefer, T. 2008. "Pregnant girls and young parents in South African schools". *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*. 22:76, 78-90.
- Bland, L. 1995. *Banishing the Beast, English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885- 1915*. London: Penguin
- Borawski, E.A Trapl, E.S. Lovegreen, L.D. Colabianchi, N. Block T. 2005. "Effectiveness of abstinence-only intervention in middle school teens". *American Journal of Health Behavior*. 29:5, 423-434.
- Boult, B. E. & Cunningham, P. W. 1991. "Black teenage pregnancy in Port Elizabeth". *Early Child Development and Care*. 75, 1-70.
- Bower, C. 2003. "The relationship between child abuse and poverty". *Agenda*. 56:84-88.
- Bratz. 2013. *Bratz*. Accessed 16 November 2013 from <http://www.bratz.com/en-us/section/about/>
- Bristow, J. 1997. *Sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- Britzman, D. 1995. "'What is this thing called love?'". *Taboo, Journal of Culture and Education* 1:65-93.
- Budd, R. W., Thorp, R. K., & Donohew, L. 1967. *Content analysis of communications*. New York: Macmillan.
- Butler, A.H. Alpaslan, A.H. Strümpher, J. & Astbury, G. 2003. "Gay and Lesbian Youth Experiences of Homophobia in South African Secondary Education". *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*. 1:2:3-28.
- Butler, J. 1990. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Chisholm, L. Motala, S. & Vally, S. 2003. (eds.). *South African Policy Review 1993-2000*. Heineman: Sandown.
- Christie, P. & Collins, C. 1982. "Bantu Education: apartheid ideology or labour reproduction?". *Comparative Education*. 18(1): 51-75.

Coleman, J. S. 1973. *The Adolescent Society*; Philip Cusik, *Inside High School*. New York: Holt.

Collins, C. Alagari, P. Summer, T. & Morin, S.F. 2002. *Abstinence Only vs. Comprehensive Sex Education: What are the arguments? What is the evidence?* AIDS Research Institute: University of California, San Francisco.

Connell, R. W. 1996. "Teaching the boys: new research on masculinity, and gender strategies for schools". *Teachers College Record*. 98(2): 296–35.

Connell, R.W. 1987. *Gender and Power, Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.

Connell, R.W. 2005. *Masculinities*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Creswell, J.W. 1994. *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Sage Publications, London.

Currie, D.H. Kelly, D.M. & Pomerantz, S. 2007. "The power to squash people': understanding girls relational aggression". *British Journal of Sociology*. 28(1): 23-37.

Curry, M.J. 2001. "Preparing to be privatized, the hidden curriculum of a community college ESL writing class", in E. Margolis (ed.) *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education*, New York: Routledge.

Davies. B. 1993. *Shards of Glass*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Deacon, R. Morrell, R. & Prinsloo, J. (1999). Discipline and homophobia in South African schools. In D.

Epstein and J. T. Sears (Eds.), *A dangerous knowing: Sexuality, pedagogy and popular culture* (pp. 164-180). London: Cassel.

Delius, P. & Glaser, C. 2002. "Sexual Socialisation in South Africa: A Historical Perspective". *African Studies*". 6(1): 27-54.

Department of Basic Education, .2011. *National Curriculum Statement (NCS): Further Education and Training Document Grade 10-12*. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education.

Department of Education, 1995. *White Paper on education and training in a democratic South Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Department of Education, 1997. *Quality education for all: Report of the National Commission for Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Commission on Education Support Services (NCESS)*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Department of Education. 2002. *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R -9 (Schools) Policy Life Orientation*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

Department of Education. 2003. *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools)*. Pretoria: Department of Education. Accessed on March 19, 2012 from <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70257>

Department of Health, 1998. *National framework and guidelines for contraceptive services. First draft document for discussion*. Republic of South Africa, September 17.

Downe-Wamboldt, B. 1992. "Content analysis: Method, applications, and issues". *Health Care for Women International*. 13:313-321.

Dunne, M. Humphrey, S. & Leach, F. 2006. "Gender violence in schools in the developing world". *Gender and Education*. 18(1):75-98.

Durrheim, K. & Terre Blanche, M. 2006. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: UCT Press.

