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**Teaching the Life Skills Curriculum: Experiences of
Managing the Blurred Terrain of the Public and Private:
An Exploratory Case Study of Women
Who Teach 7th Grade Life Skills on the Cape Flats of
Cape Town, South Africa**

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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the award of the degree

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Plagiarism Declaration

I declare that this work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:.....

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Abstract

In the context of HIV/AIDS, prevention and sex education are seen as critical for addressing the spread of the disease. The introduction of a new Life Orientation curriculum (with a focus, amongst other things, on Life Skills) which addresses the topics of sex, sexuality, and HIV/STI transmission brings otherwise private practices and experiences into the traditionally public space of schools and classrooms. It inadvertently calls up aspects in teachers' lives' and lived experience that they would ordinarily leave outside the public arena of the classroom. Questions the new curriculum raised are the focus of this study.

The focus of this study is on Life Skills *teachers*. It was concerned with the influences and experiences that shape teachers' responses to the sensitive topics of HIV, sex and sexuality in the Life Skills curriculum. Through the use of in-depth interviews, this study examined four Life Skills teachers' perceptions of the new curriculum and of the contexts presented to them by the children they teach. It addressed aspects of teachers' early lives and experiences that influenced their responses to, understanding of and interaction with topics such as HIV, sex, and sexuality; topics viewed as sensitive and private and not usually dealt with explicitly in schools.

What emerged was that the Life Skills curriculum creates tension between the curriculum topics and the teachers' life experiences, ultimately calling into question the teachers' values and experiences. Using Giddens' theory of structuration, this study argues that far from merely responding to the topics they need to teach in a linear fashion, teachers report different responses to these topics and suggest different ways of interaction with these. The results, while exploratory, suggest that when personal values and experiences are in tension with the changing contexts of Life Skills topics, teachers learn from and revise their previous views to incorporate the new knowledge gained from teaching Life Skills. Thus, while they acknowledge the constraints, they also experience the process of interacting with these topics as dynamic and fluid, ones that makes them question their own teacher identities and create opportunity to change.

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CNE	Christian National Education
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
EMDC	Educational Management District Centre
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency virus
LO	Life Orientation
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
Sex/uality	This term is used to denote topics of sex and sexuality and seeks to show their fundamentally intertwined nature.
UNAIDS	United Nations AIDS Council
UNHDR	United Nations Human Development Report
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
WHO	World Health Organization

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Chapter 1

Situating the Study

1.1 Introduction

In the context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa one avenue of government response has been the introduction of an HIV/AIDS education programme for school-aged youth in the country. Education in schools, and thus teachers, are widely accepted as one of the best methods for delivering HIV prevention messages to the general population. There is an assumption by public health planners that a majority of children attend school, which makes education in schools a first choice for prevention initiatives. While education does not take place *only* in schools, the assumption is that schools serve as a site of common experience for many of the country's youth and are, therefore, a site where education regarding HIV prevention, sex, and sexuality should be delivered. Another assumption is that teachers/educators are well-educated and professional, and, therefore, able to teach about sensitive subjects such as sex, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. However, this all presupposes that teachers are able and willing to speak about these sensitive topics in the public space of the classroom (Baxen, 2006).

In South Africa the curriculum developed to deal with these sensitive topics is part of what is called the Life Orientation learning area. While efforts to institute prevention education have been difficult in terms of implementation, training, and material/curriculum development, this type of education still shines through as one of the most significant approaches of the South African government to combat HIV/AIDS. When one conceives of an HIV/AIDS/sex education programme one must think about the spaces in which education takes place and the agents who 'deliver' the messages. While the impact of HIV/AIDS is yet to be felt in its entirety in South Africa, the government has finally taken a proactive stance in developing national policy which contributes to prevention, information, and care activities. Over the last few years, presidential messages to the public regarding HIV/AIDS have been mixed and, at times, confusing. However, one of the government agencies that have been active in the fight against HIV/AIDS has been the Department of Education.

The particular focus in this thesis is on teachers who teach the 7th grade Life Skills curriculum dealing directly with the sensitive issues of sex, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. It asks questions about what teachers bring to the Life Skills curriculum in terms of their life experiences and how this acts as the mediatory resources they draw upon to understand and respond to these topics. More specifically, I examine the influences and experiences that shape teachers' responses to the topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality in the Life Skills curriculum. The assumption I make in this work is that teachers' experiences influence not only their understanding of their roles, but also their responses and potential uptake of the content in the classroom.

What follows is a case study investigation of the ways in which four female Life Skills teachers navigate between private and public knowledge/ways of being. This case study was conducted in the Cape Flats¹ area of Cape Town, South Africa. The focus was on teachers of the Life Skills learning programme with an emphasis on the influences on their teacher identity rather than their classroom practices and experiences or students and content delivery. The focus was further narrowed to investigate their responses to and experiences of the curriculum materials and topics covered in Grade Seven within the 'Life Skills' programme developed by the Department of Health and the Western Cape Department of Education. The specific topics of interest in this thesis were HIV/AIDS and sex and sexuality (henceforth sex/uality) education, and puberty. Therefore I refer to the program/curriculum as the Life Skills Curriculum to correctly define my point of departure within the larger framework of Life Orientation.

The overall objective of the Life Orientation learning area is to "guide and prepare learners for life and its possibilities. Life Orientation specifically equips learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society" (DoE, 2002:2 6). The Life Orientation learning area is organized into four learning outcomes in the Foundation Phase (grades R-3) and Intermediate Phase (grades 4-6)

¹ The Cape Flats is an area where multiple 'townships' are located in Cape Town. "The[se] township[s] were first established after the Group Areas Act of 1950 was legislated. This act carved up urban space into racially exclusive townships that would be inhabited by populations that were racially classified according to the categories set out by the Populations Registration Act of 1950. All ethnically mixed areas were proclaimed residential spaces for a single race group only. At least two million or so people across South Africa were forcibly removed from their existing residences, as urban and rural spaces were racially cleansed" (Salo, 2002: 407).

and a fifth learning outcome is added in the Senior Phase (grades 7-9). A learning outcome specifies the skills that learners should acquire regarding a given topic. The learners should be able to demonstrate a range of competencies in each given Phase. It is also paramount that Life Orientation teachers are trained to address all of these respective topics. The learning outcomes for Life Orientation are (1) health promotion, (2) social development, (3) personal development, (4) physical development and movement, (5) orientation to the world of work (DoE, 2002:26). I will now give a brief overview of each learning outcome and discuss them in relation to each of the three Phases so as to situate the Life Skills curriculum of the Western Cape within the larger Life Orientation framework.

The first outcome of Life Orientation is health promotion where “learners will be able to make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health” (Western Cape Education Department [WCED], 2003a). This outcome deals directly with the topics of sex, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and puberty discussed in this research. In the Foundation Phase of health promotion learners should have knowledge of communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS (WCED, 2003a). Issues around abuse are also addressed. In the Intermediate Phase learners are made aware of issues regarding substance abuse (Western Cape Education Department [WCED], 2003b). Awareness of sexuality also requires discussions regarding risky behaviour. In the Senior Phase learners encounter many risky situations which deal with health, safety, and lifestyle (Western Cape Education Department [WCED], 2003c). The learner should be able to make informed choices related to these risks in addition to sexuality.

The second outcome is called social development where “the learner will be able to demonstrate an understanding of a commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions” (WCED, 2003a). The social development outcome deals with topics explicitly addressed in the seventh grade curriculum such as appropriate relationships, good touching-bad touching, peer relations, and dating. In the Foundation Phase learners know about their rights and should be able to oppose discrimination. Learners also learn about healthy relationships and diverse religions (WCED, 2003a). In the Intermediate Phase learners develop an understanding of diversity and ways to

respond to discrimination. Learners are aware of constitutional rights and have started to establish broader social relationships (WCED, 2003b). In the Senior Phase learners are starting to juggle the influences of both family and peers. They are encouraged to think broadly and participate in human rights programs. Knowledge of diversity helps learners make decisions on “human rights, social relationships, and moral issues” (WCED, 2003c).

The third learning outcome is personal development where a learner is expected to “be able to use acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in his or her own world” (WCED, 2003a). This outcome deals most with the changes going on in learners through puberty which is a cornerstone of the 7th grade curriculum in particular. In addition self esteem is addressed explicitly and the idea of nurturing yourself as a ‘whole person’ (intellectual, social, spiritual, physical, emotional) is encouraged at the 7th grade level (Department of Health [DoH], 2002b). In the Foundation Phase learners know and explore personal worth. Opportunities are created where learners participate in “positive self-concept formation” (WCED, 2003a). In the Intermediate Phase learners are going through puberty and therefore must work to address a range of life skills. Positive self esteem and peer relations are also explored extensively (WCED, 2003b). In the Senior Phase learners go through many emotional and physical changes. Positive self esteem, development of emotional intelligence, and abilities to cope are focused on (WCED, 2003c).

The fourth learning outcome is physical development and movement where “learners will be able to demonstrate an understanding of, and participate in, activities that promote movement and physical development” (WCED 2003a). At the 7th grade level this outcome manifests in terms of physical development/awareness and social skills. In the Foundation Phase learners further develop their emerging motor skills and body awareness (WCED, 2003a). In the Intermediate Phase learners develop confidence and control of their body (WCED, 2003b). Social skills and leadership are explored through team activities. In the Senior Phase learners are going through many physical changes. They are encouraged to participate in physical activities and the importance of life long fitness is stressed (WCED, 2003c).

The fifth outcome which is only taught in the Senior Phase is an orientation to the world of work. In this outcome “learners will be able to make informed decisions about further study and career choices” (WCED 2003c). In the Senior Phase learners develop and understanding of their abilities and interests and make informed decisions regarding work and further study (WCED, 2003c).

The seventh grade curriculum part of the Senior Phase, deals with many issues pertinent to teenagers. The Life Skills component of the Life Orientation learning area deals with many issues around puberty and sexuality. The programme is comprised of seventeen units which deal with topics such as peer pressure, dating, growing up a whole person (intellectual, social, spiritual, physical and emotional), conception, pregnancy, birth, rape and sexual assault, illness, HIV transmission, AIDS, HIV/AIDS awareness activities, dealing with death, and caring for people with AIDS (DoH, 2002b). The goals of the programme are to “guide learners to: abstain or postpone sexual activity, change their lifestyle if they are sexually active, be responsible if they do not want to change their lifestyle, i.e. use condoms, [and] accept people living with HIV/AIDS without discrimination” (DoH, 2002b: i). This thesis focuses specifically on the topics present in the seventh grade Life Skills curriculum and explicitly focuses on how *teachers* experience, understand and respond to these topics while negotiating their identities as women and teachers. In no way does this thesis address the classroom behaviour, pedagogy, and interaction with students. Here the focus is explicitly on teachers for the sake of understanding them as people in relation to the topics they are expected to teach. It questions the assumptions made about teachers’ levels of comfort and ability to speak to mediate about aspects of the curriculum that are usually left out of the public space of the classroom. Thus, rather than seeing what teachers do in the classroom, this thesis poses questions about teachers and influences on their lives before they enter the classroom.

1.2 HIV/AIDS in South Africa

Southern Africa has one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the world. UNAIDS, the United Nations’ body tasked with approaching the world’s HIV/AIDS pandemic, estimated the number of people living with AIDS in Southern Africa to be approximately 24,500,000 in 2005 (UNAIDS, 2006). This means that most of the

people in the world living with HIV call Southern Africa home. This does not exclude South Africa, one of the region's economic giants. HIV/AIDS has been a growing problem in South Africa over the past 10 years. The UNAIDS body (2006) estimates that in 2005 there were approximately 5,500,000 people living with HIV in South Africa. The total South African population estimated by the United Nations Human Development Report (UNHDR) in 2003 was 46,900,000². This amounts to an almost twelve percent HIV prevalence rate.

Most of those who are HIV positive are between the ages of 14-35, according to data provided by UNAIDS (2006). Of particular interest in combating HIV/AIDS are the perceptions of the youth with regard to sex, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and HIV/AIDS. The goals of almost all prevention efforts aimed at youth are to delay sexual activity and reduce teenage pregnancy levels to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS. A good gauge of the South African youth's behaviour is to look at the results of 'The First South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey' commissioned by the National Department of Health and published in 2002 (DoH, 2002a). Of those surveyed, 21.8% of youth under the age of 13 were sexually active. In the same age group (<13), 59.9% of those who were sexually active had two or more sexual partners. This type of behaviour raises serious concerns in the context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa and in itself is motivation for a sex education programme at the primary school level.

In May 2000 the Department of Health released the HIV/AIDS/STD Strategic Plan for South Africa for 2000-2005. This document emphasised the government's commitment to prevention efforts aimed at the youth. The term 'youth' is defined in

² On an international scale the statistical documentation and modelling of the HIV/AIDS epidemic has been through a process of revisions over the past decade. However, South African epidemic modelling is among the best in the world and South Africa is one of the only countries in the region with access to relevant national data such as those generated by census, cause of death, and other household surveys conducted nationwide. Statistical modelling of the impact, prevalence, and spread of HIV/AIDS must be constantly re-evaluated and multiple sources for such data should be consulted. The United Nations AIDS council made formal acknowledgment of this in their 2005 epidemic update which made estimations with in a range of possible numbers. It has only been in the past few years that such statistics have been given as a rage of numbers rather than a resolute number published. While to some this may seem an esoteric statement which boils down to the validity of statistics, all responsible quotations of HIV/AIDS related statistics should be accompanied by an acknowledgement of their contested, fluid and dependent collection and modelling. The ethical implication of such acknowledgement is important due to the fact that there can be multiple interpretations to such statistics which may lead to inappropriate messages, campaigns, generalisations, and interventions.

the document as all individuals aged between 14-35. The reason given for targeting the youth with regard to prevention efforts is because they “represent both the present and future economic powerhouse of the country” (Department of Health, 2000: 24). The government responses to HIV/AIDS have been coordinated at multiple levels and include multiple policies and programmes for managing the pandemic.³ Since prevention is a key element of HIV/AIDS related planning in the country, it is important to recognize the role of teachers in this strategy. Teachers are the key ingredient in the prevention strategy at the school level as they guide, mediate, and inform learners on key issues.

Life Skills in this context should not be understood as biologically-orientated messages about puberty and sexual reproduction. Education around sexuality⁴ should be understood as education about sexual identity, sexual decision making and sexual well-being. It is through these fundamentally important developmental topics that one comes to understand issues related to HIV/AIDS and their accompanying complexities. While HIV is not only transmittable through sexual contact, in the South African and other African epidemics as a whole, the major mode of transmission is through unprotected sex. Topics such as sex and sexuality are therefore at the centre of all prevention efforts and often highlight safer sex and the ability to negotiate sexual relations as key strategies to prevent the transmission of HIV. These issues are crucial to discuss not only with youth but at all ages with regard to prevention efforts.

As Kelly highlights,

Virtually every programme designed to outwit and get ahead of HIV/AIDS depends in one way or another on education. It is no exaggeration to say in the current state of scientific knowledge and development, the only protection available to society lies with the ‘social vaccine’ of education (Kelly, 2002: 220).

³ Responses include: Individuals with a T-cell count of < 200 qualify for a government grant. Other government programmes include care and support, outsourced to the NGO sector. There is also a national prevention campaign called Khomani, a toll free AIDS hotline.

⁴ **sexuality**, *n.* [After HOMOSEXUALITY *n.*, *heterosexuality* *s.v.* HETEROSEXUAL *a.* and *n.*] A person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which he or she is typically attracted; the fact of being heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual; sexual orientation. (Oxford English Dictionary)

The impact of HIV/AIDS on education in terms of attendance, attrition, student populations, and orphanhood has been highlighted by multiple authors but the extent to which these elements have been impacted solely by the HIV/AIDS epidemic is hard to prove. Authors such as Coombe (2002) Whiteside (2000), Kelly (2002) and others have stated that the education sector is impacted in multiple ways by the pandemic. These authors fear that both the supply of and demand for education will be impacted by HIV/AIDS-related illnesses, death, and extended family care situations. Such situations will and do affect both teachers and students. One could also state that similar effects would be present in situations of poverty and malnutrition, so it is hard to state that such occurrences are solely HIV/AIDS related.⁵ This problem, however, is highly indicative of the interrelated nature of HIV/AIDS and other social problems such as poverty and childhood malnutrition, all of which affect the education sector. One must be cautious to generalize about the education sector as a whole as it is diverse, complex, and changing. Bennell (2003) is quick to point out that teachers are not a “heterogeneous group” within the Southern African region or, as one must emphasize, within a specified country.

The lives of teachers are also impacted by the pandemic and they have indicated having increased family care responsibilities and additional financial burdens due to the increasing frequency of funeral/burial costs and absorption of orphaned children and ill elderly family members into their households (Kelly 2002). Teachers may also be living with HIV/AIDS and dealing with the personal health and emotional consequences. Teachers are also affected by student illness and co-worker attrition due to HIV/AIDS. They do not, therefore come to the Life Skills curriculum from a neutral position.

Although all of the above mentioned interventions and strategies exist in South Africa, education is still recognized as a key strategy for the prevention of HIV transmission. Schools are therefore regarded as one of the most effective spaces for

⁵ A more comprehensive examination of this subject would include other factors such as poverty and cofactors of sanitation, nutrition, and housing. Other aspects such as substance abuse, gangsterism, and other external factors should also be considered as important for gaining a holistic understanding of how illness, ability to work, care for family, and school attendance may be changing in specific contexts.

the dissemination of prevention messages. Thus, one of the government's key strategies was the development of Life Skills education in schools.

Embedded in the new HIV education curriculum are topics related to sex and sexuality, issues that are generally left outside the school walls. For the purposes of this study it is important to understand these topics in terms of their place in schools. They are traditionally not included in the public space of schooling. These topics relate to the knowledge/experience of the physical body which is not usually addressed in the public space of the classroom. The 'lived body' is a term to express the complex experiences and active nature of the body (Williams, 1998). The lived body is conceptualized as not just a vessel housing a brain but rather a contextual and active body through which the self and identity are explored and shaped (Williams, 1998). How does this curriculum, which calls upon knowledge of the lived body, impact on the teacher? While education is widely accepted as a key strategy and schools as the best place for mediation of prevention messages and HIV/sex education, few interrogate the assumptions this makes about the teachers/disseminators of these messages. The prevailing assumption is that teachers are able and willing to discuss these deeply private topics in the public arena of schools. How does a curriculum dealing with the sexualized body find space in the public area of schooling, where the mind rather than the body is the traditional concern? Can teachers effectively teach about topics that society holds as private? Have they been trained to carry out such work? How do they view the curriculum? How do their private lives influence their ability and willingness to impart the content of this curriculum? It is these questions about schools and teachers that led to the questions I ask in this thesis. What are teachers' perceptions about curriculum topics, specifically sex, sexuality and HIV? What are the influences on teachers' perceptions of these topics? Are they comfortable teaching these topics? How have they been trained to teach them?