Eckert, P. 1989. *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and identity in the High School*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Eder, D., Evans, C.C., and Parker, S. 1995. *School Talk: Gender and Adolescent Culture*. Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Ekstrand, M.L Siegel, D.S, Nido V. 1996. Peer-led AIDS Prevention Delays Onset of Sexual Activity and Changes Peer Norms Among Urban Junior High School Students. Paper presented at: XI International Conference on AIDS; July, 1996; Vancouver, Canada.

Elder, G.S. 2003. *Hostels, Sexuality and the Apartheid Legacy*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Engelbrecht, P. 2006. "The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa after 10 years". *European Journal of Psychological Journal*. xxi(3), 253-264.

Enslin, P. 2003. "Citizenship Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa". *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 33(1):73-81.

Epstein, D. & Johnson, R. (Eds). 1998. *Schooling sexualities*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Epstein, D. & Johnson, R. 1994. 'On the straight and the narrow: the heterosexual presumption, homophobias and schools', in D.Epstein (ed.) *Challenging Gay and Lesbian Inequalities in Education*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Epstein, D. & Johnson, R. 1998. *Schooling Sexualities*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Epstein, D. 1999. "Sex play: romantic significations, sexism and silences in the schoolyard". In Epstein, D. and Sears, J.T (Eds.), *A Dangerous Knowing: Sexuality, Pedagogy and Popular Culture*. London, New York: Cassell.

Epstein, D. Elwood, V. & Maw, J. (eds) .1998. *Failing Boys? Issues in Gender and Achievement*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Epstein, D. O'Flynn, S. & Telford, D., 2003. *Silenced sexualities in schools and universities*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

.

Erikson, E. 1968. *Identity, youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.

Fine, M. & McClelland, S.I. 2006. "Sexuality Education and Desire: Still Missing After All These Years". *Harvard Educational Review*.76(3):29-58.

Fine, M. 1988. "Sexuality, schooling and adolescent females: the missing discourse of desire". *Harvard Educational Review* 58(1):29-53.

Foucault, M. 1976. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. R.Hurley, Harmondsworth: Penguin

Foucault, M. 1978. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. 1988. 'Technologies of the Self', in L. Martin, H. Gutman and P.H. Hutton, (eds) *Technologies of the Self, a Seminar with Michel Foucault*, London: Tavistock.

Francis, B. 1998. *Power Plays. Primary School Children's Constructions of Gender, Power and Adult Work*. England: Trentham Books.

Francis, B.2010. "Gender, toys and learning". *Oxford Review of Education*. 36(3): 325-344.

Frosh, S. Phoenix, A. & Pattman, R. 2002. *Young masculinities*. New York: Palgrave.

Golden, C. (1984, March). Diversity and variability in lesbian identities. Paper presented at Lesbian Psychologies Conference of the Association of Women in Psychology.

Gordon, T. Holland, J. & Lahelma, E. 2000. *Making Spaces: Citizenship and Difference in Schools*, London: Macmillan.

Grieshaber, S. & Cannella, G.S. (Eds.) 2001. *Embracing Identities in Early Childhood Education: Diversity and Possibilities*. New York and London: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Griffin, C. 1985. *Typical Girls? Young Women from School to the Job Market*, London: Routledge.

Hacksley, M. 1998. *True Valour the story of Victoria Girls' High School Grahamstown 1897-1997*. Grahamstown: Victoria Girls' High School.

Hansen, A. 1998. *Mass Communication Research Methods*. London: Macmillan.

Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. 2000. *Sociology : themes and perspective*. London : HarperCollins.

Harris, A., Lawn, M. & Prescott, W. (eds.). 1978. *Curriculum Innovation*. Croom Helm, London: Open University Press.

Hawkes, G. 1996. *A Sociology of Sex and Sexuality*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Haywood, C. 1996. "Out of the curriculum: sex talking, talking sex". *Curriculum Studies* 4(2):229–49.

Haywood, C., & Mac an Ghaill, M. 2003. Troubling school boys: making young masculinities. In: C, Haywood & M, Mac an Ghaill. *Men and Masculinities*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Helleve, A. Flisher, A.J. Onya, H., Mukoma, W. & Klepp, K.I. 2009. "South African teachers' reflections on the impact of culture on their teaching of sexuality and HIV/AIDS". *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. 11(2):189-204.

Hey, V. 1997. *The Company She Keeps: An Ethnography of Girls' Friendship*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Hird, M.J. & Jackson, S. 2001. "'Where 'angels' and 'wusses' fear to tread: sexual coercion in adolescent dating relationships'". *Journal of Sociology*. 37(1): 27-43.

Hirst, J. 2004. "Researching young people's sexuality and learning about sex: experience, need, and sex and relationship education". *Culture, Health and Sexuality*. 6(2): 115-129.

Hofmeyr, J. 2000. *The Emerging School Landscape in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. University of Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch.

Holland, J. Ramazanoglu, C. Sharpe, S. & Thomson, R. 1998. *The Male in the Head, Heterosexuality, Gender and Power*, London: Tufnell Press.

Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, S. & Scott, S. 1990. *Sex, Risk and Danger: AIDS education policy and young women's sexuality*. London: Tufnell Press.

Holt, M. 1979. *Regenerating the Curriculum*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S.E. 2005. "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis". *Qualitative Health Research*. 15: 1227-1288.

Human Rights Watch. 2001. *Scared at school: Sexual violence against girls in South African Schools*. New York: Human Rights Watch.

IOL, 2012. 'Our education system is in crisis' Accessed in 12 September 2013 from <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/our-education-system-is-in-crisis-1.1355362#.UtTGhdIW344>

Jackson, C. .2006. "'Wild Girls?' An exploration of 'ladette' cultures in secondary schools". *Gender and Education*. 18(4):339-360.

- Jackson, S. 1978. "How to make babies: sexism in sex education". *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 1, 341-352.
- Jackson, S. 1982. *Childhood and Sexuality*. Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.
- Jackson, S. 1996. "Heterosexuality as a problem for feminist theory", in L Adkins and V. Merchant (eds) *Sexualising the Social, Power and the Organisation of Sexuality*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Jacobs, A. 2011. "Life Orientation as experienced by learners: a qualitative study in North-West Province". *South African Journal of Education*. 31:212-223.
- James, W. Auerbach, F. Desai, Z. Giliomee, H. Jordan, P. Krog, A. Kulati, T. Lehoko, K., Leibowitz, B. & Tlakula, P. 2000. *Values, Education and Democracy*. Conxtions Development Communications.
- Jansen, J.D. & Christie, P. (eds.). 1999. *Changing Curriculum Studies in Outcomes Based Education in South Africa*. Cape Town: Juta & Co.
- Jenkes, C. 1996. *Childhood*. London: Routledge.
- Jewkes, R. & Christofides, N. 2008. Teenage pregnancy: Rethinking prevention. Paper prepared for the Teenage pregnancy: rethinking prevention Keynote address at the 5th youth policy initiative roundtable on teenage pregnancy, 6th March 2008
- Johnson, R. 1996. "Sexual dissonances: or the "impossibility" of sexuality education". *Curriculum Studies*, special issue on the *Sexual Politics of Schooling* 4(2):163–89.
- Kazembe, A., 2009. "Factors that influence sexual behavior in young women". *African Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health* 3, 67–73.
- Kehily, M. J. & Nayak, A. 1996. "Playing it straight: masculinities, homophobias and schooling". *Journal of Gender Studies*. 5(2): 211–29.
- Kehily, M.J. 2002. *Gender, Sexuality and Schooling: Shifting Agendas in social learning*. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Kenway, J. & Willis, S. with J. Blackmore & L. Rennie .1998. *Answering Back, Gender and Feminism, in School*. London: Routledge.
- Kenway, J., & Fitzclarence, L. 1997. "Masculinity, violence and schooling: Challenging 'poisonous' pedagogies". *Gender and Education*. 9, 117-133.
- Kiely, E. 2005. "Where is the discourse of desire? Deconstructing the Irish Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) resource materials". *Irish Educational Studies*. 24 (2–3): 253–66.
- Kirby, D., 2008. "The impact of abstinence and comprehensive sex and STD/HIV education programs on adolescent sexual behaviour". *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*. 5(3): 18-27