1.3 Education in South Africa: tension with change

For the purposes of this thesis it is important to briefly understand the historical context of education in South Africa in particular how the system influenced the participants as students educated in the system and as teachers trained to reproduce it.

In South Africa there is a history of hugely unequal access to education. There was specific Christian and racist ideological underpinning of the education system from its inception. This is of particular interest because the teachers who participated in this study were educated and trained under the Apartheid system of education which enshrined these values. Thus these ideologies were an influential factor in their early lives, teacher training, and ideas of education.

Education in South Africa has been deeply influenced by Christianity from its formal inception in the mid 1600's (Christie, 1994). For Black South Africans mission schools were the only real source of education until the 1950's (Christie, 1994: 67). In 1953 the introduction of Bantu Education segregated formal education into different systems for specified racial population groups (Black, Coloured, Indian, and White) (Christie, 1994: 101). A typical experience of education for all non-white children during that time emphasised religion, simple English and Afrikaans, crafts and gardening (Christie, 1994: 120). White children received a much more extensive education which also covered maths, history and science (ibid). Inequality in education manifested in multiple ways. In terms of teacher to student ratios, teacher training, school facilities, curriculum materials, and subjects taught there was a huge discrepancy from White to Black schools, with White schools having overall better conditions (Christie, 1994). Despite these discrepancies there was still one overarching ideology. Christianity and racism, which privileged the White race over all other racial groups, were the cornerstones that educated all South Africans. Christian National Education (CNE) was the official educational ideology of Apartheid (Ashley, 1989:7). CNE was founded on a Calvinist approach to teaching all areas of life (Ashley, 1989:7).

In the CNE system teachers served as enforcers in the authoritarian school setting. Teachers were seen as employees of the government and in charge of the dissemination of Apartheid's agenda of racial segregation and Christian morality. The teacher took a particular place and role within this structure. As Christie (1994) describes,

In most schools the teacher usually stands up front, while the students sit passively at their desks. The students' role is to listen to and to memorize what the teacher says. The students are not active- they simply 'receive' the knowledge which the teachers 'deposit' in their minds (168).

With changes in the political system of South Africa came change in the system of education. Thus democracy brought with it new ideals and ideology to education in South Africa. After South Africa's democratic elections in 1994 the education system of the country began a drastic phase of revision. The new/current Outcomes Based Education approach sought to banish racism in schools and utilizes a human rights approach to education. The major ideological underpinnings are values enshrined in the South African Constitution. In South Africa today corporal punishment is illegal and the style of teaching calls for teachers to engage with students rather than dictate memorization.

The teachers interviewed in this study were trained by this old system of CNE. In this system teachers' personal life and experience were not called upon in the classroom. School topics were kept formal, didactic, and teachers viewed as knowledge disseminators rather than teachers with life experiences. In addition, teachers were trained in a place and time that did not call on their personhood in the classroom. The current Life Skills curriculum asks teachers to think of their role in completely different ways as they are supposed to model responsible behaviour, engage with students, and act as agents of change. These roles will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Let it just suffice here to show the already emerging tension between the participants' experience of education and training through CNE and their current role as Life Skills teachers in the Outcomes Based Education system.

1.3 The problem

This thesis argues that there has been a dearth of studies which explore HIV/AIDS/sex/sexuality education specifically in relation to teachers. Few have asked questions about how teachers consider themselves, their role(s), and the impact of how others view them as mediators of such sensitive subjects. The introduction and formalisation of these private subjects in the public space of schools leads to these questions. It also brings into question common perceptions of schools as academically-driven institutions where the outcome is usually defined through assessment procedures. In addition the curriculum topics discussed in this thesis are an extreme departure from the Christian National education that the teachers were

trained under thus causing them to re-examine their role, identity, and position as teachers. Traditionally schools and teachers have sought to assess knowledge of the mind as opposed to knowledge related to an understanding of the physical, lived body. This is made visible through the traditional forms of assessment in schools of examination results and pedagogical practices such as rote learning and in South Africa, Christian National Education. In these traditional constructs of education, teachers are not asked to bring their 'lived bodies' into the classroom. Yet everyone has lived experiences which inform their knowledge, especially in relation to sex/sexuality, HIV/AIDS and puberty. These lived experiences are called upon in unique ways when the topics of sex and sexuality are discussed. In particular this lived knowledge of sex/sexuality is tied to an experience of the body, hence the lived body. Traditionally teachers are merely vessels through which learning takes place, and their personal experiences are neither relevant nor appropriate in context of schools. Nor is the knowledge and experience of that body traditionally engaged within the school setting.

While these subjects bring different knowledge into the classroom they also bring about a different way of conceptualizing success within the education system. Standards for success in the Life Skills curricula have to do with memorization of terms, application of concepts to anecdotal situations, and sexual behaviour change/modification.⁶ The goal of behaviour change engages the student's physical body as well as the mind and is ultimately an unevaluated output of the curriculum. The differences introduced to the traditional field of education by the Life Skills curriculum are discussed in detail in the following chapter, but suffice to say here Life Skills courses ask both teachers and students to learn and perform in new ways that invite private knowledge of the lived body into the public space of schools and expects sexual behaviour change as an outcome.

⁶ It is important to note that behaviour change through education is a contested idea due to the fact that such results are difficult to measure. Attempts to measure behaviour change are usually in the form of pre- and post education surveys and involve self reporting of behaviour. In the case of Life Skills education, reporting on sensitive topics such as sexual choice, activity, frequency, HIV status, sexuality, and negotiation of sex are likely to be influenced by numerous factors. Such factors include pressure to conform, lack of anonymity, personal disclosure of sensitive information, and social exclusion, amongst others. Thus, while the national goal of HIV/AIDS and sex education is to lower the amount of people having unsafe sex the success of these initiatives in some respects un-measurable.

As South Africa moved from the apartheid⁷ era to a developing democratic society⁸, significant changes were made to the education system. Structurally, the education system changed in terms of national qualifications. Organisationally, segregationist policies were abolished. The major curricular changes shifted the education paradigm from a system of learning by rote and memorization to learner-centred teaching. Pedagogically there were also changes, namely with regard to training teachers. The transition from the apartheid system to democratic governance is well documented by others. In addition to the vast array of literature on the transition of the political system there is much on the changes within the education sector. One of those major changes was curriculum development and implementation. Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was developed in 1999 and was implemented in the following years in schools across South Africa. This new curriculum was a departure from learning by rote and put more emphasis on exposing learners to different subjects, ideas, and values. In addition, OBE established a diverse pedagogical process with new expectations for teachers and learners. This new curriculum was therefore different not only in theory, style and approach but also in implementation and training. With the implementation of OBE in 2000 the HIV/AIDS and sexuality education curriculum outcomes were developed.

As stated in the Department of Education's 'The HIV/AIDS Emergency Guidelines for Educators' (Department of Education [DoE], 2000) teachers play an important role in HIV prevention. The Department of Education stated that "educators have a unique opportunity to influence children's ideas about sex and relationships" and that "educators are expected to be role models and leaders in the community. By adopting safe and responsible sexual practices ourselves, we can protect ourselves from HIV and help countless others to do the same" (DoE, 2000: 5).

⁷ "At the heart of the apartheid system were four ideas...four 'racial groups'- White, Coloured, Indian, and African- each with its own inherent culture. Second, Whites, as the civilized race, were entitled to have absolute control over the state. Third, white interests should prevail over black interests; the state was not obliged to provide equal facilities for the subordinate races. Fourth, the white racial group formed a single nation, with Afrikaans- and English-speaking components, while Africans belonged to several (eventually ten) distinct "nations"... a formula that made the white nation the largest in the country" (Thompson 2000:190).

⁸ After much struggle to end the system of apartheid the new South Africa emerged with the many legacies (institutional, social, and infrastructural) of the apartheid regime. As Thompson states, "although the creation of a democratic constitution was a vital step forward, it was merely a skeleton that might... lead to the growth of a democratic society" (2000: 265).

In an attempt to understand the link between education, prevention and HIV/prevalence amongst the youth it is important to look at who is delivering the messages about HIV/AIDS to the nation's young people. Learners in all South African classrooms will be affected by HIV/AIDS in some way. By the middle of an average learner's secondary schooling years they are demographically among one of the highest HIV prevalence groups in the country, region, and world. It is therefore crucial to look at how the HIV/AIDS curriculum is being implemented and, in the case of this study, what influences and experiences shape teacher responses to topics of HIV and sex and sexuality. This means focusing on teachers as people with intricate identities which they bring to the classroom, and as individuals who have complex experiences. "In an era of HIV/AIDS, teachers play an even more critical role - they are a source of accurate information and a person with whom young people can raise sensitive and complicated issues about sexuality" (James-Traore, 2004: 3).

There has been a substantial amount of research on teachers in the classroom setting and in their professional development but little in the area of teachers as people and not just knowledge disseminators which is what this thesis discusses. As Carrim states,

These 'other' characteristics ["race, gender, political opinion, religion, sexual orientation and ethnicities, inter alia"] of teachers' identities tend not to be given sufficient academic coverage in the functionalist and structuralist accounts of teachers as workers and/or professionals. If we are to capture the precise nature of teachers' identities, it is important that we address the actual lived realities of teachers themselves, their perceptions and their experiences (2003: 307).

When looking at the importance placed on education as a method of prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS, the role of the teacher is central to the implementation of the South African national strategy. The topics of Life Skills call on the teachers' lived knowledge of the body, which therefore brings 'other identities' into the classroom. The teacher is not just a knowledge disseminator but also a woman, mother, sister, partner, and sexual being. As Sayed (2004) states, even the media "seldom reports on the stresses of coping with the numerous roles and identities that are demanded of teachers" (251). This aspect of teaching is therefore often overlooked when investigating teachers and the teaching profession.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to explore *experiences that shape teachers' perceptions* of and responses to some topics in the Life Skills programme. In particular, I investigate aspects of their lives that influence *how they respond* to certain topics in the Life Skills curriculum. These topics include teaching about puberty and changes to the body, HIV prevention, and sexual decision making.⁹ To understand the teachers' perceptions and responses the divisions between private and public knowledge relating to HIV, sex and sexuality is explored. The space of schools as sacred/public spaces is explored and how the introduction of profane/private subjects such as sex and sexuality into these spaces causes teachers to renegotiate their identity. In addition the aim is to understand how the Life Skills curriculum shapes the role of the teacher and expectations of success within schools as traditionally focused academic institutions.

Teachers who participated in this study reported that they use their personal knowledge to cope with teaching about sex and sexuality, and to shape the ways they teach about these topics. This study was carried out with four female Coloured Life Skills teachers who were asked about personal experiences and opinions regarding some curriculum topics from the seventh grade Western Cape Education Department curriculum currently (2005) instituted in primary schools in the Western Cape Province. Women were chosen as participants in this study because they constitute 65.86% of teachers¹⁰ in South Africa. In addition it is commonly known that women traditionally teach the 'soft subjects' such as Life Skills, Language, and Literature. Coloured women were chosen to participate in this study because they make up such a significant portion of the population of women in the Western Cape Province, where

⁹ The Life Skills learning programme deals with health promotion and personal development. The curriculum seeks to "guide learners to: abstain or postpone sexual activity, change their lifestyle if they are sexually active, be responsible if they do not want to change their lifestyle, i.e. use condoms, accept people living with HIV/AIDS without discrimination" (DoH, 2002b: i). Curriculum topics include HIV/AIDS transmission and awareness, sex and sexuality, peer pressure, dating, growing up a whole person (intellectual, social, spiritual, physical and emotional), conception, pregnancy, birth, rape and sexual assault, illness, dealing with death, and caring for people with AIDS.

¹⁰ The term teachers in this case is further defined to mean pre-primary, primary, and secondary education intuition teaching professionals (Statistics South Africa, 2007a).

the research was carried out (Statistics South Africa, 2007b). They therefore constitute the majority of the teaching population in the Province.

However while it is impossible to generalize the responses of these teachers to the larger teacher population, this study seeks to hypothesise and explore the role of identity for Life Skills teachers and how teachers' personal experiences impact the ways in which they respond, speak about, and interact with the subjects of sex, sexuality, and HIV/AIDS.

1.5 Research question

The main research question is: What are the influences and experiences that shape teachers' responses to topics of HIV and sex and sexuality in the Life Skills curriculum?

Supporting questions:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the new curriculum in relation to the children they teach?
- What are the aspects of teachers' *early lives* and experiences that influence their understanding and interaction with topics such as HIV, sex, and sexuality?
- What are teachers' *responses* to teaching topics viewed as sensitive and private and not usually talked about explicitly in schools?

1.6 Outline of the thesis

In Chapter 1, I provide the background to the study. This includes information about HIV/AIDS in South Africa and the implementation of the HIV/AIDS/sexuality education programme. I then discuss the research problem and rationale behind the research. In addition I outline the research question and sub questions of this study.

In Chapter 2 I establish a conceptual framework. This framework aids an understanding of the Life Skills curriculum, its impact on teachers, and traditional conceptualizations of education. I also highlight some of the Department of Education's expectations of Life Skills teachers. In this chapter I shall also highlight pertinent questions with regard to these expectations

In Chapter 3, I establish a historical view of the history of sexuality pertinent to one's understanding of the Life Skills curriculum, teachers' perceptions and experiences, along with the discourse of HIV/AIDS/sexuality education. I will also elaborate on traditional values and modern reflexivity, both historically and conceptually. In addition, I will draw on the theories of Anthony Giddens to aid an understanding of the divisions of public and private. The theories of Emile Durkheim will be explored to enrich this understanding through an exploration of the terms sacred and profane. These theories, terms and concepts will help aid the analysis and discussion of the results of this investigation in chapter 6.

In Chapter 4 I review relevant literature and research regarding teachers' navigation of the personal and professional worlds in relation to sexuality and HIV/AIDS. In this chapter I also highlight the limitations of these various studies and show where my research fills in some gaps.

In chapter 5 the research process and methodology are outlined. The qualitative nature of the study is discussed, along with the methods utilized in the research process. Assumptions related to the citing of the study, samples used, and limitations of the study are addressed here. I position myself as the researcher and in addition outline the data analysis process.

In chapter 6, I explore the structural influences and experiences present in the teachers' early lives. I present life histories of each participant and discuss some of the influential structures which emerge. These structures are grouped into general categories which emerged from the interview data. The influences explored include family structures, the role of religion, the political and social climate, and structures which informed their early understanding of the sexual self. This chapter will also discuss further the conceptual and theoretical frameworks outlined in chapters 2 and 3, using them to give a greater understanding of the multiple experiences and perceptions of the Life Skills curriculum.

In chapter 7 I explore the experiences which have influenced teachers' understanding of and interaction with Life Skills topics. This chapter is divided into two sections. In

the first section I highlight their experiences of sex education along with their envisaged role as Life Skills teachers. In the second section I consider the intersection of their lived experiences and the Life Skills curriculum. This section takes into consideration teachers, students, and the sensitive topics of the curriculum to gain an understanding of contemporary contexts of youth culture and how teachers make sense of their personal values in the classroom.

In chapter 8 I discuss the emerging themes and make conclusions based on the research and theoretical framework. I then make recommendations for further research in the emerging field of HIV/AIDS teaching and education in South Africa.

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Chapter 2

OBE and Life Skills: Changing values, expectations and roles for teachers

2.1 Introduction

This chapter helps to develop an understanding of the outcomes based education system and the values enshrined with it along with the implications of these values. The Life Skills program is highlighted and the sensitive topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality are outlined. The focus is then turned towards the values and topics of OBE and the way in which the Life Skills curriculum calls upon private knowledge and experience in the public space of schooling. In order to further understand this Durkheim's theory of the sacred and profane is employed to illuminate the tensions of bringing "profane" topics like sex into the "sacred space" of schools. The new values and topics of the curriculum also bring about new measures of educational success, such as behaviour change. These measures will be juxtaposed with the traditional outcomes of education. In so doing, I will highlight how behaviour change oriented outcomes bring personal issues to the fore in the traditionally public space of schools. The shifts in goals and values of Life Skills education have also caused the Department of Education to re-conceptualize the roles of teachers with regard to the desired behavioural outcomes. Here some of the roles of a Life Skills teacher are explored. Once again Durkheim's theory is employed to aid an understanding of the sacred and profane manifestations of these roles. This chapter concludes with an overview of how the Life Skills curriculum changes education, teaching, and learning in fundamental ways by bringing the private/profane knowledge of the lived body into the otherwise public/sacred space of schooling. This chapter frames why it is important to look at teachers' personal experiences. Teachers' experiences are drawn upon and inform the values, expectations, and outcomes of the curriculum they teach. Here an attempt is made to understand what teachers were responding to when they spoke about the Life Skills curriculum. This chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the complexities of public and private knowledge and experiences for Life Skills teachers and looks at the curriculum in terms of teachers' responses to it, not necessarily their teaching of this curriculum.

2.2 Values of OBE and the Life Skills Curriculum

As stated in the problem, the new post-apartheid education system instituted changes in the methodology and practice of education. Teaching in South Africa became difficult due to the fact that OBE instituted new standards which conflicted with those of the apartheid era system still in place. Most of the country's teachers were trained under the old segregated structures of apartheid to use traditional learning by rote methods. The introduction of OBE was a huge departure from those previous methods. This departure affected the way the system addressed values. The new paradigm has enshrined new values and addresses sensitive topics such as gender empowerment, alternative ways of being (religion, sexuality, and career) and the influence of media and globalization. The new OBE system has been difficult for many teachers to adopt. However, many teachers in South Africa saw the OBE system as a refreshing if problematic change from the traditional forms of learning by rote. Many saw it as a development tool for the new generation of free South Africans.