- Kyman, W. 1998. "Into the 21st renewing the campaign for school-based sexuality education". *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*. 24: 131-137.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leach, F. & Mitchell, C. (eds). 2006. *Combating gender violence in and around schools*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham.
- Lees, S. 1986. *Losing Out: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls*. London: Hutchinson.
- Lees, S. 1993. *Sugar and Spice, Sexuality and Adolescent Girls*. Harmondsworth .
- Lees, S. 1993. *Sugar and Spice, Sexuality and Adolescent Girls*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Lesko, N. 1988. *Symbolizing Society: Stories, Rites and Structure in Catholic High School*. Philadelphia: Falmer.
- Lincoln, Y.S & Guba, E.G. 1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, N. R. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lindkvist, K. 1981. "Approaches to textual analysis". In K. E. Rosengren (Ed.), *Advances in content analysis* (pp. 23-41). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Luker, K. 2006. *When sex Goes to School: Warning Views on Sex - Sex Education – Since the Sixties*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Lupton, D. & Tulloch, J. 1996. "'All red in the face': students' views on school-based HIV/AIDS and sexuality education". *Sociological Review*, 44:252–271.
- Mac an Ghaill, M. 1994. *The Making of Men*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Mac an Ghaill, M. 1996. "Deconstructing heterosexualities within school arenas". *Curriculum Studies*, 4(2): 191–209.
- Macleod, C. 2009. Danger and disease in sex education: the saturation of 'adolescence' with colonialist assumptions. *Journal of Health Management*, 11(2), 375-389.
- MacNaughton, G. 2000. *Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood Education*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Marshall, D. & Case, J. 2010. "Rethinking 'disadvantage' in higher education: a paradigmatic case study using narrative analysis". In. *Studies in Higher Education*. 35(5): 491-504.
- Masuku, N. 1998. *Pregnancy Among School Girls at KwaMgaga High School Umlazi. Pupils Perceptions and the Schools 'Response*. Unpublished M.Ed dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.
- Mathews, C., Boon, H., Flisher, A.J. and Schaalma, H.P. 2006. "Factors associated with teacher's implementation of HIV/AIDS education in secondary schools in Cape Town". South Africa. *AIDS Care*. 18(4):388-397.

Matthee, S. & Muire, R. 2005. *Life Orientation for the Real World Learners Book Grade 10*. Florida Hills: Vivlia Publishers and Booksellers.

Matthee, S. & Muire, R. 2006. *Life Orientation for the Real World Learners Book Grade 11*. Florida Hills: Vivlia Publishers and Booksellers.

Mayer R, 1995-96 Trends in Opposition to Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Public Schools in the United States, SEICUS Report 24(1996).

Mbananga, N. 2004. Cultural clashes in reproductive health information in South Africa. *Health Education* 104 no 3 pp. 152-162.

McRobbie, A. 1978. ““Jackie: and ideology of adolescent femininity””, In (Eds) Bernard Waites, Tony Bennett, and Graham Martin. *Popular culture: past and present: a reader*. London: Croom Helm.

McTavish, D.-G., & Pirro, E.-B. 1990. “Contextual content analysis”. *Quality and Quantity*, 24:245-265.

Measor, L. 1989. ‘Are you coming to see some dirty films today Miss?’ Sex education and adolescent sexuality, in: L. Holly (Ed.) *Girls and Sexuality, Teaching and Learning* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Measor, L., Tiffin, C. & Miller, K. 2000. *Young people's views on sex education: education, attitudes and behaviour*. London, RoutledgeFalmer.

Mitchell, C. Walsh, S. & Larkin, J. 2004. “Visualizing the politics of innocence in the age of AIDS”. *Sex Education*. 4(1):35-47.

Modisaotsile, M. 2012. The falling standard of basic education in South Africa, *Africa Institute of South Africa*, ASIA Policy Brief Number 72.

Moran, J. 2001. “Childhood sexuality and education: the case of section 28”, *Sexualities*, 4, 73–89.

Morrell, R. 1998. “Gender and education: The place of masculinity in South African schools”. *South African Journal of Education* 18, no. 4: 218–25.

Morrell, R. 2000. “Considering the case for single sex schools for girls in South Africa”. *McGill Journal for Education* 35(3): 221-44.

Mort, F. 1987. *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-moral Politics in England since 1930*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Motala, S. & Pampallis, J. 2005. *Governance and Fianance in the South African Schooling System: First Decade of Democracy*. Johannesburg: Centre for Education Policy Development and Wits Education Policy Unit.

- Naidoo, J.P. 2005. *Educational decentralization and school governance in South Africa: from policy to practice*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Naidoo, 2006. M. *An evaluation of the sexuality education programme being implemented in South African schools*. PhD thesis. University of Zululand.
- Ncayiyana, D.J, & Ter Haar, G. 1989. "Pregnant adolescents in rural Transkei". *South African Medical Journal*, 75(4): 231-232.
- Neuman, W.L. 1997. *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 3rd Edition. Boston, Mass: Allyn & Bacon.
- News 24. 2011. 17 000 pregnancies at KZN schools in 2010, Accessed in March 10, 2012 from <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/17-000-pregnancies-at-KZN-schools-in-2010-20110310>
- News24. 2010. Lesbian kicked to 'convert' her. Accessed on February 05, 2012 from <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Lesbian-kicked-to-convert-her-20100517>
- News24. 2011. Four guilt of 'lesbian' killing. Accessed on February 05, 2013 from <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Four-guilty-of-lesbian-killing-20111007>
- Nxumalo, Z.E. 1997. Teenage Pregnancy: Psycho-social and Educational Implications. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, unpublished Thesis.
- Offer, D. & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. 1992. "Debunking the myths of adolescence: findings from recent research", *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 31:1003–1014.
- Omoni, G.M., 2009. "Teenage mothers in Kenya: seduced, coerced and at risk of HIV". *African Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health* 3:24–29.
- Osler, A. 2006. "Excluded girls: Interpersonal, institutional and structural violence in schooling. *Gender and Education*". 18(6):571-589.
- Paechter, C. 2003. "Masculinities and Femininities as Communities of Practice". *Women's Studies International Forum* 26(1): 69 – 77.
- Paechter, C. 2004. "'Mens Sana in Corpore Sano': Cartesian dualism and the marginalisation of sex education". *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. 25(3), 309–320.
- Panday, D. 2008. *Teachers' perspectives on the implementation of Life Orientation*. Master's thesis. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University: Port Elizabeth.
- Panday, S. Makiwane, M. Ranchod, C. & Letsaolo, T. 2009. *Teenage pregnancy in South Africa – with specific focus on school-going learners*. Child, Youth, Family & Social Development, Human Sciences Research Council. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Pascoe, C. J. 2007. *Dude, you're a fag: masculinity and sexuality in high school*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Pauw, H.C. 1994. The Xhosa. Unpublished Occasional Paper. University of Port Elizabeth, Port Elizabeth.
- Perrin, K. & DeJoy, S.B. 2003. "Abstinence-Only Education: How We Got Here and Where We're Going". *Journal of Public Health Policy*. 24(3/4): 445-459.
- Petchesky, R. 1984. Abortion and woman's choice. New York: Longman.
- Pillay, N. 2009. Girls' experience of violence in a single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal. MA thesis. University of KwaZulu Natal.
- Posel, D. 2004. "Getting the nation talking about sex': reflections on the discursive constitution of sexuality in South Africa since 1994", In *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*. 18(62): 55-63.
- Preston-Whyte E, Zondi M. 1992. "African teenage pregnancy: whose problem?" In: S. Burman, Preston-Whyte E, (eds). *Questionable Issue: Illegitimacy in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. p.226-46.
- Preston-Whyte, E., Zondi, M., Mavundla, G & Gumede, H. 1990. "Teenage pregnancy, whose problem? Realities and prospects for action in KwaZulu-Natal". *South African Journal of Demography*, 3:11-20.
- Prinsloo, E. 2007. "Implementation of life orientation programmes in the new curriculum in South African schools: perceptions of principals and life orientation teacher". *South African Journal of Education*. 27(1):155-170.
- Quinlivan, K. & Town, S. 1999. "Queer pedagogy, educational practice and lesbian and gay youth", *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 12(5): 509-524.
- Reay, D. 2001. "'Spice Girls', 'Nice Girls', 'Girlies', and 'Tomboys': Gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom", *Gender and Education*, 13:2, 153-166.
- Reddy, S. & Dunne, M. 2007. "Risking it: Young heterosexual femininities in South African context of HIV/AIDS". *Sexualities*. 10(2):159-172.
- Redman, P. 1994. 'Shifting ground: rethinking sexuality education', in D. Epstein (ed.) *Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequalities in Education*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Redman, P. 2001. "The discipline of love: negotiation and regulation in boys' performances of a romance-based heterosexual masculinity". *Men and masculinities*. 4(2): 186-200.
- Reiss, M. 2005. A brief history of sex education. Accessed on 19 September 2013 from <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/body-mind/health/health-studies/brief-history-sex-education>
- Renold, E. 2002. "'Presumed innocence': (hetero)sexual, homophobic and heterosexual harassment amongst primary school girls and boys", *Childhood* 9(4): 415-33.