Formally, changes in the practice of education came with the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (RNCS) which mandated that there should be a shift from a "traditional aims-and-objectives approach to outcomes-based education" which can be seen as the modern curriculum in relation to the outdated traditional one (RNCS, 2002: 4). The curriculum statement also uses language that is modern in its values and advocates the ideals of democracy and human rights, as opposed to language based on racial segregation notions of the past. The new curriculum utilizes the South African constitution as a cornerstone in defining its values. The Manifesto on Values, Education, and Democracy (as quoted in the RNCS, 2002) outlines those values in the national constitution which are to be upheld in the development of the new curriculum. These values are incorporated into the curriculum. In relation to education on HIV/AIDS (as is relevant to this study) the curriculum states that it must "[deal] with HIV/AIDS and [nurture] a culture of sexual and social responsibility" (RNCS, 2002: 8).

In Mattson and Harley's chapter entitled, *Teacher Identities and Strategic Mimicry in the Policy/Practice Gap* (2003), they offer a useful framework and understanding of traditionalism and modernity in the changing South African curriculum. They define

traditional education as the multiple legacies and systems that have influenced the field and its practice. The legacies of colonialism, missionary education, and apartheid continue to influence the ways schools operate, teaching happens and education is conceptualized (Mattson and Harley, 2003: 290). It is the conservative, regimented, and strict nature of these systems which has permeated education in South Africa in the past. For Mattson and Harley, the ideals upheld by traditional education include “sexism, authoritarianism, corporal punishment, rote-learning, ritual and routine” (Mattson and Harley, 2003: 290). OBE caused conflict between “educational traditionalists” who advocated a theory consisting of learning by rote and exercises of memorization, and the newer “child-centred education” (Carr, 2003: 8). Mattson and Harley define modernity as a push for globalization and the information age. They also take into account Giddens’ ideas of reflexivity at both the institutional and individual levels (Mattson and Harley, 2003: 290). Carr explains the difference as being a distinction of the social function of education. “Between those who emphasise the responsibilities of education to *economic goals* and those who stress its importance for *personal growth and fulfilment*” (Carr, 2003: 8, my emphasis). In the South African context another way to look at this shift in educational theory is between Fundamental Pedagogics, the previous style of rote learning, and the emergence of Outcomes Based Education.

What Mattson and Harley also highlight is that these shifts from traditional to modern educational philosophy may be difficult for teachers who are not necessarily shifting with them, whether in their own life or in the practice of teaching. Teachers are caught in a difficult position trying to navigate these changes. Mattson and Harley (2003) explain that teachers in South Africa try to “look competent” (284) in different areas but are actually just performing what they call “mimicry”. Mimicry is the act of pretending and modelling the expected behaviour for a given situation (Mattson and Harley, 2003: 284). In the case of the progressive South African curriculum teachers feel alienated and in some cases ostracised personally by the topics, methods, and expectations of the curriculum. Mattson and Harley (2003) state that these overly liberal and sometimes out of touch curricula ask teachers to participate as first world actors rather than as actors from their own contextual experiences.

Teacher education policy and providers reinforce teachers’ strategies of mimicry by trying to reform teacher identities in the image of a first world, modern global citizen or ‘universal

subject' rather than attending to their more pressing and practical needs (Mattson and Harley, 2003: 284).

Mattson and Harley (2003) point out that the values present in the curriculum (a curriculum which upholds ideas of modern reflexivity and human rights) impact on culture, lifestyle and locality. The values present in the language, goals, and materials produced by the Department of Education are a radical departure from the materials used to educate most teachers currently working in South Africa. These very modern ideas are tied to the theory of reflexivity and ask the teacher to bridge the private/public divide. Modern curriculum topics such as Life Skills interrogate knowledge previously located in the profane, bringing new topics into the sacred sphere of public education.

The Life Orientation (LO) learning area is geared towards equipping South Africa's youth with Life Skills, preparing them for "successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society" (RNCS, 2002: 26). A learning area is the nomenclature for a larger group of 'outcomes' and could be seen as an umbrella term. The LO learning area is comprised of five outcomes in the grades 7-9 phase: health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development and movement, and orientation to the world of work (RNCS, 2002: 26). Each outcome is then comprised of learning programmes in the form of curriculum materials.

Where does the teacher fit into the new curriculum? The Revised National Curriculum outlines the ideal teacher as someone who is "able to fulfil various roles" (DoE, 2002: 27) in the classroom. While this is to be expected of a teacher, one must consult other Department of Education documents to clarify what types of roles are envisioned and implied in this statement.

2.3 Changing values, bring the profane into the sacred in new ways

For the purposes of this thesis, "sensitive subjects" should refer to sex/uality, puberty, HIV/AIDS and other related chronic illnesses, sexual abuse, violence, death, coming of age, and relationships. It is when these subjects are being taught that the teacher's personal experiences and identity are inevitably engaged with in complex ways. There is an internal debate happening wherein the teacher's personal experiences and

philosophies play a role, while externally there is a specific expectation of teaching that may not relate to his/her experiences. This dichotomy, while present in the teaching of other subjects, is highly relevant in the context of such sensitive issues as those discussed above. This would also be true of the student's experience with sensitive topics. It is these sensitive topics which blur the boundaries of the sacred and profane, public and private, teacher roles, and, in addition, bring into question the accepted discourse of schools as public spaces.

Durkheim divides the world into sacred and profane spheres (Morrison, 2006). This means that there are public and private ways of being- objects, thoughts, and actions in society. "The sacred in society is given its awesome sacred qualities by virtue of its capacity to represent values, sentiments, power, or beliefs which are shared in common" (Cuzzort, 1969: 29). In contrast Cuzzort (1969) tells of the "profane", which can be thought of in terms of the domestic realm of everyday activity of the individual. Morrison (2006) helps to further clarify Durkheim's theory by stating that "sacred things are not only set apart, but also they are protected by interdictions which have the force of prohibitions or taboos acting to protect and isolate the sacred from the profane" (235). Life Skills topics such as sex and sexuality would be regarded as profane in this context. The school can be seen as a sacred space where specific subjects such as reading, writing and arithmetic are enshrined as sacred. Thus the taboo of speaking about the profane topics of sex/sexuality in the classroom directly confronts the sacred space of schools. Morrison further clarifies these distinctions by stating that,

Sacred things are segregated from profane things and are thought to be superior in dignity and are therefore elevated from ordinary things... the sacred and profane represents a principle of segregation which formally separates the natural from the spiritual world, the domestic world from the outside world... In this way the sacred and the profane provide the group with a classificatory model of opposites such as good and evil, clean and dirty, pure and polluted, inside and outside, holy and defiled and so on (Morrison, 2006: 235).

One of the most important considerations related to bringing profane topics into the school setting is illustrated in the chronicle of the history of sexuality. This is addressed here only in brief and elaborated on in the following chapter. Sex is seldom a topic discussed between parents and children (Coombe, 2002). Generally speaking, when one thinks back to the childhood conversations regarding sex those conversations were most likely to be with peers rather than parents. The traditionally

taboo nature of sex has to do with a deep rooted cultural moralization of the topic. With roots of modesty and the separation of men and women's worlds, the topic of sex was enshrined as profane and therefore unspeakable in public spheres. This replicated not only in personal relationships but in politics, economics, business, and education. The history of sexuality is full of silences, regulations, and distinctions between the public and private spheres. Thus the Life Skills programme seeks –in some ways- to push profane topics into the public realm. It is because of the deeply rooted historic separation of these topics that many people find them uncomfortable to discuss in public. Because the curriculum teaches these sensitive topics and also seeks to change personal behaviour with regard to these, the subject differs from others in the school setting.

2.4 Changing expectations of schooling: academic achievement and behaviour change

When speaking about the introduction of a new subject or the apparent elaboration of a subject such as traditionally bio-medically-focused sex education courses, one must also look at how new curricula fit in with the pre-existing system of schooling. Here the expectations and ideas of success associated with Life Skills are framed within a broader understanding of traditional educational expectations, ideas of success, and the separation of public and private spaces and knowledge. The traditional idea of education is to achieve a certain level of knowledge regarding basic subjects, such as reading and maths. These goals are traditionally evaluated in terms of examination results. The development and inclusion of a new subject such as Life Skills has shifted curriculum content and evaluation procedures. The teacher, student and society at large have long considered academic achievement to be in the form of exam results, yet the foundation of Life Skills education challenges this paradigm in a fundamental way. Life Skills courses relates achievement to behaviour change, health and personal wellness skills and regulation/ownership of the physical body, for example, the delaying of sexual intercourse to prevent STI/HIV transmission.

The difference in thinking about academic/school success and achievement in relation to Life Skills is important in addressing the complexities of teaching Life Skills in the modern school setting. These concepts of success and the role of the school highlight

a tension between the curriculum, teaching, role expectations, and outcomes. Indeed, Life Skills curricula blur the understood standards of academic success because the outcomes cannot be measured in the same way as those of traditional taught subjects. This is not to say that the previous ideas of academic rigour and success are unnecessary. On the contrary, they must co-exist with the ideals advocated in behaviour change education such as Life Skills.

What must be addressed is where the school is located, as an institution and public space, within our understanding of public and private life. The school is a site of intense learning and development for the children of the nation and is traditionally thought of as a place of public discourse. Private matters of the lives of teachers, administrators, and, in most cases, students stay 'at home'. Adults who work in a school setting are thought to be unprofessional if they provide 'too much' personal information to their students. Many times teachers do not tell students their personal details such as where they live, who their partners are, their personal and family issues and the complexities of their relationships and this reticence is thought of as professionalism. In some cases, when an aspect of personal life interrupts the job of a teacher such as in the case of death, birth, and marriage a teacher may be 'forced' to disclose details of the personal in their classroom. As stated above, here it is important to remember Durkheim's contribution to an understating of conflict between the public and private spheres of life which he terms the sacred and profane. One can then apply these terms to the school as a sacred space where public knowledge is taught and profane knowledge of the personal nature is excluded.

The school is seen as a sacred space where future leaders are moulded, knowledge is imparted, intellectual property developed, and academic dreams formulated. The school space and the actors within that space are seen as part of a sacred institution. However, the introduction of sex education such as in the Life Skills curriculum, can result in conflict between the sacred and profane spheres of the lives of each person involved in the school culture.

The expectations of success, as elaborated on above, bring into question each individual's profane sphere of life. Parents, teachers, students, community members, and school administrators are then forced to merge the two spheres of sacred and

profane, public and private. The profane is present as the everyday practice of the body, its social relations and sexual relations. These issues are then present in the topics discussed in class, assignments given to students, questions asked of parents and teachers, larger health promotion campaigns in the school, and the school administration's dealings with the community at large. Life Skills is an inherently profane subject, which due to the necessities of public health has been incorporated into the sacred space of schools. This incorporation puts all the actors in a difficult position to manage their public and private, sacred and profane identities, actions, opinions, values/beliefs in new ways within the sacred space of the school. It is useful to extend the idea of the school beyond the literal walls of a school grounds but also into the lives of parents, concerned community members, learners, teachers, and members of the school administration.

Teachers play an integral role in the implementation of the National HIV/AIDS Policy (HSRC, 2005) as those who deliver important prevention and Life Skills messages to the adolescent population of the country. As adults who have regular contact with the youth of the country they are seen as key players in delivering the preventive education message mandated by the National HIV/AIDS policy. Teachers are influential in many ways in the course of a young adult's life. Through years of interaction and involvement, teachers often represent a trustworthy and knowledgeable adult figure in students' lives. While the teacher is instrumental in a student's academic success, the national policy also hopes that the teacher influences the private practices of students' sexual behaviour choices. This expected influence is not only in the sphere of personal life but also at a deeper level of intimate practice. It is the hope of the curriculum that Life Skills teachers will reach students in a fundamental way and stimulate/encourage behaviour change. It is the hope of the national government, particularly the Departments of Education and Health, that this crucial population receives a tool kit of knowledge and strategies for dealing with HIV/AIDS prevention, interaction with people living with HIV/AIDS, sex/uality, relationships, body ownership, and sexual abuse as these impact on HIV/AIDS related issues in communities across the country.

In Sayed's (2004) chapter regarding teacher education in post-apartheid South Africa he notes that "the new curriculum [OBE] sets up different expectations of teachers

from those held under apartheid, which expected very little of teachers,” (257-258). The new curriculum requires teachers to deliver a curriculum foreign to them. They did not learn in the ways they are now mandated to teach, but here they are at the centre of this new programme’s successful implementation. Sayed (2004) goes on to say that the radical yet necessary changes within the Department of Education’s curriculum and training have shaped what it means to be a teacher. The role of the teacher is markedly different in South Africa with the introduction of OBE and the Revised National Curriculum Statement. Jansen (2003) includes the complexities of post-apartheid contexts in which “teachers, in the democratic ideal, were going to be knowledge-producers; they would take charge of their own classrooms; they would initiate discussion; they would select liberatory content knowledge for the curriculum; they would empower learners; they would change the world” (121). Teachers were envisioned to be what Jansen (2003) calls ‘liberators’ who would change society. It is within this discourse that one should look at the HIV/AIDS and sex/uality education curriculum and its subsequent goals. The teachers of the Life Skills curriculum are asked to perform in new ways. The Department of Education envisions different ways of being for Life Skills teachers, and this study takes this into account when examining their roles as mediators in this curriculum.

2.5 The ideal Life Skills Teacher

As elaborated on above, the ideas of success introduced by the Life Skills curriculum are different from those in traditional educational curricula. It is therefore important to look at the different roles and expectations advocated for teachers by the policy maker/curriculum developer. Examining these roles is of particular importance because of the changes this curriculum introduces into the world of the teacher and student. Due to the inherently personal nature of these sensitive subjects, teachers’ roles are re-negotiated. This underscores the importance of obtaining the point of view of the teachers themselves to gain an understanding of how their lived experiences influence the way they deal with these sensitive topics.

In the context of teaching Life Skills teachers’ roles are re-negotiated on a daily basis in terms of the topics presented and those which confront the teacher. The expectations placed on the teacher by the curriculum are very important in

understanding the teachers' navigation of these topics along with what contributes to their experiences and perceptions of the Life Skills curriculum.

What follows is a compilation of the expectations of a Life Skills teacher gathered from multiple Department of Education sources. The main sources consulted for this summation are: *The National Policy on HIV/AIDS for Learners and Educators in Public Schools and Students and Educators in Further Education and Training Institutions* (Department of Education [DoE], 1999), *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (Department of Education [DoE], 2002) and *The HIV/AIDS Emergency Guidelines for Educators* (DoE, 2000).

The first expectation is that *teachers should be specifically trained and supported at both the school and provincial level*. Life Skills teachers go through a unique training from their respective provincial Departments of Education. This study focuses on the Western Cape Department of Education practice where Life Skills teachers at the primary school level participate in a three day initial training programme (Western Cape Education Department [WCED], 2002) This 21 hour training session covers the basics of biomedical HIV/AIDS facts and statistics, as well as factors that may make someone vulnerable to HIV transmission. The training programme also addresses the educators' personal values (WCED, 2002). The training elaborates on the Life Skills curriculum in addition to the more general Life Orientation learning area. The training programme sheds light on other gender and sexual abuse related issues, HIV/AIDS school structures and dealing with the community at large. It concludes with some tips on time-tabling (WCED, 2002). After a teacher in the Western Cape attends this initial training course there are numerous workshop sessions and refresher courses offered each year on different curriculum topics and methods. As discussed earlier, the topics specific to the Life Skills curriculum do introduce the private experiences and knowledge of the lived body into the public world. Even still, Life Skills teachers are expected to *be at ease with the curriculum content*.

Other expectations address the teacher as a role model and state that the Life Skills teacher *should be a role model for students*. While teachers are often considered role models for their students it may be asked in what ways should a teacher be a role model in Life Skills. What types of roles should be modelled? What values are

modelled in those roles? What characteristics should be modelled and is this with regard to sexual behaviour? The Department of Education states that *teachers should exemplify responsible sexual behaviour*. What is meant by responsible? In what space does the teacher exemplify this behaviour: in public everyday life, as a teacher, in private life? How does a teacher live up to this stipulation, especially when its meaning is not specified? There must also be an interrogation of morality here and an investigation into whose morality and values are regarded as responsible in relation to the requirements of the curriculum.

The other expectations concern the imparting of knowledge. Life Skills teachers should *empower learners to deal with drugs, sexual abuse, violence, and STIs in relation to their role in HIV transmission*. This expectation is critical for the task of HIV prevention and the heart of the Life Skills curriculum. This expectation asks teachers to have an understanding of the complexities of social pressure which students come into contact with on a daily basis. What does the phrase ‘empower to deal with...’ mean? How does a teacher measure his/her effectiveness? The last goal is to *provide information on prevention methods which are defined to mean: abstinence from sex and immorality, use of condoms, faithfulness, prompt treatment of STIs and TB, avoidance of traumatic contact with blood, and the application of universal precautions*. What is considered immorality? Does providing information about prevention methods stop the transmission of HIV? Does providing information include providing tools/methods such as condoms and rubber gloves? These questions frame the investigation of Life Skills teachers’ perceptions and experiences of the complex nature of HIV and sex/uality. They begin to explore some of aspects of the tensions that seem to arise from the teacher’s personal and professional knowledge and experiences of these topics.

2.6 Conclusion

It is clear that the system of OBE, including the Life Skills curriculum introduces new values into the world of learning and teaching in South Africa. With the development of democracy the education system and philosophy changed greatly to include a human rights approach. Agreed upon values are upheld within the idealistic OBE and Life Skills programmes. These values however, especially in the case of

Life Skills teaching, have thrust new topics into the world of schooling. They have brought previously profane topics of personal life and behaviour into the sacred space of schools. This fundamental characteristic of the Life Skills program also brings into question ideas of success. The Life Skills program aims to change students' sexual behaviour. This anticipated outcome is very different from typical measures of academic success. These changes in conceptualizing success have also highlighted the different desired roles and ways of being of the Life Skills teacher. The Department of Education asks teachers to engage with the topics of the Life Skills curriculum in a personal way. It is therefore important to investigate what teachers' life experiences are which inform their engagement with these topics. The personal is now relevant in new ways in the space of schooling/teaching. Life Skills calls on life experiences as a basis of understanding and departure for teachers and students. In the next chapter specific theories are used to aid an understanding of how life experiences and values are developed in relation to the history of sexuality and modern/traditional ways of being. These theories provide a backdrop to the personal experiences that shape teachers' responses to topics of HIV and sex and sexuality in the Life Skills curriculum.