Renold, E. 2004. "'Other' boys: negotiating non-hegemonic masculinities in the primary school". *Gender and Education*. 16(2): 247-266.

Rich, A. 1980. "'Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence'", *Signs* 5(4):631-60.

Ringrose, J. & Renold, E. 2010. "Normative cruelties and gender deviants: the performative effects of bullying discourses for girls and boys in school". *British Educational Research Journal* 36 no.4: 573-96.

Roodt, M. 2011. Research and Policy Brief: 'Model C' is the model to emulate. South African Institute of Race Relations Accessed on 26 September 2013 from <http://www.sairr.org.za/sairr-today-1/research-and-policy-brief-model-c-is-the-model-to-emulate-1-february-2011>

Rooth, E. 2005. *An investigation of the status and practice of life orientation in South African schools in two provinces*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of the Western Cape.

Rosser, E. & Harre, R. 1976. 'The meaning of trouble', in M.Hammersley and P.Woods (eds) *The Process of Schooling, a Sociological Reader*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

RSA (Republic of South Africa). 1996. *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Rubin, G. 1975. 'The traffic in women: notes on the "political economy" of sex', in R.Reiter (ed.) *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, New York: Monthly Review Press.

Rubin, G. 1984. 'Thinking sex: notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality', in C.Vance (ed.) *Pleasure and Danger, Exploring Female Sexuality*, London: Pandora.

Santelli, J., Ott, M.A., Lyon, M., Rogers, J., Summer, D. & Schleifer, R. 2006. Abstinence and abstinence-only education: A review of the US policies and programs. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 38(1):72-18.

Sayed, Y. 2000 International perspectives on educational decentralisation. Paper for Swedish International

Sears, J. (ed.) 1992. *Sexuality and the Curriculum, the Politics and Practices of Sexuality Education*, New York: Teachers' College Press.

Sedgwick, E.K. 1994. *Tendencies*. London: Routledge

Skelton, C. 2001. *Schooling the boys masculinities and primary education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Skelton, C. 2001. *Schooling the boys*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Smyth, H. 2000. *Rocking the cradle: Contraception, sex and politics in New Zealand*. Wellington: Steele Roberts.

South African Government Information. 2009. Accessed on 10 October 2013 from <http://www.southafrica.info/about/democracy/constitution.htm#.UtYqM9IW344>

South African Institute of Race Relations, 1992. *Race Relations Survey 1991/2*, Johannesburg.

Strouse, J & Fabes, R.A. 1985. "Formal versus informal sources of sex education: competing forces in the sexual socialization of adolescents". *Adolescent*. XX: 251-263.

Taylor, N. & Vinjevold, P. (eds.). 1999. *Getting Learning Right*. Report of the President's Education Initiative Research Project. Wits: Joint Education Trust.

Tesch, R. 1990. *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools*. Bristol, PA: Falmer.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. 1996.

Theron, L.C. 2008. "The Batsha Life Orientation study — An appraisal by Grade 9 learners living in townships". *Education as Change*. 12(45).