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Chapter 3

Understanding Social Practice

3.1 Introduction

This study seeks to explore teachers' understanding/ experiences/ responses and therefore requires a framework that explains social practice. It must also make explicit the ways people come to know themselves along with the beliefs and values they hold. This framework makes explicit the rules and regulations (structures) that govern peoples' lives within a particular context. The framework examines the interaction between social structures and human agents. Here I use Giddens' theory of structuration to help understand how people make meaning of their lives and come to hold the beliefs they claim are important. This helps to illuminate the influences and experiences that shape the teachers' responses to the topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality in the Life Skills curriculum. This framework provides a context in which to examine the tensions between the sacred and profane and the public and private in relation to teachers' roles as Life Skills instructors. This framework situates the teachers' experiences within the larger contexts of the traditional and modern, and the history of sexuality and is explained in detail below.

An overarching aspect of this study is how the topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality central to this investigation along with the development of the discourse itself have been influenced by the history of sexuality. We look to Foucault for a background to the history of sexuality and how shifts over time have created the social regulation of sexuality. This history is of particular importance when the discourse of HIV/AIDS and sex education is addressed as it is a contemporary chapter of the history of sexuality. The history of sexuality also makes explicit the deep rooted divisions between the public and the private and their associations with the sacred and profane. Giddens' and Durkheim's theories will aid an understanding of these aspects of life. I also reference the history of sexuality and its impact on the discourse of HIV/AIDS and in turn sexuality education.

3.2 Theory of structuration

Giddens theory of structuration aids an understanding of the struggles the participants' have when navigating the unclear divisions of private/public and traditional/modern spheres of life. Structuration aids an understanding of people's life experiences, influences, and perceptions. This theory will be employed to show how the participants' enacted agency to revise the 'rules' of their youth and grow past these 'given' structures. Through lenses focused on both structure and agency key patterns are seen throughout the later chapters of this thesis, which serve to strengthen an understanding of the participants' and the research questions.

According to Giddens, social practices make up individuals and society. Social practices shape both society and the individual, as opposed to individual action, experience of the individual actor, or the existence of social rules or their requirements (Clark, 1990). Giddens' theory is an attempt to understand the way agents (people) are shaped and how they shape social structures (the rules of society) (Giddens, 1984: 3). What Giddens says is that agents both draw on and reproduce the structuring properties (rules and regulations) of social practice (Giddens, 1984). He explains that social practices are recursive, "that is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves *as actors*" (Giddens, 1984: 2). For example a person will both draw on the rules and regulations of structural influences such as the family while also impacting on the structure through their own practices.

Social practices are carried out by human agents who exercise agency. Agency, Giddens (1984) states,

Refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency implies power: cf. Oxford English Dictionary definition of an agent, as 'one who exerts power or produces an effect'). Agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently (9).

Agency is, therefore, the ability/power of human agent to 'act' in any given situation. It is the ability of the agent to exercise both agency and reflexivity which is integral to the theory of structuration.

To understand human agents one must recognize what Giddens (1984) terms their “knowledgeability”. Important for understanding structuration is what Giddens calls the “reflexive form of the knowledgeability of human agents” (1984: 3). Here he means reflexivity to be understood as an agent’s capacity to be self-reflective in relation to daily life. He goes further to say that “actors not only monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own; they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move” (Giddens, 1984: 5). This is to say that there is also a certain amount of institutional reflexivity where the rules and regulations of structures are reflected upon, for example, questioning previously uncontested rules and social norms. Giddens (1984) explains that the knowledgeability of agents makes possible the process of reflexivity along with the important reproduction and evaluation of social practice enabled by the characteristic of modernity.

It is the specifically reflexive form of the knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices. Continuity of practice presumes reflexivity, but reflexivity in turn is possible only because of the continuity of practices that makes them distinctively ‘the same’ across space and time. ‘Reflexivity’ hence should be understood not merely as ‘self-consciousness’ but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life. To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons (including lying about them) (3).

The two-fold characteristic of reflexivity impacts on agents’ decisions and also informs the reproduction of structures by agents. The theory of structuration is used in this thesis as an analytical tool to aid an understanding of the interaction between structures and agents. Structures are not fixed but are subject to change through the process of their reproduction by agents. In turn, agents are not pre-determined but rather exercise agency and continually take part in processes of reflexivity at both the individual and institutional level. Structures and agents should be seen as reciprocally influencing each other and as being fluid within that exchange. To better understand how agents make sense of the social world in terms of their structural influences and reflexivity I shall position the individual agent within the broader cultural and social contexts of the traditional and modern.

3.3 Traditionalism and modernity

The challenges teachers faced by teachers through addressing the topics covered by the Life Skills curriculum lend themselves to an examination which utilizes the notions of traditionalism and modernity. An understanding of traditionalism and modernity must be seen in an historical context. Much like the history of sexuality (addressed below) there have been gradual shifts and changes in the way people operate, relate, and socialize that have caused social theorists to classify these actions on a continuum from traditional to modern. In using these terms we must avoid seeing them as exclusive and rigid but rather as ways of conceptualizing the world in relation to the ways people interact and expect the social world to work. This notion of expectations of traditionalism and modernity will help us understand how the participants have responded to changes in society from the traditional to the modern and reflexive.

Numerous theories exist regarding the shifts between the traditional and the modern. This examination engages primarily with Anthony Giddens' theories to illustrate the concepts. Giddens did not coin the phrases traditional and modern, but his work on these subjects and social classifications is an intellectual precedent in the field of social theory. The field of social theory was developed in the Enlightenment period and its first preoccupation was with the development of the idea of modernity (Smart, 1999; Giddens, 1994b). As Smart (1999) states,

it is in this context [of the Enlightenment] that the social was first constituted as an object of abstract knowledge or reasoning, a focus for theoretical reflection and systematic analysis, as well as a target of technologies aiming to exercise control over the vagaries to which everyday life is subject (35).

The period of the Enlightenment questioned larger institutions such as the church and government, along with issues of social life, gender, family structures, and sex/uality (Giddens, 1994b: 5).

All societies have both traditional and modern characteristics. These are not exclusive eras or ways of operating but ways of classifying social actions. In defining tradition, Giddens (1994) writes that it,

is bound up with memory, specifically what Maurice Halbwachs terms 'collective memory': involves ritual; is connected with what I shall call formulaic notion of

truth; has 'guardians'; and, unlike custom, has binding force which has a combined moral and emotional content (63).

Traditionalism encompasses ideas of communal responsibility, family relations, and interactions insofar as they supersede individualism. From a traditionalist stance, relationships along with future aspirations are predetermined by the community. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim explain traditional ways of being thus: “on the one hand they rigorously restrict the individual’s choices, on the other they offer a familiarity and protection, a stable footing and certain identity” (1955: 46). As tradition was questioned these values and systems did not disappear but were rather reinvented and conceptualized through a process of interrogation (Giddens, 1994b: 5). Another important aspect of the shifting climate between traditional and modern was the development of a middle class, the reduction of poverty, and a rise in people’s standard of living. This made it possible for people to conceive of other ways of life and therefore lent itself to the idea of reflexivity, a core aspect of the modern project of the self (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 47).

In Giddens’ *The Consequences of Modernity* he details aspects of his theory in a table titled “Environments of Trust and Risk in Pre-modern and Modern Cultures”. For the purposes of this thesis I will not reproduce this table but rather summarize relevant points. These illustrate some of the differences in ways of thinking and operating between the traditional and modernity and are useful guidelines for describing traditional and modern culture (Giddens, 1990: 102). Elaborating on key aspects of this table will aid a deeper understanding of these concepts.

In pre-modern/traditional cultures much emphasis is placed on kinship ties, local community, and religious institutions along with larger traditions. Kinship ties and family networks are used as stabilising forces in peoples’ lives. Personal identity within traditional culture is developed in relation to one’s role within family and community structures. Interactions, lessons, and support from the community at large are central to the life of a community member. Religious institutions are useful in terms of social organization, community development and identity construction as they are present and unchanging in every stage of an individual’s coming of age. Overarching tradition in pre-modern society can be seen as a means for families and individuals to connect to the past, present, and future and conceptualize time

(Giddens, 1990: 120). As will be demonstrated later, these traditionalist values are also some of the characteristics of the participants' lives. The role of family, religion, and social climate will be explored to gain an understanding of how these structures draw on a more traditional way of being to illustrate the departure between the participants' traditional experience/ values and the values enshrined in the Life Skills curricula. As will be shown, the impact of traditional culture does persist into eras of modernity in multiple ways, blurring the boundary between the classifications of traditionalism and modernity.

However, life in the modern era is different from the traditional in that modernity incorporates abstract questions of the self and the individual's place in society. Gerard Delanty (1999) guides an understanding of the concept of modernity as multifaceted. He describes it in terms of its cultural, social, and political manifestations by saying that:

As a cultural idea, modernity refers to the capacity of a society to interpret itself and to act on the basis of knowledge; as a social concept, modernity refers to the domain of social institutions with which social relations are structured; and as a political notion, modernity refers to the dynamic movement of society by which social actors bring about social change by bringing their creative and learning powers to bear on the concrete situation in which they find themselves (Delanty, 1999: 12).

Delanty points out that modernity is not fixed and cannot be described in terms of absolutes but rather by certain defining characteristics. As Scott Lash (1994) highlights, reflexivity should be thought of in two ways: structural and self reflexivity.

First there is structural reflexivity in which agency, set free from the constraints of social structures, then reflects on the 'rules' and 'resources' of such structure; reflects on agency's social conditions of existence. Second there is self-reflexivity in which agency reflects on itself (115).

It is important to understand these two forms of reflexivity, since they are pertinent to the analysis of the participants' lives. Reflexivity is of particular importance when looking at the ways in which the participants evaluate and reconsider structures. Self-reflexivity is important in understanding how the participants' reflect on their lives and the changing contexts they are presented by the Life Skills curriculum and involved agents. By looking at their lives with a reflexive understanding agents are able to view and evaluate their life events, aspirations, and experiences in multiple ways. To be reflexive is to gain a critical understanding of the influences, actions, and

events in one's life and understand them (or at least attempt to do so) in relation to one's personal identity.

Giddens' further explores the subject of modernity by emphasising that personal connection and social and sexual relationships replace the role of kinship ties and serve as stabilizing forces through which people construct their identity. This is not to say that kinship ties are unimportant, but rather, that the family structure as a stabilizing force is no longer paramount. In turn, an agent's development of social identity in the modern world cannot be removed from the process of reflexivity, agency, and the structures from which they arise. This is opposed to the situation in traditional society, where one's identity was fixed in relation to one's position within a social structure.

Within this period of modernity the effects of urbanization, globalization, and (in the case of South Africa) the abolishment of the apartheid system have led to greater freedom of movement, which has separated large families and even made the socially desirable family size change. This in turn has contributed to an evolution in the concept of the 'local community'. In its modern form, community is a more fluid entity where personal connections are important for individuals rather than one's position within social hierarchy in relation to their family. Institutions of religion and social traditions are also not emphasised as much in modernity. Changing family roles and personal support networks, and an emphasis on the individual diminish the role of these traditional structures.

According to Giddens' (1990) continuum, the period of late modernity is signified by society's value of individualism along with reflexivity. In this period of late modernity the media are seen as a mirror showing the viewer the necessity of living out a self reflexive project. In South Africa the independence of the South African Broadcasting System has changed much of what the country sees in terms of sexual content, outside opinion, and western influence. This change in what is presented by the South African media has surely impacted on how people conceptualize their identity and how they perceive themselves in a globalizing world. This will be demonstrated later by drawing on the participants' experiences and reports of the changing values of our modern, post-apartheid world as opposed to previous

traditional values and structures. Giddens (1990) states that “globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (64). Harding (1998) states in her chapter titled ‘Private Sex, Public Danger’ that,

The private and the public are mobile and interdependent categories. Neither has meaning without the other. In contemporary societies, many of the meanings of sexuality are constituted in relation to changing definitions of public and private and a shifting border between them. Transgressions of this border help to constitute categories of sexual experience and perform a normative function, since representations of private sex made public are accompanied by an indication of whether or not they should be tolerated. Sexuality, in turn, gives meaning to and links the domains of private and public and, through this, links the individual to broader cultural and political structures in a way that makes social (dis)order possible. Sexuality is central to the power relations constituting modern societies (37).

It is through the lens of these changes, that the views and behaviour of the teachers interviewed for this study should be viewed. The characteristics of traditionalism and modernity manifest in different aspects of this research. These classifications are used to shed light on the curriculum and the shifts in educational values and practices. In addition, these ideas aid an understanding of the changes between the apartheid era and the democratic South Africa experienced by the participants’. The influential structures of the participants’ youth are also viewed using the concepts of traditionalism and modernity. In addition the ideas of traditionalism and modernity are employed to highlight the experiences of both teachers and students in the Life Skills classroom. The participants’ experiences are framed not only in the context of traditionalism and modernity but also with regard to how sexuality is understood within these paradigms. The history of sexuality highlights further the participants’ position in the context of understanding the “profane” topics of HIV, sex and sexuality. What is of particular importance here is the silences around sexuality which have persisted throughout the participants’ lives.

3.4 History of sexuality

Alongside shifts in the social world between traditionalism and modernity there have been significant shifts in societal views of sexuality. Examining the history of sexuality will aid our understanding of the experiences in the participants’ lives by highlighting the roots of silences, private and public divides, and the sacred and

profane in terms of traditionalism and modernity. The most widely used text for understanding the history of sexuality is French social theorist Michel Foucault's 'The History of Sexuality' series. The works of other theorists, some of whom critique and validate Foucault's assertions about the history of sexuality are also relevant and are addressed here.

The study of sexuality can be seen through many lenses. One of the most widely adhered to school of thought is the social constructivist perspective. This perspective understands the body in terms of how it is "shaped, constrained, and even invented by society" (Shilling, 1993: 70). One of the marked contributions of the social constructivist perspective to our understanding of sexuality is the idea that sexuality is tied to context. Gagnon and Parker (1995) state clearly that "sexual actions of specific bodies [are linked] to the cultural and social contexts in which sexuality occurs" (12). Social constructivists such as Foucault theorise that society shapes the sexual being and concepts of the body. Foucault's work "views the body as produced and constituted by discourse" (Shilling, 1993: 98). This discourse around sexuality, in a Foucault's understanding, relates to conversations, silences, actions, and thoughts about sex. His understanding of sexual knowledge is that it "is always bound up with historically specific regimes of power, and therefore, every society produces its own truths which have a normalizing and regulatory function" (McNay, 1992: 25). It is the social constructivist's research agenda which lead to our greater understanding of the different contexts of sexuality.

Other perspectives on the history of sexuality include feminist perspectives which have worked on re-conceptualising the history of sexuality in terms of women's positions in the public/private domains, constructions/performance of gender, and reproduction and power of patriarchal systems. Feminist social theorists seek to "re-evaluate and rediscover the experiences of women" (McNay, 1992: 3). Judith Butler (1990) speaks about the importance of defining what constitutes gender. While we may understand the basic difference in sex based on physical differences, understanding gender is a more complex matter which is shaped by cultural and social contexts. Butler defines gender as a cultural construction and performance of certain ways of being. "The action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already

socially established; and is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimisation” (Butler, 1990: 140; Butler’s emphasis). The act of becoming gendered is a repetitive process which is continuous and changing. Becoming gendered also involves social aspects where one is measured in terms of social norms and performance in ‘public’ spaces. These performances seek to establish a type of normality and serve to keep “maintaining gender within its binary frame” (Butler, 1990: 140).

Feminists’ critique Foucault’s use of power; they find fault with his theory which as they see it, “results in a reduction of social agents to passive bodies and does not explain how individuals may act in an autonomous fashion” (McNay, 1992: 3). Other theories in the feminist tradition highlight ‘other’ sexualities and in a similar sense re-evaluate and rediscover these types of experiences within the historical and contemporary contexts.

The period of social history before the seventeenth century is characterised by Foucault as being open to discussions on matters of sex in both private and public. However this changed with a massive shift in thinking. It was in the seventeenth century that the European world saw a shifting social realm and the establishment of the upper class. In the nineteenth century, progression of capitalism and industrial modes of production brought changes in social class, reproduction, and socialization (Foucault, 1978: 5). During this period the ‘Victorian bourgeoisie’ emerged as a social class who silenced talk of sexual matters, kept the role of sex as solely reproductive, and also moralized sex via the strict Christian institutions and moral standards of the day (Foucault, 1978: 3). Any behaviour which deviated from these strict parameters was outcast or institutionalized (ibid). What Foucault (1978) calls the repression of matters relating to sex which he states “operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of non-existence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see and nothing to know” (4). Silence was established in particular around all matters of sex and sexuality between “parents and children... teachers and pupils, or masters and domestic servants” (Foucault, 1978: 18). It is this ‘repressive hypothesis’ that makes up the bulk of Foucault’s writings about the history of sexuality in his first volume. This repressiveness was a characteristic of the Victorian period but there are

remnants of this mentality in today's society which influence the participants' lives as will be demonstrated later in chapter six.

The establishment of the nineteenth century modern capitalist society gave rise to new ways of being and social relations. Marshall (1994) identifies industrial capitalism's most influential factor as the "specialised division of labour, the expansion of science and technical rationality to encompass more and more aspects of life, the economic dominance of wage labour and commodity production and the emergence of a political citizenry" (27). At the same time an equally influential factor in society was the strength and influence of the Christian church. It was in the context of the Christian church that society was informed and regulated on matters of sex/uality. This was also the case for participants of Muslim faith. The general messages sent by the church to its congregations and society at large consisted of conservative ideology about sex as solely reproduction and vilified lust as sin. The church also perpetuated a negative portrayal of female sexuality.

The church strengthened already strict divisions between the public and private. A man's sphere of production was the public world of governance and work, while a woman's power was only in the private space of procreation or re-production. It is these early separations between *male and female / public and private* which continue to inform our understanding of the different expectations held for men and women in relation to expressed sexuality. The sexuality of women was reduced to the almost non-existent and practice such as female masturbation were viewed as for the highly perverse, the deviants (Foucault, 1978). Female sexual deviants were seen as prostitutes and sexual desire in women was regarded as deviant.. Men, on the other hand, were accustomed to visiting prostitutes and having mistresses and these practices persisted into the nineteenth century and fuelled the spread of syphilis in Europe.

What is important with regard to this discussion is how different attitudes held by the church shaped discourse around behaviours regarding sex. "In the Middle Ages, the Christian confession was the site in which sex was formulated. The priest was concerned with people's sexual *activities* and the dominant discourses on sex were concerned with the flesh (Shilling, 1993: 76; Shilling's emphasis). To be forgiven for

one's sins the confessor had to divulge everything to the priest including lustful fantasies, thoughts, and actions undertaken in a lustful/sexual/pleasurable manner. Thus the confessional became a site for the development of sexual discourse.

The increasing preoccupation with not only lustful action but also lustful thinking marked the beginning of a shift during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation (Shilling, 1993: 76). Shilling (1993) marks this period by an occupation with intention, “[p]riests started to inquire about people’s *intentions*, as well as their actions, and the locus of sexuality began to shift from the body to the mind of subjects” (76 Shilling’s emphasis). It is this increasing interest in the intentions of sexual behaviour that led us to our current conceptualizations of sexuality and desire.

The church was not the only body of professionals who had strong opinions and messages about sex. The medical field was becoming increasingly influential in the lives of middle and upper class citizens. Gagnon and Parker state that both the religious moralization of sex and the secular scientific community sought to regulate sexuality. Both institutions “viewed sex as a basic drive that needed to be thwarted through self-control and environmental purity” (Gagnon and Parker, 1995: 4). Both the religious and scientific communities further defined the role of sex as purely for the purposes of reproduction and sanctioned only under the institution of marriage between a man and woman. This further solidified the idea that sexuality was “automatic and heterosexual and universal” (Gagnon and Parker, 1995: 12).

Gagnon and Parker (1995) take us on an expedited tour of the history of sexuality to the present day. They recount the necessity for many social theorists to move to the United States during WWII and the importance of American influence such as the Kinsey Reports of the early 1950’s (1995: 5). New perspectives became accepted as the norm in sexuality research and included the feminist and homo/other sexual experience.

The history of sexuality research around HIV/AIDS has recently shaped research agendas. This research has revealed the fact that we “fundamentally lack an understanding of sexuality and sexual conduct cross-culturally” (Gagnon and Parker, 1995: 10). What HIV/AIDS has brought to the fore is a reinvigorated belief in the necessity of sex education. As the pandemic has spread from being a largely male,

homosexual, western issue to a female, heterosexual, 'third world' problem the research and concepts for dealing with sex/uality have changed.

The field of sexuality research and the history of sexuality is unfortunately overwhelmingly Euro-American phenomenon in its approach. While some have started to research sex/uality in other cultural contexts, few of these perspectives have been considered within the accepted discourse. Where are African contexts and influential forces situated in the history of sexuality and modern sexuality research? As Gagnon and Parker (1995) point out, "research attention focused on the dominant patterns of contemporary Western Europe or North America has also begun to give way to the broadening concern with social contexts once ignored as little more than peripheral and cultural systems marked above all else, in relation to dominant Western patters, by their organization of sexual difference" (Gagnon and Parker, 1995: 12).

In this chapter I have laid out a theoretical framework which serves to define the multiple lenses through which the data will be presented later in chapters six and seven. Firstly, the theory of structuration was outlined in terms of the basic interplay between structure and agent as illustrated by Anthony Giddens. Particularly important is the process by which agents recursively interact with the structural influences in their life. Structuration highlights the ways in which participants enact agency and interact with the influential structures of their early life. They learn from, revise their view of, and make sense of the world based on their interaction with social structures. Even in later stages of life they exercise agency and reflexivity, for instance, the teachers interviewed in this study are seen to do this in order to operate in and out of the Life Skills classroom.

Then traditionalism and modernity were highlighted in terms of their characteristics and in particular their impact on peoples' concepts of the self. In the analysis, the aspects of traditionalism which shaped the participants' lives come to the fore. In addition the teachers' struggles in navigating between traditionalism and modernity become clear in both their personal and professional lives. The influences of traditionalism and modernity also manifest in the teachers' experience of the curriculum, for example when their traditional ideas of youth are confronted by changing modern contexts.

In the final section of this chapter the history of sexuality was outlined utilizing Michael Foucault's work which gives insight into the context in which the teachers' grew up, the cultures of sexual silence and malediction, and in terms of where they currently operate as Life Skills teachers and agents of sexual behaviour change.

This conceptual framework is employed in multiple ways throughout the rest of this work and serves as a fundamental tool for understanding the behaviour and motivations of the teachers later on in the analysis. The conceptual framework laid out above includes theories that could be critiqued as dualistic and limiting. However, for our purposes one must not read these theories as exclusive, rigid, and fixed. What must be considered is their inner/inter-connected nature and their ability to explain the particular aspects of social life.

For instance, the theory of structuration is much further reaching than has been elaborated on for the purposes of this thesis. The basic understanding sought here is to show the recursive relationship between structure and agent. Thus highlighting the participants' interaction with the influential structures in their lives and how they evoke agency to create change. Similarly, understandings of traditionalism and modernity are far from being a dichotomy of historical periods or ways of being. While one may conceptualize them as being exclusive in both a micro and macro sense these world views are less rigid in real-life situations. . In any social context there is interplay between traditionalism and modernity and distinctions between are not clear cut. One may regard traditional ideals as the principles people live by while at the same time also being influenced by modernity. This will be shown in particular with participants whose values are overwhelmingly traditional but whose teaching confronts them with modern ways of being each day. The practice of traditionalism and modernity is also applicable to our understandings of the blurred divisions between public and private (domains and knowledge) along with the sacred and profane spheres. These theories will therefore be applied to the research in an overlapping way in an effort to highlight the complexities of the participants' experience with the Life Skills curriculum as teachers and as women with particular backgrounds.

In chapters 6 and 7 this theoretical framework is utilized to draw attention to the complexities of social practice. In the chapter which follows, I will review literature relevant to the study of teaching sexuality and HIV/AIDS curricula along with research done on the personal dynamics of teaching such sensitive subjects.

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Chapter 4

Literature Review: Research regarding teacher's personal lives, teaching sex/uality, and HIV/AIDS curricula

Two years of searching online journal databases and the internet has yielded no other research specifically related to attitudes and influences of teachers of sexuality and HIV/AIDS curricula. Therefore, the literature detailed below refers to books, compilations from conferences, and organisations. Numerous journal articles are used to illustrate the context and previous research done in related fields.

My contribution to the field of sociology of education/qualitative studies geared toward understanding HIV/AIDS is to provide an investigation of teachers' attitudes and influences in relation to the Life Skills curriculum they teach. Here teachers are understood not only in terms of their responses to the Life Skills curriculum but also their interactions, opinions, and values in relation to the sensitive topic of sex/uality/HIV/AIDS/STI education. Few people have asked such questions in relation to these issues. Here teachers are investigated as people working in a context that demands a new way of negotiating the private/public divide.

Much of the teacher centred research that has been carried out has to do with 'hard' subjects such as science and maths and in many cases focuses on the teachers' professional development and training. Much of our understanding of teachers' identities is based on researching them in terms of their life as professionals and workers (Carrim, 2003). Teachers take on many other roles in the form of mother, councillor and friend. This thesis is interested in these and in the teachers' personal knowledge and experience and how those dynamics impact on the classroom. .

As stated by Baxen and Breidlid (2004), much of the discourse on HIV/AIDS prevention and sex education assume that,

teachers can, are able to and will teach about deeply private, personal topics in a public space which brings their own sexuality and sexual practice into the spotlight, an assumption that the content (e.g. biological nature of the disease) of research is uncontested (6).

It is important to acknowledge that a teacher's sexuality and sexual practice are in the 'spotlight' with regard to this curriculum because for each individual the topics of sex education and Life Skills brings up different experiences of the lived body. The physical experiences of teachers are usually not called upon when they impart knowledge but this is what happens in the case of Life Skills teaching. It is therefore important to recognize that the experience of teachers is not necessarily universal. This research seeks to bring to the fore new and interesting questions about such experiences and contexts. The lessons learned by such studies helps to illuminate the variety and, in some cases, common experiences of some teachers'. Such experiences are related to coping when educating on sensitive topics. "Teachers' experiences of schooling can be interpreted in different ways. Different teachers tell different and often conflicting stories about similar situations and events. What validates each story is that it constructs meaning for the person telling it" (Elliott, 1994: 134).

Douglas Tonks writes in his book 'Teaching AIDS' (1996) about how to develop an HIV/AIDS education curriculum, pedagogical approaches to the topic, as well as how to handle student issues and classroom dynamics. Although his book is focused on the US context of HIV/AIDS in the early 1990's he does offer some advice to teachers of the subject which transcends his specific context and is applicable to HIV/AIDS educators the world over. In a section on preparing teachers to teach this curriculum he says that,

Teachers are likely to confront many more issues, both public and private, than they have been used to. A much higher level of research, sensitivity, and even personal soul-searching is often necessary in this subject area than in more traditional subjects such as math and grammar (Tonks, 1996: 22).

Tonks (1996) also addresses what he calls "personal prejudices and biases" that a teacher may have regarding people living with HIV, homosexuality, and teenage sexual exploration (24). He recommends that "AIDS instructors need to acknowledge and confront these biases and the inhibitions they may create in order to offer effective HIV and AIDS instruction." (Tonks, 1996: 25). This point is important because Tonks sees the teacher as a person with a lived experience that is brought into the classroom and informs the teacher in fundamental ways. Engaging with both the personal and professional aspects of teaching these sensitive subjects is important.

Hedgepeth and Helmich (1996) state that,

Educator values affect a sexuality education program in a number of ways: the inclusion or exclusion of certain topics from sexuality teaching; the extent to which certain topics are covered; selection of materials; how group issues are handled; and teacher interactions with learners, colleagues, and community members (97).

In other words, there is no way to divorce the teacher as a person with lived experiences from their job in the classroom. The teacher is intrinsically involved in the curriculum at the delivery level and is influential with regard to what students learn and to what they are exposed. This happens when a teacher uses agency to privilege certain information while silencing other information. While this may seem obvious in some cases the ramifications of this impact may be more profound when dealing with ‘real life’ subjects such as safe sex, family planning, contraception, and relationships. Hedgepeth and Helmich also emphasise that in many cases the teacher becomes like a psychologist for children and sometimes for families. This may happen because the sexuality education teacher is the only person in the school to form a ‘personal’ connection with the learners. In these cases, as in the classroom in general, Hedgepeth and Helmich (1996) warn about the possibility of a teacher’s counter-transference. This term refers to “cases in which the educator unconsciously holds positive or negative feelings toward a learner based on experiences with others” (Hedgepeth and Helmich, 1996: 102). Hedgepeth and Helmich give realistic and relevant advice to sex/uality and HIV/AIDS teachers regarding their role in the classroom and curriculum content. They have aided an understanding of the complex nature of teaching sexuality oriented subjects and develop gender and experience-sensitive definitions for classroom and operational use.

Mary Jane Kehily’s article ‘Sexing the Subject: Teachers, Pedagogies and Sex Education’ (2002) explores the role of a teacher’s sexual identity/ and its impact on pedagogic practice. Kehily’s research was conducted in the Midlands of England in two multi-ethnic working class areas. She carried out interviews with four sex education teachers and one nurse, in partial fulfilment of a doctoral thesis. Through these interviews, along with observation of and conversation with students, Kehily (2002) found that,

A glimpse into life histories of the practitioners I interviewed illustrates that their approaches to teaching and learning have been shaped by their past experiences as pupils and as gendered sexual subjects (229).

Kehily elaborates on sex education as a contested field/curriculum and also delves into the ways in which teachers deal with sensitive subjects such as homosexuality, teen pregnancy, and sexual decision making. She concludes that “the success of sex education depends on a contingency of factors which cannot necessarily be accounted for at the level of policy” (Kehily, 2002: 230).

Jonathan Silin’s (1995) book explores the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the educational response in New York State from the 1980s to early 1990s. He takes the reader through what he defines as political and stigmatised issues such as ‘being in the closet’, HIV/AIDS transmission, curriculum development, and larger political underpinnings of HIV/AIDS and sex education. He gives voice to the teacher who is uncomfortable with teaching this subject and in addition critiques the dissemination techniques assumed in some curricula.

Silin writes that it is impossible for teachers to remain neutral in teaching sensitive topics because their own meanings and constructions are inherently woven into their teaching, however subconsciously (Silin, 1995: 53). Silin advocates curricular revisions and an expanded understanding of teachers which encompasses an acceptance of the complexities of teaching and living. A teacher is not a robot made to disseminate knowledge but rather an individual with a set of experiences informed not only by daily life but also classroom behaviours, professional choices, school culture, and pedagogy. Silin’s (1995) extensive work with teachers regarding HIV/AIDS “suggests that personal values, prejudices, and preconceptions play a critical role in determining what information they do and do not provide” in the classroom (65). Most of the teachers about whom Silin reports in his book were not worried about contracting HIV/AIDS themselves and had taken a moral high ground to (what in that context was seen as) a gay male disease. Most of the time, in Silin’s research, teachers came into contact with a threat of HIV transmission only through receiving infected blood in an emergency. Their ‘othering’ of those who are HIV positive served to distance the teacher from feeling the effects of the virus in society. This practice of ‘othering’ also hindered their ability to be effective as teachers of the HIV/AIDS curriculum. Silin discusses the bombardment of teachers having to consider possible HIV transmission/risk, a previously distant/unknown risk. He calls this the “all-at-oneness of HIV/AIDS, a disease that not only destroys an individual’s

immune system but also breaks down the artificial barriers that we construct between professional and personal” (Silin, 1995: 65).

4.1 Limitations of studies

The overall limitation of these studies is the fact that they are carried out in European and American contexts and are, therefore, not necessarily applicable to other contexts. In addition, within these studies HIV transmission is conceptualized in terms of homosexual men and blood transfusion modes of transmission. While this is applicable at some levels, it does not consider the complexities of a heterosexually transmitted generalized epidemic like that of South Africa. While there are lessons to be learned from such studies done in the West, it is necessary to develop a discourse around teaching HIV/AIDS and sex/uality in the South African (and other) contexts. There is a discourse around HIV/AIDS focused on black communities in South Africa but few have written about the Coloured¹¹ community in similar ways. The Coloured racial group of was chosen for this thesis because I found no published studies done specifically with Coloured teachers in South Africa. Most other studies on subjects related to HIV/AIDS in South Africa have been done with Black (African) participants.

4.2 Conclusion

In the research literature related to teaching HIV/AIDS and sex education the teacher is still conceptualized as the disseminator of knowledge. Few studies have interrogated the complexities of teaching the sensitive topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality. Some studies have highlighted how personal knowledge is called upon in new ways when addressing these sensitive topics. These topics can make teachers feel as though their own sexuality and practice is under the ‘spotlight’ as Baxen and Breidlid (2004) say. Tonks (1996) reiterates that teachers of these sensitive subjects are often confronted with issues that bring up public and private ways of being not experienced in teaching other subjects. Later this study examines some of the personal knowledge and experiences that are called upon and shape the participants’ responses

¹¹ The apartheid government grouped and segregated South Africans in terms of racial categories of Black (African), Coloured, Indian and White (Thompson, 2000: 190). The use of these racial categories persists to date although the segregatory policies of apartheid have been abolished.

to curriculum topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality. It then becomes clear through Hedgepeth and Helmich's (1996) work that this confrontation of the personal in the public space of schools calls up the values of the teacher and this in turn influences the sexuality education programme in fundamental ways. Later in this thesis the values of the curriculum and the teacher are explored. As Kehily (2002) highlights, a teacher's pedagogy is formed by earlier experiences. This will be explored in terms of influential structures in the early life of the participants and through the agency they assert in changing contexts.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 5

Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the research design of the study. It traces the methodological position as well as the approach utilized. It starts with an overview of the methodological framework within which this study is located and proceeds with a description of an exploration of the approach, data collection tools, site and sample as well as issues of ethics and confidentiality.

At the outset, this chapter starts with a discussion on the researcher's position and how this influenced both the research and analysis process.

5.2 Positioning the Researcher

I am an American woman in my mid twenties. I must frame my understanding of this subject and my motivation for this research in terms of who I am and the various roles my personal experiences have played in the research design, data collection, contact with participants, and theoretical understanding of these subjects. I am from a small Midwestern town in the United States. I was born in 1981 and have spent approximately 4 years (at various stages) in South Africa (predominantly Cape Town). To me modernity and the ideals embodied by it seem like second nature. The process of carrying out this research and understanding the conceptual framework of the participants was both cultural and theoretical informative for me. My personal experiences of teaching have also informed my understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

Before starting the MPhil in HIV/AIDS and Society at UCT I was interested in the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education system(s) in South Africa. At the time I was just starting to explore what it could mean for a teacher, with complex personal experiences, to teach sensitive subjects such as HIV/AIDS and sexuality. To aid my understanding of teaching I decided to become a substitute teacher in the United States for one semester before I started my graduate studies. I taught in both inner city

and suburban school settings. I taught a range of ages from 6 to 18 years old. I was placed in multiple-subject classrooms and grade levels for periods ranging from one day to three months. This experience helped me to understand the basics of a teacher's daily routine, classroom interaction, and school environments in different ways than when I was a student. Through conversations with and observations of the teachers' interactions I was able to see witness their attitudes and responses to the multiple social problems that are dealt with in schools. I learned of the vast differences in the experiences of teaching within the inner city and suburban schools. I can therefore safely assume that experiences in South African contexts are equally as diverse and complex. In short, I've spent enough time in the classroom to be able to begin to understand 'what it takes' to be a teacher. This understanding was deepened when I was employed to help develop a Life Skills teacher training resource focused on culture and gender.

I was also able to work on a project developing teacher training resources for Life Skills teachers which focused on their experiences of culture and gender in relation to teaching about HIV and sexuality. Some of my initial hypotheses and assumptions were clarified by reading workshop transcripts utilized in this endeavour along with developing the training resources. These transcripts were from numerous workshops held in two provinces in South Africa over multiple years and were about teaching Life Skills from the perspective of Life Skills teachers. It was through my interactions with this project that I began to see the importance of enquiring about teacher's experiences in relation to the complexities of teaching Life Skills. It was also through this work that I realized how much I could identify with the issues raised by the female respondents. It was at this point that I made a decision to focus my interests on female Life Skills teachers. This led me towards a feminist research paradigm to tell the story and illustrate the conflicts between the public and private worlds of Life Skills teachers.