Thompson, S. 1983. "Search for tomorrow: On feminism and the reconstruction of teen romance". In A. Snitow, C. Stansell, & S. Thompson (Eds.), *Powers of desire* (pp. 367- 384). New York: Monthly Review Press.

Thomson, R. & Scott, S. 1991. *Learning about Sex: Young Women and the Social Construction of Sexual Identity*, London: Tufnell Press.

Thomson, R. 1994. "Moral rhetoric and public health pragmatism: the recent politics of sex education", *Feminist Review*, 48, pp. 40–60.

Thorogood, N. 2000 . 'Sex education as disciplinary technique: policy and practice in England and Wales', *Sexualities* 3(4):425–38.

Tobin, J (Ed). 1997. *Making a Place for Pleasure in Early Childhood Education*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Tolman , DL , 2002 . Dilemmas of desire: Teenage girls talk about sexuality .Cambridge , MA : Harvard University Press .

Trenchard, L. & Warren, H. 1984. *Something to Tell You: the Experiences and Needs of Young Lesbians and Gay Men in London*, London: Gay Teenage Group.

Trudell, B. 1993. *Doing Sex Education: Gender, Politics and Schooling*, London: Routledge.

van Deventer, K. 2009. "Perspectives of teachers on the implementation of Life Orientation on Grade R-11 from selected Western Cape schools". *South African Journal of Education*. 29:127-145.

van Deventer, K. 2009. Perspectives of teachers on the implementation of Life Orientation on Grade R-11 from selected Western Cape schools. *South African Journal of Education*. 29:127-145.

Vance, C. 1995. "Social construction theory and sexuality", in M.Berger, B.Wallis and S.Watson (eds) *Constructing Masculinity*, New York: Routledge.

Waghid, Y., & Engelbrecht, P. 2002. "Inclusive education, policy and hope: Mapping democratic policy changes on inclusion in South Africa". *International Journal of Special Education*, 17(1), 20-25.

Walkerdine, V. 1986. 'Post-structructuralist theory and everyday social practices: the family and the school', in S. Wilkinson (ed.) *Feminist Social Psychology, Developing Theory and Practice*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Walkerdine, V. 1990. *School Girl Fiction*, London: Verso.

Walkerdine, V. 1991. *Schoolgirl Fictions*. London: Verso.

Walkerdine, V. 1997. *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture*. London: Macmillan.

Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H, & Melody, J. 2000. "Class attainment and sexuality in late twentieth century Britain". In C. Zmroczek and P. Mahony (Eds) *Women and Social Class: Interracial Feminist Perspectives*. London: UCL Press.

Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H, & Melody, J. 2001. *Growing up girl: psychosocial explorations of gender and class*. Houndmills, Basingtoke, Hampshire: Palgrave

Weeks, J. 1977. *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, London: Quartet.

Weeks, J. 1981. *Sex, Politics and Society: the Regulation of Sexuality Since 1880*, Harlow: Longman.

Weeks, J. 1985. *Sexuality and its Discontents*, London: Routledge.

Weeks, J. 1986. *Sexuality*. London: Tavistock.

Weeks, J. 1998. "The "homosexual role" after 30 years: an appreciation of the work of Mary MacIntosh", *Sexualities*. 1(2): 131-152.

Weiner, G. & Arnot, M. (eds) 1987. *Gender under Scrutiny: New Inquiries in Education*, London: Hutchinson.

Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wiley, D.C. 2009. "The Ethics of Abstinence-Only and Abstinence-Plus Sexuality Education". *Journal of School of Health*. 72(4):164-167.

Williams. J. (Ed.). 1997. *Negotiating Access to Higher Education*. Buckingham: Open Press University.

Willis, P. 1977. *Learning to Labour, How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, Farnborough: Saxon House.

Wolpe, A.M. 1988. *Within School Walls, the Role of Discipline, Sexuality and the Curriculum*. London: Routledge.

Wood, K., & Jewkes, R. 2006. "Blood Blockages and Scolding Nurses: Barriers to Adolescent Contraceptive Use in South". *Reproductive Health Matters*. 14(27):109–118.

Yelland, N. (Ed.). (1998) *Gender in Early Childhood*. London and New York: Routledge.