Within the application of research methods, feminist researchers have been pioneers in considering their position within the research they do (historically a step not taken by men). The reflexivity of feminist research seeks to "gain insight into the assumptions about gender relations underlying the conduct of inquiry," (Fonow & Cook, 1991: 2). Although there are not specific masculine and feminine research

methodologies, there are some methods which are preferred feminist researchers. These methods include those that seek to place women's experiences at the forefront of research. Many times feminist research takes the form of life histories (the retelling of history from women's point of view) or action research (an attempt to empower the researched), and is in many cases concerned with everyday life. It is this acknowledgement of the embedded nature of gender which makes feminist research inherently different from other studies.

5.3 Qualitative Research

The focus of this study is on understanding teachers' experiences that influence their responses to certain topics in the Life Orientation curriculum. Such a focus that is interested in understanding a phenomenon in depth rather than generalising on the larger population required a methodological approach that put human action at its centre. Thus a qualitative approach, in which information is explored in depth rather than widely, was most appropriate. As Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that qualitative research is concerned with "attempting to understand... actions in terms of the actors' own beliefs, history, and context" (271). Qualitative research thus focuses on human action and seeks to gain insight into the human condition based on a few detailed examples. Qualitative research does not produce statistical data but rather takes a more general look at the socio-cultural human condition and results in data that is contextually rich and descriptive. In qualitative research there is much emphasis on understanding individuals, groups, and entire cultures. Neuman (1997) outlines the characteristics of qualitative research as presenting multiple perspectives, producing general data, allowing researchers to explore multiple themes, attempting to elaborate on our understanding of the human experience, not a generator of quantitative data, and unique to a specific context and researcher (123). As in the case of this research a small group of teachers were interviewed to explore teacher identity and their response to and interaction with the curriculum topics. This research sought to shed light on the specific contextualized experiences of these teachers rather than a larger generalized group, thus generating in-depth, qualitatively rich, insights regarding *some* teachers.

A qualitative methodology is used in the case of this research that seeks to understand four teachers' perspectives and experiences in relation to the specific subjects of HIV/AIDS and sex/uality. The qualitative approach allows for a wider exploration of teachers and their experiences. An understanding of the teachers' navigation of the private and public in terms of knowledge/actions/identities has emerged from the data which addresses the research questions. While many approaches to such a subject are possible under the discipline of qualitative research, the most appropriate for this study was the case study approach.

5.4 Case study approach

Within the broad qualitative methodology, a case approach was adopted because it allowed for an exploration of current situation from the perspective of a few key informants. A case study is a common tool used in social science research. It involves investigation by looking at an example of a larger whole/population (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 280). While case studies cannot be generalized and “prove something, a single case can disprove a general statement” (Payne, 2004: 32). The case study research strategy is often used to examine “contemporary events...when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated” (Yin, 1994: 8). In general, case studies research fewer cases in more depth. As Gomm and Hammersley (2000) describe, “ ‘case study’ refers to research that investigates a few cases, often just one, in considerable depth” (3). Gomm and Hammersley go on to say that within the field of research methodology research, “It is sometimes argued that the aim of case study research should be to capture cases in their uniqueness, rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalizations or for theoretical inference of some kind. And this is often held to require a narrative approach rather than one framed in terms of variable analysis” (Gomm & Hammersley, 2000: 3). This is true in the case of this study where the teacher participants were interviewed in a narrative study method which provided rich narrative data in an exploratory format. Stake further clarifies that case studies rather than generalizing actually pursues “particularization” (Stake, 1995: 8). He goes on to say that “we take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on

uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself” (Stake, 1995: 8).

Four Life Skills teachers comprise the unit of analysis in this study. While they each constitute a case, the emerging data only explored these specific teachers’ experiences in relation to the research questions and thus, while it does not make generalizations, it does offer insight that is viewed as exploratory yet important in highlighting emerging trends in teacher identity and the difficulty of teaching sensitive topics. As Yin (1994) states, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (13).

In many case studies another key element of data collection is participant observation (Yin, 1994: 13). Due to challenges of access and time constraints it was not possible to include participant observations in the study. In particular, teachers’ schedules, and that fact that many had covered the Life Skills curriculum topics focused on in this thesis much earlier in the year made this not feasible in terms of time and willingness of the participants¹². Instead multiple, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to gain insight regarding the influence and experiences that shape their responses to the topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality.

5.6 A narrative approach to data collection

The approach taken was one that foregrounded the narratives of teachers. This study used interviews to collect narratives that illuminate the influences and experience that shape Life Skills teachers’ responses to the topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality in the curriculum. Narrative study is a method for looking at the predominant themes of a person’s life (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 502). These histories are thought to be particularly useful in examining everyday life as it reflects how experiences act as the resource people draw upon to articulate their beliefs, understanding and responses (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 284). In this thesis, the everyday experiences of four teachers are illuminated so as to gain insight into their perceptions and experiences

¹² Please see the limitations of this study for more information.

regarding HIV, sex, and sexuality. In particular, the narrative study approach aids an understanding of the complexities of life. As Babbie and Mouton (2001) state, “life history (and narrative) technique is peculiarly suited to discovering the confusions, ambiguities, and contradictions that make up our everyday life experiences” (284). The narrative technique is, therefore, specially suited to an examination such as this because here what are sought are influences, experiences, perceptions, interactions, responses, and navigations that impact on Life Skills teachers. In the case of this study the narrative approach was used to understand the influential structures in the participants’ early life, those which informed their sexual selves, and what they draw on formulate their values, beliefs, and perceptions regarding the topics under scrutiny. This method also allowed discussion of experiences up till the present day which have informed the participants in numerous ways. The information generated from these rich narrative interviews are presented and discussed in chapters six, seven and eight.

5.7 Sample and site

I first submitted an application to do research with the teachers to the Western Cape Education Department. I was granted permission to carry out the research between the dates of August 16, 2005 to September 23, 2005.¹³ Participants were purposively selected to take part in this study. A purposive sample is one that may be chosen because of previous knowledge of the population (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 166). The purposively selected attributes in this study were based on gender and racial group and geographic location.

5.7.1 Gender

First, women were chosen as the focus of this study because they (a) make up the largest proportion (65.86%) of all teachers in South Africa¹⁴, (b) traditionally teach ‘soft subjects’ such as Life Skills, and (c) were interviewed with more ease in terms of my own comfort and levels of engagement. I felt that, as a woman researcher, I would

¹³ Please reference Appendix I for a copy of the letter from the Western Cape Education Department granting permission for this research.

¹⁴ The term teachers in this case is further defined to mean pre-primary, primary, and secondary education intuition teaching professionals (Statistics South Africa, 2007a).

have a better rapport with women, thus enabling us both to be more relaxed during the interactions. The latter point is of particular importance because of the nature of the sensitive topics discussed during interviews. I wanted to create an open and non-judgemental space to speak with the participants about their personal experiences of sex/sexuality/puberty, sex education, along with the influential structures and experiences that inform them on these topics. In addition, I felt that eliciting this information and having these types of discussions with men (considering I am a woman) would prove to be difficult. The feminist research approach to telling *new stories* of women was also an influence of my choice for women as participants. The research questions discussed in this research get to the heart of women's life experiences. In addition this research aimed at painting the picture of a teacher as a whole person with private and public experiences which inform, shape, and help them to manage their roles and identities.

5.7.2 Race

Second, the racial group of Coloured was chosen because (a) they make up the largest population group in the Western Cape (where the research was conducted); (b) they comprise the largest population group in the City of Cape Town where in the geographical area of the study, Coloured schools make up the majority, and (c) as a researcher, I had personal experience with the population group.

When I embarked on this research I had spent the majority of my time living in South Africa whilst staying with two different Coloured families and in a predominantly 'Coloured community'. Thus, as an outsider I felt as though I understood *some* cultural nuances of this population group more than other groups in the country. I felt a particular comfort and understanding with Coloured people in Cape Town as I'd talked to many people and was invited into the 'family' for holidays, birthdays, celebrations, and many weekends of Sunday lunch. While it was not my initial intention to associate myself with a/the Coloured community for research purposes what I found was that my lived experience in South Africa was informed, shaped, and experienced with Coloured people. Once I became a researcher I realized that my lived experience amongst Coloured women in particular could help me to better understand the contexts in which the participants were from. Thus during the initial

research phase of the literature review I was on the look out for research done with Coloured women, out of personal curiosity of research done with this community. As I found, there had been no published studies of this kind done specifically with Coloured teachers, thus heightening my interest to focus on this population group. While I do speak of my experience in terms of larger community of people it should be explicitly understood that each case in this study should be seen as offering the respondent's individual experiences and a particular insight into teacher identity not insight regarding a generalized group.

5.7.3 Geographic area

The geographic area of this study is the Western Cape Province of South Africa and specifically the City of Cape Town. The Western Cape was chosen because it is the area where I was living to study at the University of Cape Town. The city is divided into six educational management districts by the Department of Education and this study was carried out in the Central Educational Management District Centre's (EMDC) 'Metropole Central Region' of Cape Town. This region encompasses much of the Cape Flats area. This large geographic area was chosen based on proximity to the researcher due to travel constraints during the interview process.

5.7.4 Factors which restricted participation in the study

The teachers interviewed for this study were selected through a process of making contact with schools in the central EMDC. I made initial contact with the Life Orientation supervisor at the Western Cape, Central EMDC. Through meeting with him I obtained the contact details of all the primary schools in the Central EMDC. What I found was that there were two overarching factors that restricted teachers from participating in this study. These were time and the focus of the study. These will be explained in the following subsections.

5.7.4.1 Time

The first factor had to do with time which restricted participation in three ways. First, the time period stipulated by the Department of Education during which I was to

conduct the research proved to be too short. The Department granted permission for this research to be carried out in less than a one month time period. This proved difficult as the time it took from my initial contact with potential participants and setting up interviews was lengthy. I made contact with 50 schools through a faxed letter explaining my research and then phoned each school to follow this up within two days. In some cases there were not Coloured Life Skills teachers teaching at the 7th grade level. In other schools the principal wanted to meet with me before the teachers were asked about their interest to participate. It took me approximately a week and a half to find the four teachers who agreed to participate in the study. I continued to contact and pursue other participants but my efforts were not successful for multiple reasons (discussed below).

Second, the time period within the academic calendar when permission to do research was granted proved to be difficult for teachers in terms of their already exhausting workload and tricky time management. Permission to carry out the research was granted for the end of the third semester just before their spring holiday; a time when the teachers were preparing exams, tying up loose ends, and reviewing materials in class. They also reported that there was much paperwork that they had to complete at that time of year. In addition teachers would only make time to meet with me directly after school for approximately an hour and a half (depending on their transport) on the school grounds. Also, none of the teachers would interview on a Friday as they wanted to get home early and thus this left only 4 days a week and only allowed me to interview one teacher on a given day because they wanted to go home. I suggested that we could meet on the weekend or over the upcoming school vacation but none of the participants were willing to make time for such a meeting. They clearly saw their participation as part of their job in some sense.

Third, the teachers indicated to me that they were 'done' teaching Life Skills for the semester when I met them. They had completed all units for Life Skills and were now doing a basic review of other subjects for exams. Thus, they indicated to me that conducting classroom observations would not provide much insight regarding the sensitive topics focused on in this research.

5.7.4.2 Focus

The second major factor that restricted participation in this study was the focus. The issue of focus was twofold, (1) in terms of the focus of the research situated on understanding *teachers'* personal experiences/responses rather than on learners and classroom interactions. In many cases when I spoke on the phone to a potential participant after faxing the initial contact letter they would ask when I wanted to come observe the students. I would then reiterate to them that this research was about teachers, about them as people with personal experiences regarding the topics they teach. I expressed my interest in speaking to them and discussing their lives. This focus on *teachers* made many uncomfortable and responses ranged from "that's not for me" to "Oh, I've never heard of that before". Many teachers who I did make initial contact with decided not to participate in this research because of this focus on them as people rather than as deliverers of a curriculum or the learners in their classrooms. This also could have been tied to an issue of time because I asked to meet with them alone and thus participation meant additional time commitments on the schools grounds and not just classroom observations which don't impact on the teachers' personal time to a great extent.

The second issue related to focus regarding the topics discussed. Since the topics of HIV/AIDS, sex, sexuality, and coming of age are very personally experienced many teachers could have rejected the research based on that alone. While one would imagine that Life Skills teachers, who speak about these topics in the public sphere of schools, would be open to talking about them for research purposes, this was not the case. This research highlighted teachers personal experiences in ways that are not *explicitly* expressed in their role as Life Skills teacher. In addition some could have felt that there was a certain amount of disclosure involved in speaking about these topics with a researcher. Thus, the mere focus of this research likely discouraged participation of multiple teachers due to the highly personal/experiential nature of the topics focused on and because they are usually not spoken about/discussed explicitly/openly.

5.8 Methods of data collection

Interviews to gain insight into teachers' narratives were used as the main method of data collection in this study. This method was supported by the proceeding literature review. In qualitative research the use of interviews for data collection is very common as they allow the researcher to address questions in general and in detail. All of the interviews for this thesis were semi-structured. An interview schedule was used, although the flow of conversation and depth of topics covered varied in each session. Each interview took between 50 – 70 minutes. All interviews were held within the time period stipulated by the Department of Education in the permission undertake the research¹⁵. All of the interviews were held inside the teachers' respective schools. Two of the participants, Ms. Abrahams and Mrs. Jordon, preferred to have the interviews in their classroom after school or during a free period. Ms. Campbell and Ms. Isaacs preferred to hold the interviews in the empty teacher's lounge after school hours or the principal's office.

In Appendix 3, the interview guide used during the interview process is included. These questions were used merely as a guide. The flow of the interviews was according to the conversations rather than a rigid question and answer session. I probed further, when possible regarding the core research questions related to understanding the participants' personal experiences and perceptions of the Life Skills curriculum topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality.

5.9 Data analysis process

In this research the main analytical approach was Grounded Theory. "Grounded theory is an approach that allows us to study a relatively unknown social phenomenon around which no specified theory may exist" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 499). In this study Grounded Theory was used in two particular ways. First, it was used as an analytical tool for evaluating the data. Second, what emerged was a set of themes that required a theoretical framework. In this regard, therefore, Grounded Theory was used as a means to draw on different theories to develop a framework that would explain the data. As Payne and Payne (2004) elaborate, Grounded Theory is more a building

¹⁵ See Appendix

up of theoretical concepts for analysis rather than a predetermined theory (99). This is true in the case of this thesis as I have developed a conceptual and theoretical framework of already existing theories to help understand the participants in relation to their work with the Life Skills curriculum. The process behind Grounded Theory involves coding responses and making note of emerging themes (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 499-501; Payne and Payne, 2004: 100-102). Grounded Theory was chosen as an approach because in the investigation I wanted to investigate if themes would emerge from the data collected through interviews. The Grounded Theory approach allows for an exploration of this type. The emerging themes of each participant's life in relation to the topics listed above were explored to illustrate their experiences and perceptions of the Life Skills curriculum. These themes revealed that participants had similar influential structures and values and this will be discussed in the following chapter. It was found that the participants had similar influential structures and experiences with the curriculum topics of HIV/AIDS and sex/uality. This information would not have been revealed without the utilization of both narrative study and Grounded Theory approaches.

In the case of this thesis, each interview was recorded using a digital recording device. For the purposes of transcription the digital files had to be put onto audio tapes. A university employee was hired to transcribe all of the interviews for the researcher. When the transcribed files were sent back via e-mail each interview was checked and corrected where necessary. The transcripts were re-read numerous times and coded based on the theoretical ideas of sacred/profane, public/private, Traditionalism/modernity, silences around sexuality, and aspects/experiences/ perceptions which influenced the above mentioned theory related to the Life Skills curriculum. The Codes developed through analyzing the research data were grouped into themes that became the framework for writing up the results in the following chapters.

5.10 Ethics and confidentiality

Since the nature of topics covered in this research are sensitive special care was taken to ensure these topics were addressed with sensitivity to the participant in mind. As discussed earlier, discussion of such topics has historically been reserved for the private sphere. Bringing these topics into the public domain can be difficult for many

people even those with experience in teaching Life Skills. This was also true for Life Skills teachers when topics in direct relation to their life, values, and experiences were discussed

Ethical standards recommended by the University of Cape Town Ethics Committee were adhered to at each level of the research process. In addition there was no intended or anticipated harm to the participant. The researcher has made every effort to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants in recorded data and also during the interview process. The names of all participants, areas, and others mentioned in the interviews have been changed to pseudonyms to protect the participants' anonymity. As was stated above, the location of each interview varied on circumstances of availability and participant's comfort. In some circumstances however, there were others present in the interview space which may have compromised the participants' responses, open expression, and in turn the quality of the data collected.

A consent form was reviewed with and signed by each participant before the start of the first interview¹⁶. The participant was also left with a copy of the consent form for their personal records, in addition to the researcher's and the University's contact details in case they needed to contact anyone during or after the research process because of an ethical concern. The form also specified whether they chose their name to be used in any form of the research.

5.11 Limitations of the study

One limitation of this study lies in its scope. Only four teachers were interviewed for this study. While it would have been ideal to interview more teachers, and every effort was made to do so, it was impossible due to time and work constraints of the defined research time period and teacher work load as well as other reasons already articulated in earlier parts of this chapter. I initially had to gain permission from the Department of Education to carry out the research, and this proved to be a 6 month long process. My initial request was sent to the department and I received no response from the

¹⁶ Please see Appendix 2 for a copy of the consent form

department for six months, thus impeding the research process quite significantly. Once permission to undertake the research was granted by the Department of Education and participants were confirmed for the study there was little time to carry out the interviews. In addition, it was the end of the term and the participants were already feeling overworked, making it hard to schedule interview time. This notwithstanding, the research was not seriously compromised. What emerges from the data sufficiently illustrates the experiences of some Life Skills teachers giving some insight into areas for further research and room to expand research specifically related to the teaching of Life Skills.

In addition to the small number of participants, another limitation was that only coloured (as opposed to other racial groups or a mixture of groups) women (as opposed to a men or a mixed group) were interviewed. Other variables could include age group, teacher training, and personal sexual preference to name a few. The decision was made, however, to limit these variables for the purpose of this study. This is a minor dissertation and while a larger population would most definitely illuminate more complexities there were restraints to obtaining more participants, such as the unwillingness of teachers to participate because of the highly personal nature of the topics discussed.

Another issue of scope is the exclusive focus on the seventh grade Life Skills curriculum. However, while other grade levels and curriculum text could have been chosen it was the topics covered in the seventh grade Life Skills curriculum that particularly teased out the issues related to sex/uality and HIV. The seventh grade Life Skills teacher deals with many children who are in the coming of age phase. Their students are starting to experiment with sex, question authority, and present the teacher with a very modern perspective of these issues. .

A limitation of this study in terms of data collection was that there were no in class observations done of the teachers. It was problematic for the teachers to have me in class due to the time constraints and pressure they were already under at the end of the term. At the same time when the interviews where carried out many teachers had already covered the topics of interest to this study. At the time of the interviews the teachers were in the last few weeks of the term and were busy tying up loose ends,

giving tests, and drawing things to a close. Classroom observations could have enriched the data in a new way and shed light on the teachers' actual practice of teaching Life Skills. Although that could have been interesting it was not the focus of this study. This research sought out the step before teaching, which is to understand and explore teachers' experiences and perceptions of what they need to mediate. To do justice to the next logical question related to how these experiences and perceptions impact on the classroom and on student learning would require a whole new set of research questions and inquiry. It is useful to have a baseline study of the teachers' experiences and perceptions which inform the way they think about the topics before making the data more complex an observation process.

The final limitation is my position as the researcher. At the beginning of the research the participants, reminded me that I was only a few years older than their children. Although this may have given them reason to hold back their personal experiences and opinions from me I felt as though a good rapport was developed during the interviews which minimized this effect. The participants touched on their intimate experiences in ways I could never have predicted. My 'outsider' status of being an American may have also made the participants feel as though I did not understand their points of view, although this does not seem to emerge from the interview data. Despite these possible shortcomings, I made every effort to plan, interview, research, and write up this research with a great deal of reflexivity.

In the next section I present and discuss the data collected during the interview process and analyze this data in terms of the concepts and theories discussed in chapters two and three.

Chapter 6

Influential Structures and Experiences

6.1 Introduction

This chapter gets to the heart of the research questions by exploring the participants' early life experiences. Through the narrative study approach influential structures of the teachers' early lives are explored. Here Giddens' theory of structuration is particularly important in understanding how/when/why experiences and perceptions are developed and shaped in the course of one's life. This chapter looks at key experiences and influential structures that have shaped who the participants have become as women and teachers. These influential structures are seen by the participants as intrinsic aspects of their personhood and identity. This chapter aids an understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and positions from which the participants speak about the topics and situations presented by the Life Skills curriculum. In this chapter transcripts were utilized from interviews which provide narrative data of the teachers' experiences and narrative. I discuss the themes and issues that emerge from the research data by utilizing the conceptual and theoretical frameworks previously established. The research design of these interviews was laid out in the previous chapter. This chapter highlights key aspects from the interviews that exemplify aspects of the teachers' early lives and experiences that influence their understanding of and interaction with topics such as HIV, sex, and sexuality.

This chapter is comprised of two sections. Section 6.1 serves as a broad introduction to the participants and their early lives. This section is divided into subsections which cover the narratives of all four participants. In the first section the four participants are introduced through short narrative summaries. In the second section the Life Skills teachers' identities are further explored in a discussion of the influential structures and experiences of their lives. Section 6.2 is also divided into four subsections which address family, religion, political climate, and influences on the sexual self. This section aids an understanding of the influences and experiences that shape teacher's responses to topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality in the Life Skills curriculum. Included here is a discussion of prevailing silences in relation to sexuality and puberty,

menstruation, and talking about sex. In this discussion the participants reveal the structures they draw on in their everyday lives to make sense of the topics of HIV/AIDS and sex/uality in the Life Skills curriculum.

6.2 Life Histories

This presentation of results begins by introducing the reader to the participants. A brief snapshot of each participants narrative is detailed here to paint a picture of their early life, influences and the dominant structures shaping their lives. Throughout the rest of this chapter and the subsequent chapters their lives and narratives will be discusses and elaborated on further. This section seeks to orient the reader in a basic sense to the participants.

6.2.1 Mrs. Jordon

Mrs. Jordon is a 56 year old coloured woman who has been teaching for her entire adult life. Mrs. Jordon comes from what she termed a “broken family”. She never had connections to her birth mother and was raised by her grandmother. She did, however, have the company of her three brothers and an aunt who was only a few years older than she was. She was a self described ‘tom-boy’ who tried to keep up with her brothers. Mrs. Jordon was affected directly by the migrant labor system as her father was a migrant labourer who only saw her and her brothers on the infrequent weekends he came home. Mrs. Jordon felt that a benefit of growing up with only brothers enables her as a teacher to understand her male students in a way that is uncharacteristic of most female Life Skills teachers. Because she comes from a broken home, she suggests that she understands the context of families who are split up and how that affects her students. Mrs. Jordon herself was a “trouble-maker” in school and was often disciplined and called on at home by teachers. The concerns of liking boys, being a woman, and concepts of marriage were far from her mind. Having grown up surrounded mostly by brothers she felt the pressures of young womanhood to be daunting. She was not stereotypically feminine and did not like the fact that she was a girl. She wanted nothing to do with role playing her wedding or thinking about boys in a sexual way at all. It wasn’t until later, when she met her husband that she warmed to some of the ‘roles of womanhood’.

I used to be ever so sorry I was a girl. I would like to have been treated like a boy. Today I'm not sorry because I'm happy as a woman and I can still act like a boy, I don't have to be a boy. I'm still a tomboy and there's nothing wrong with it and there's nothing wrong with a boy doing the washing, making food (Mrs. Jordon, Interview 2).

When it came to understanding her body as a woman Mrs. Jordon was not given much direction. Mrs. Jordon did not speak to anyone about sex until she was close to eighteen years old. It was only through interacting with her aunt (who was only a few years older than her) that she was informed about sex and coming of age.

I couldn't speak to anybody. I can clearly even remember my aunt, who was young, and I was always under the impression, 'don't worry that's men'. I mean, in any case, I'm not going to get married. She (aunt) now went from the one boyfriend to the next and then she left home. When she left she forgot her tampons in the drawer and I got a hiding (beating) (Mrs. Jordon, Interview 2).

Silence was the norm surrounding both roles and appropriate behaviour for girls along with puberty. When she started menstruating, she was very confused and said that,

I had to stay in the bed...I wondered, 'what did I do wrong?' I thought I was sick and I must watch them (brothers and friends) through the window...play. She (grandmother) told me nobody must know. When my dad came home for the weekend she told him and I said, 'But you told me I musn't tell anybody?' and she's telling my father. 'What's wrong with me now?' and then she explained to me, he's my father (Mrs. Jordon, Interview 2).

Mrs. Jordon was confused and did not know why her body was changing. However, although all teenagers are confused to a certain degree about the multiple changes they go through, Mrs. Jordon was lucky to have the input of her aunt who illuminated a whole different world regarding gender relations, coming of age, and young womanhood. Mrs. Jordon at least had the input of a female family member. Her mother was not around so her young aunt supplemented what little her grandmother told her. This, in turn, exposed Mrs. Jordon to more information about relationships, menstruation, and sex than the other participants. Once Mrs. Jordon's aunt,

Showed me a letter one of her boyfriends wrote to her so I finished the letter and then forgot it in my pocket and went off to boarding school. She (grandmother) got a hold of the letter and I got a hiding (beating) because of the letter her boyfriend wrote (Mrs. Jordon, Interview 2).

To her surprise, she later fell in love, married, and started a family. She emphasized the happiness in her marriage and how much she is still in love. She is the mother of three. At the time of the interviews, one of her daughters was pregnant. Even though as a child she wasn't very excited about being a girl, she now loves her role as a mother and wife and appreciates that society's gender definitions don't always fit with

every individual. She is an active church member and is involved as a mentor and organizer of the churches youth. Mrs. Jordon organizes extracurricular activities at the school and takes a very personal approach to dealing with students. She enjoys an open relationship with her own children and appreciates that they are growing up in a time different from that which she experienced as a young woman.

6.2.2 Ms. Abrahams

Ms. Abrahams is a 48 year old Coloured female. Her family was forcibly removed¹⁷ to the Cape Flats when she was 10 years old. They were able to find a house for her and her seven siblings. She and one of her siblings still stay in that house. She was raised in a very strict Muslim family and according to religious rules. She was the oldest of the girls and the 5th born into the family. She was sheltered and kept at home because she was a young woman. Her parents were also very strict.

I grew up under a very, very strict mother and father and we (the girls) weren't allowed even to stand in the yard, in front now, at the gate. Because my parents would label that as being seductive if we stand outside (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

Religious conservatism was the cornerstone of the Abrahams family. As a result the young Ms. Abrahams felt very sheltered growing up.

We (the girls) weren't exposed really. I wasn't exposed to the outside world and you know if we go out, we would go out with my parents and um, it was only when I turned 18 and when I matriculated that I could go out with friends. But then I had to be back before sunset (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

Mrs. Abraham's life consisted of school and family. While she did not elaborate very much about individual family members she did say that she continues to have close relationships with her siblings along with their partners and children.

While the rules of her youth were strict she did take great lessons from the religious nature of her upbringing. She considers her faith to be a very important part of her identity.

Our dress code, our way of character; we must always be generous and generous in everything, giving advice, financial support to others and also moral support you know (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 2).

¹⁷ As detailed by Salo (2002), Forced removals was a policy of the apartheid government which moved residents from desirable land and the city centre to the outskirts of larger cities (407).

During her youth Ms. Abrahams never even thought about sex education. It was a taboo topic.

At that time people wouldn't use words like 'sex' or 'having sex'. It was taboo. If you talk about, even now, if you talk about sex and to the parents, they'll come to you and ask, 'Are you teaching my child sex education? Are you encouraging my child to have sex?' (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

Ms. Abrahams was not able to speak with any adults about sex or reproduction in her youth and young adulthood. In fact the topic, as she understood it, was completely off limits. She even worried that any interest would have consequences.

If my parents or even my older brother, if they going to find out that I read a romantic novel, love story, we were hit (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

Aside from fear that her parents or brothers would discover her curiosity for romance novels, Ms. Abrahams never once spoke to them about sex, reproduction, or menstruation.

My parents they were secretive. We were not supposed to know certain things about sex and about life... I see things different now because things were kept from me (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 2).

Ms. Abrahams experienced embarrassment when she started menstruating. It wasn't until later that she realized that she had been uninformed about the changes going on in her body. One can sense her embarrassment when telling this story in the interview by her laughter.

I started to menstruate, and remember I had four brothers, and the teacher said if a man can touch you, but I processed that as if he's going to touch you then you're going to fall pregnant, you know. If my brothers come past me then, you know I would pull away (laughing). You see, and um, now you can imagine at that time. Our children they are fortunate. They learn from an early age, Grade R, that if you have sex then you can fall pregnant (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

She was a primary school student at the school where she currently teaches. Ms. Abrahams is a single woman who has never been married and does not have any children of her own. She does consider her students to be like her children along with her nieces and nephews who play a big part in her life. After matriculating in 1975, Ms. Abrahams trained as a teacher of Coloured children under the apartheid system. She then started teaching in 1978. After 10 years of teaching she went to the University of the Western Cape to do a B.A. in history and then a B.Ed. at the same institution. She has taught history, needlework, languages and Life Skills.

6.2.3 Ms. Isaacs

Ms. Isaacs is a 38 year old Coloured female. She is one of five children in her family. She has never been married and does not have children. She has been teaching since 1990. She has taught at the high school level in the commercial field and in the primary school level, maths and Life Skills. As a student she took a particular interest in biology but a teacher training qualification was more affordable than a university education. Much of how she described her early life involved her father. He was a pastor at a community church which was very influential in her life.

“I grew up in this world where you had a mom and a dad and a family, with family time” (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2). Her father was a pastor and pillar of their community. She spoke of how people looked up to him and how she too felt the power that he exuded in the community while at home. He demanded the highest moral standards, conformity to rules, and did not like dealing with problems at home. He was out of the home often doing church and other civic work which left her and her siblings with their mother most of the time. Her father was unapologetic about this and did not want to deal with any problems at home. Ms. Isaacs responded to this at a young age by always obeying the rules, not questioning authority, and generally sticking to the ‘straight and narrow.’

We never ventured out. If it was expected of us to do this, then we would do that (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1).

Socially, she surrounded herself with other girls who had similar staunchly religious parents and were also active participants in church and religious life.

When Ms. Isaacs was going through puberty she had only spoken to her friends about sex and reproduction. She did not speak with her parents *“because of religion”*. Her aunt was her first informant about the issue of menstruation and the conversation only arose the day she started menstruating. She also associated the event with embarrassment because upon her return to her family’s home *“There was now a big celebration and I felt so embarrassed about it.”* (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2)

Ms. Isaacs spoke of the silences that persist in her family regarding sex/uality. When asked if there are any curriculum topics that she would have reservations speaking about with her family members

I speak to my mom at home and also mention the things happening in the class. Then I would tell her that although I believe in abstinence I need to show them (students) the other side also and that for one I know, like having protected sex and being unmarried, I wouldn't dare go in that direction (laughs) with my family around. That's something that I would say yes, would be a big, major problem (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1).

Even as an adult, Ms. Isaacs felt the control of her family in addition to the embedded silences surrounding subjects of sexuality.

Her father's influence persisted into her adult life and it wasn't until after his death that she started to reconsider some of the things she had previously unquestioningly accepted. Ms. Isaacs stated,

But after the death of my father I started to, I wouldn't say experience stuff, but I saw a other side of life, and that in a way kind of, I was very rigid before it was either black or white there was no shades of grey for me and when I started teaching and when I started interacting more with people that did change (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2).

Because of the influential idea of a 'pure father' figure, Ms. Isaacs has difficulty dealing with issues of sexual abuse even today. She spoke of how on a few occasions students have come to her for advice regarding abuse from a father/father figure and that this confrontation of her 'pure-father' experience was difficult to reconcile with stories and situations brought to her attention by students.

Ms. Isaacs differed from the other participants because she made no mention of the social and political system of apartheid. It seemed like the family and religious structures were so constraining in her case that she did not feel the effects of the social and political climate as others did. It is also important to note that Ms. Isaacs is the youngest participant which may be why her experiences of the social and political structures of apartheid were not raised in the interviews as their influence at that time had lessened from that of the experience of her older counterparts.

6.2.4 Ms. Campbell

Ms. Campbell is a 48 year old Coloured woman. She was raised in a strict Christian family with five siblings. Her father died two years ago and since then her mother has been staying with her and her sons. She considers herself to be the lucky one in the family because she was able to finish her schooling and go on for further training as a teacher. Due to family economic constraints, her siblings had to enter the workforce to aid in the support of their family before they could finish their schooling. She has been teaching for 25 years and is the single mother of two teenage children.

Growing up Ms. Campbell said her mother was the ‘feared’ parent in her home and was very strict. She respected her mother and said that growing up,

My mother was also very protective if you think about it how we grew up, very protective so we wouldn't dare step out of line. So we won't step out of line because you don't want to disappoint your mother (Ms. Campbell, Interview 1).

Ms. Campbell is the youngest child in her family. She left home at a late age, but even when she was working in a neighbouring African country as a teacher, her mother tried to regulate her actions. She told of how her mother would call her each day and enquire about all of her activities.

Another influential aspect of Ms. Campbell's life was faith and religion. Ms. Campbell told of how she never was given a choice to be a part of religious structure because of its intertwined nature within the family structure.

I could actually never function without it (religion/faith) (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

While she was ‘never given a choice’, she could not imagine her life without her strong religious faith. This attitude is similar to that of the other participants, who also internalised the structure of religion imparted on them.

I would say it's about what my parents taught me, what they put in place, and it's all according to what the Bible says... we take our value system from the Ten Commandments (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

Due to Ms. Campbell's religious fervor and strict mother, she was never able to speak about puberty or learn about sex from them. Mrs. Jordon was much more informed than Ms. Campbell who felt she was left out of the loop entirely. Her older siblings did not even speak to her about basic reproduction after having their own children. It

wasn't until she read a book on the topic in her early 20s that she finally figured it all out, or at least saw a diagram of the sex organs.

I mean I was 18, nobody would talk to me about it (sex and reproduction). I knew about it you know. There was this book, ooh golly um, the book was called 'every woman' and it's like everybody wanted to take this book in the library because it had all info. It's about development and you as a woman so what it was, it also showed us the female and the male organs, which I mean you don't see it, now everybody, that is why I say that book was very informative to me, but talking about sex, I can talk about sex to you now because it's been consented now, but then that's why I say about 20, 25 I mean I had two sisters at the time who were married and my brother was married, they had children. But my second eldest sister and my brother had children and nobody spoke to me. Not even my mother (Ms. Campbell, Interview 1).

In one case, Ms. Campbell spoke of a group of friends who were to her astonishingly open about matters of sex. When Ms. Campbell had just started teaching she was also working at a shop on the weekends. Her co-workers were still in school, she was three or four years older than them. Her co-workers spoke about sex and relationships in such an explicit way that Ms. Campbell was very offended. She said of the situation,

they want to be explicit then I walk out of their company because that was never part of my thinking. How can I say, I was never socialized in that way? You see, it has lots to do with my social life (Ms. Campbell, Interview 1).

This incident in the shop was the first time she had been exposed to explicit talk of sex. While she did hypothesize that her lack of exposure was due to her strong family and religious upbringing at the time of this interaction, she was shocked and offended. These were *good girls* who did not act in opposition to the status quo of strict family, religion or social and political systems. As Ms. Campbell describes,

We were taught to think inside the box, we couldn't think outside the box, if you did you were thrown in jail. So yeah, keep to the straight and narrow (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

Another strong regulatory structure for Ms. Campbell was the apartheid system. She spoke of the way that the structure of apartheid taught her to stand by her beliefs. In the case of equal rights and education this became particularly apparent to her.

With the boycotts and the marching and at that time we were like in the struggle fighting for our freedom and things like that...I believed in the cause and therefore I would do it (demonstrate). I did not compromise on that. So, if I take a decision that I feel it's what I believe in, I'm not going to stand back. That's my belief. Nobody was going to change my mind about equal rights and education (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

Surprisingly, all of these teachers spoke about their Coloured or racial identities as important only in terms of their schooling and career choices, as Ms. Campbell states below,

We were told that we were black or colored and because of that we were only allowed certain things (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

Due to the fact that they were forbidden by law to form relationships with people of other races, their already restrictive social world defined by strict family and religious structures, was further controlled by the Apartheid state.

I haven't been part of an integrated system growing up...We could never mix, there was no way we could go across the (color) line. There were acts in place, rules and laws for that. We could work together, be in the same shop but never form a relationship (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

6.3 Influential Structures Shaping Teachers' Experiences

This section explores earlier life experiences of the participants' to illuminate some of the influences that shape Life Skills teachers' responses to the sensitive topics of the curriculum they teach. This section also gets to the heart of sub-question two which asks- what are the aspects of teachers' early lives and experiences that influence their understanding and interaction with topics such as HIV, sex, and sexuality. Here Giddens' theory of structuration is drawn on to aid an understanding of the importance of these experiences. Since the question asks what are the aspects, experiences, and influences that shape understanding it is important to engage with the theories of structuration, reflexivity, traditionalism and modernity along with the sacred and profane delineations. At its root the theory of structuration attempts to understand the way agents are shaped by and also shape the influential structures of their lives. In addition the tensions between traditionalism and modernity are also dealt with in terms of values, beliefs, and regulations. The ideas of the sacred and profane are also called upon to aid an understanding of regulations on knowledge of the physical body. With an understanding of these influential structures the following chapter will then look at the participant's reflexivity and agency in relation to the topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality. The section that follows includes a discussion of family structures, the role of religion and the political and social climate. It must be emphasised that for the purposes of this discussion artificial delineations and categories have been used although the reality of these complex and highly influential structures are not separate, exclusive, or singularly impact on the lives of participants.

6.3.1 Family structures, control and discipline

Family was an influential structure in the early life of the participants. Giddens theory of structuration states that such structures are continually referenced and reproduced throughout an agent's life. Families are the people who surround us most in early life. The experience and knowledge gained through interacting with family during formative years is fundamental to the development of the Self. The family structure is important for understanding the experiences which shape teachers responses to the Life Skills curriculum. The participants' experiences of a strong family structure influenced their ideas of family, the role of children, youth culture, and inevitably youth sexuality/sexual activity. These findings will be further detailed in the next chapter. What is sought out there is an understanding of the influences and experiences which shape teachers' responses to the Life Skills curriculum. In the case of the teachers their experiences of family structures are continually referenced throughout life. While they are not fixed they still inform action, inaction and reaction. In the case of all four participants the family structures of early life were so controlling and conservative that they did not see they had options until much later in life. It was only later in life when Ms. Campbell left to work in a foreign country away from the constraints of family. Ms. Abrahams dared to read romance novels even though she feared the consequences of her family discovering this secret. Ms. Isaacs only started to socialize with people who drank alcohol in her early thirties after the death of her father as she'd held back because of the strict moral code he advocated for the family. Mrs. Jordon felt like a 'tom-boy' until later in life when she stopped trying to keep up with her brothers, discovered her femininity, and met her husband.

All four teachers spoke about their family as highly influential structures. What was important was the way the family structure controlled access and exposure to knowledge, their activities, socialization and movement in early life. They also describe how these experiences continually impact on their lives today. All told of the multiple influences family members have had in their adult experience. Family helped shape their ideas, morals, values, preferences, reactions, and coping mechanisms. The structure of family also regulated practices, prescribed actions, and informed the participants' social interactions.

All four teachers were heavily influenced by the silences, regulation, and strict nature of their family structures. This strict regulation was influenced by societal norms (see history of sexuality in chapter 3) for young women that sought to regulate and protect women from the temptations of youth and risk of pregnancy. For all of the participants the family structure dictated who they socialized with, where they went, what they read, talked about, and thought was possible in their life. It is important to see these experiences as shaping forces in how the participants understand life and in turn how they understand, interact with, and respond to the topics and situations raised by the Life Skills curriculum. It is with this greater understanding of their experiences that we then look at their personal journey of learning about sex/uality.

While the shape of each family differed amongst the four respondents the similarity was in the importance and influence of family in their lives. The presentation of family structures below highlights some of the participants' experiences of family as an informing structure.

Although the participants grew up in strict households they were still able to experience many different things. As Giddens' theory of structuration states, agents are not pre-determined and structures are not fixed. Even though the participants spoke about these structures (family and religion) with such inevitability their recursive interaction with these structures along with their changing contexts enabled them to move beyond their early life of strict experiences.

The other pervasive characteristic of all four participants' family structures is the strength of traditional values which underpinned them. Ms. Isaacs' unquestioned obedience to her domineering father demonstrates a traditional patriarchal family. She grew up thinking that men should be unquestioned and not bothered by details of the home. Ms. Isaacs she also used her father's community role and religious affiliation to define herself, rather than individualistic pursuits. In the case of Ms. Campbell, it was her regulated movement and even career choices at the hand of her mother which were fundamental to her ideas of the family structure. This control sought to regulate her attempts at individualism in a large, close-knit family. This control of her movement and choices kept her at home and out of the public world of dating, political action, and even career advancement. This control should not be seen

as void of motivation to regulate sexuality and traditionally ‘unladylike’ behaviour. This demonstrates that the traditional values of the participants’ early life are informed and reinforced by the history of sexuality. Ms. Abrahams’ experience of traditional conservative values was well highlighted by the fact that she was not allowed to stand in the yard as that was seen as seductive by her strict parents. The history of sexuality can also be drawn on to understand the regulation of women and girls. For instance, Ms. Abrahams’ parents saw her standing in the yard as seductive because of traditional society’s view of female sexuality and female purity.

What emerges is that these strict experiences impact on the participants’ view of childhood generally. When they were asked about their youth, the strongest element of their past was defined as family. For them, it would be impossible to divorce their experiences of youth from the structure of the family. What is important here in light of the research questions is that these experiences of youth influence their current conceptions of youth culture. The regulation and structures that these participants were a part of during their coming of age years is not the assumed way of life for their students today. As will be shown in the next chapter, the family structure has changed and along with those changes the roles, responsibilities, and sexuality of children have also shifted. Examples will be given which show that the participants have difficulty dealing with these changes and often feel disassociated from their students and the experiences of the Life Skills topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality. Next, the influence of religion is highlighted as a compounding influence on the already conservative messages from family.

6.3.2 Role of Religion

The role of religion was important for all four participants. Each had been heavily influenced and regulated by Christian or Muslim moral standards and expectations. In their youth, these moral standards seemed very rigid and later in life they realized the role that this rigidity played in their personal development. Today they continue to practice their religions and are active participants in religious communities. There are numerous ways in which religion has impacted on the teachers in this study. In early life the church and religious community shaped how they saw the world, and *what* they saw. The strict morals characteristic of their religious upbringing remained, in

most cases, unquestioned until their late twenties. At that stage what Giddens calls agency was enacted in a noticeable way. This decision to ‘act differently’ singles their enactment of reflexivity. It was only at that stage that Ms. Abrahams bunked classes in college for a summer party at the beach and checked out her first romance novels. In adulthood Ms. Campbell was with peers who were drinking and smoking marijuana. It was at this stage that she also borrowed a book from the library about the body and sexual reproduction. In her adult years, after the death of her father, Ms. Isaacs started to socialize with people who drank alcohol and allowed herself to be in the presence of those consuming the substance. Mrs. Jordon met her husband in her early twenties and started to see men as more than her competitive brothers. These ‘coming of age’ experiences marked a change in the teachers’ application of this strict moral code dictated by their family and religious upbringing through their practice of agency and reflexivity.

Aligned with the discussion in the previous section, family enforced order was seen by the participants to have religious moral motivation that regulated curfew, socializing, jobs, dress, reading material, and dating. Ms. Campbell and Abrahams also spoke of religion as an inherent structure in their family life which was unquestioned. The morals advocated by religious doctrine, both Muslim and Christian, encouraged the women to stay at home, excel in studies, and delay sexual relationships until later in their adult lives.

The structures of family and religion are interconnected and, in the case of the participants, had a mutually reinforcing ideology of conservatism, regulation, and control. The consequence of these strong ideologies is that the participants spoke of their lives as inconceivable without these two structures. The most striking aspect of the combination of these two structures (family and religion) is the way the teachers spoke about their influence with such inevitability. The participants’ unquestioned obedience to authority, traditional values, and social constraints is important in understanding what is discussed in the next section, their experiences of the Life Skills curriculum topics which include coming of age, sex/uality, and relationships in particular. Because their lives were so regulated with enforced traditional rules, they experienced their coming of age in a different way their students, which is explored in the following chapter.

Structures of religion and family held them back from experiencing, talking about, and exploring their own sexuality from a very early stage. These experiences serve to inform and are also reproduced throughout life. These strict structures also regulated the public and private spheres of their lives. They separated the sacred and profane in the sense that the profane was silenced and became a neglected and hidden part of the self, congruent with the larger trends and silences in the history of sexuality. The sacred places of home and church were where the participants performed a regulated version of the self. In those sacred spaces it was seldom that intimate issues of the profane were discussed, for example during the participants' youth they were influenced by many silences relating to their own body and sexual maturation. Due to these silences the event of first menstruation was traumatic for them all. They were all unaware of the changes taking place in their own bodies. They each spoke of the event of first menstruation as tied to feelings of shame, confusion, uncleanliness, punishment, unsureness, and awkwardness because they had never been educated in any way about such coming of age events. This lack of education was due in full to the silences and taboo associated with the private and profane topics of female sexuality. Early experiences such as these helped to set a precedent for the participants to never involve the profane in sacred spaces of the public. This persists into the Life Skills classroom, as will be elaborated on in the following chapter. Some participants felt very uncomfortable about teaching the inherently profane topics of the Life Skills curriculum in the sacred space of the school, especially in the beginning of their attempts. It is these traditional separations between private and public knowledge and profane and sacred spaces that were reinforced by the structure of religion in the participants' lives. In a similar way, the social and political system of apartheid influenced and reinforced these divisions.

Overall, the structures of family and religion exercised very similar controls over the participants' early life. While these two structures were dominant, this group also described aspects of their social and political environment which served to strengthen the perceived validity of the structures of family and religion discussed below.

6.3.3 Political and Social Climate

The political climate of apartheid in South Africa was an inherently influential structure in the participants' lives. While the topic of this structure was not raised directly throughout the interview process it was mentioned subtly and could be seen as extremely influential as a force which shaped the course of the participants' lives. Ms. Campbell spoke most about the issues of political and social climate.

The three older participants, Mrs. Jordon, Ms. Abrahams, and Ms. Campbell spoke of the apartheid system at least once during the interview session. While no interview questions focused specifically on the impact of apartheid on their lives as women, or teachers, these issues came through in their stories. The participant who did not speak about the influences of Apartheid was the youngest participant, Ms. Isaacs who is thirty-eight. The apartheid education system kept the participants naive of the larger situations unfolding in the country. Apartheid was spoken about in an unobtrusive way only in as much as it influenced their career choices. The structure of apartheid kept the participants living in worlds isolated by their racial classification.

It is well known that the social and political climate during the apartheid era impacted all communities at a fundamental level. In the case of these participants it seemed taken for granted that the multiple and underlying effects of the social and political structures shaped their lives. Beyond their acknowledgement in terms of schooling and career choices, these structures made deep-rooted and fundamental impacts on all of the participants' lives, actions, aspirations, and choices. This manifested itself in their unquestioning nature, their career choices and their social/political 'rightness'.

Being 'right' was an important aspect of all of the participants' lives. Their rightness was influenced in two ways. The first was a political choice to associate with the 'right' group so as not to get caught up in politics and be sent to jail for thinking and acting outside of the prescribed behavior. Secondly rightness was conceptualized in the form of moralistic behavior.

The teachers spoke about forced removals, the 'little box' mentality, social and political rightness and standing up for basic rights to education. The traditionalist and

extremely conservative nature of the social and political climate of that time served to reinforce the structures of family and religion elaborated on in the above sections. In the case of rightness, the participants concealed any interest in the changing modern contexts of socialization and politics so as to keep up the appearance of being a conservative traditionalist, despite their true feelings about these structures. The social/political system also informed the participants' ideas that change and modernization could lead to imprisonment. Their adherence to the conservative traditional lives advocated by their family and religious, and social/political structures were consistent. While adhering to family and religious fervor, the participants did enact agency with regard to basic human rights. Ms. Campbell noted attending a protest at her school for the right to education and left South Africa to work abroad. Mrs. Jordon also advocated for the right to education and attended student gatherings.

The family, religion, and social/political climate were formative in the teachers' understanding of sexuality. The strict nature of these structures, elaborated on above, also served to regulate sexuality and the participants' understanding of their own coming of age.

6.3.4 Influences on the Sexual Self

The experiences described below cannot be separated from the influences mentioned above. However, I make this distinction to highlight particular aspects that have had a more direct influence on the sexual identity of the teachers. Some of the structural influences mentioned here are also present in other forms in the previous section but are influential for different reasons in relation to the sexual self. This portion of the analysis aids in comprehension of the specific experiences the participants had which have shaped their perceptions and responses to the sensitive and private topics of the Life Skills curriculum.

Silence around issues related to sex/uality and coming of age, religion, and social pressure were all influential in the lives of these participants. For the four teachers interviewed in this study there was a perceived contrast between their experiences as youth in relation to that of their students' experiences, as will be discussed in the next

chapter. The teachers highlighted their experiences of menstruation, learning about sex/uality, dating, relationships, and being women.

Silence was the pervasive theme in all of the participants' lives with regard to sexuality. This is characteristic of larger societal silences around sexuality that were explored earlier in this thesis through the history of sexuality (see chapter 3). Not one of the participants had a conversation with a parent or care giver about sex, sexuality, or puberty during their youth. It was due to these silences that the participants did not ask or enquire about such subjects. It was a normal experience for many to find silences about sexuality from their parents. For all of the participants the major factors that contributed to this silence were their strict religious and family structures. In addition, as was elaborated on above, the social and political climate served to reinforce silences about sexuality and separations between the sacred and profane.

All four felt uninformed, confused, and ashamed of the changes in their bodies. None of them had been part of any type of dialogue about sex, the body, or reproduction at the time when they started menstruating. They attributed this to silences at home regarding sex, religious strictness toward sex before marriage, and their own innocence.

The silences around sex/uality felt by the participants' in their early lives was a direct result of the other structural forces elaborated on in above sections. These silences kept all matters and knowledge of the personal lived body out of the spheres of the public/sacred space of home, family, school, and church. These silences were perpetuated from the history of sexuality, traditional silence which has prevailed since the Victorian era relating to all matters sexual. These silences enshrouded sex/uality, reproduction, and coming of age during the teachers' early lives and these silences persisted into their adulthood.

It also seemed problematic that the participants, who were themselves raised in a culture of silence around sex/uality, were now supposed to be the disseminators of knowledge about an otherwise (still) silent subject among most parents and children.

In spite of the silences surrounding sex/uality, all of the participants were informed in some way about basic reproduction. This information, however, was vague and sometimes confusing to them. All of the participants did learn about sexuality through a key informant. Ms. Isaacs and Mrs. Jordon learned about menstruation and reproduction from their aunts. Ms. Abrahams had only had a brief and vague sex education session at school when she started to menstruate. Despite her curiosity, Ms. Campbell's family and siblings who already had children did not talk to her about menstruation or reproduction. Ms. Campbell learnt of a book from friends which later informed her about these topics. Their lack of knowledge of these topics contributed to their understanding of sexuality during their coming of age.

Because of the traditional conservative structures surrounding the teachers in their early life the silences around sexuality kept them naive regarding sex/uality when they were growing up. It seems as though topics related to sex/uality were seen as so deviant that even seeking knowledge about them was forbidden. This was demonstrated by Ms. Abrahams' fear of her parents finding out that she read a romance novel and Ms. Campbell quietly borrowing a copy of Every Woman. The key informants about sex in the participants' lives also gave them a glimpse into a world of changing standards, morals, and socialization. These informants were catalysts of change and reflexivity. The people who informed them about sex/uality and relationships exposed them to a world outside the constraints they normally experienced. For the first time they were personally exposed to other ways of thinking about a subject normally regulated by the structures of family, religion, and the social/political climate.

The teachers' key informants also introduced the experiences of the lived body to the public sphere. Public, in this context, means even a conversation at home as there was such a strictly enforced silence about these issues that the divisions of public and private seemed to be extreme and inclusive of the public was any utterance of these topics. This information imparted to the participants was a catalyst for them to see another way of life and other ways of being. Despite their embarrassment and lack of knowledge at this earlier stage in life, all four women went on to become Life Skills teachers and today supposedly speak about these issues in the public space of schools year after year. It is certain that these experiences and informants of sex/uality are

remembered, referenced, and continue to shape the participants' understanding of and interaction with the topics of HIV/AIDS and sex/uality.

In the next chapter I show how the experiences described in the first two sections serve as mediatory tools these teachers draw on in understanding their roles as Life Skills teachers. What are examined in the next chapter are the experiences, perceptions, and understandings of the Life Skills curriculum topics and not the participants' actual teaching. In addition I show how changes in the educational paradigm have also isolated the teachers' from their students' experiences. The following section concludes by showing how the teacher's reported that their perspective, values, and past experiences interact with the curriculum and their relationship with their students and how they have changed in the process of teaching Life Skills. This links the teachers' personal experiences in early life and the making of the sexual self with their responses to the current contexts in which they work.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the early lives of the participants and in, particular, highlighted some of the emerging influential structures. These influential structures in the teachers' early lives shape their understanding of Life Skills topics. The conservative and traditional modes of operating that were prescribed in their early life in many cases persist into adulthood. The control, discipline, and belonging of the family and religious structures emerged as mutually reinforcing and are seen by the participants as inevitable. It is clear that the structures of family and religion greatly impact on the participants' morals, values, actions and judgements in fundamental ways. It was illustrated how the participants enacted agency in multiple cases. However, while there are a few highly influential structures in their early lives the participants were still able to be reflexive agents. They adapt their early life knowledge to their experiences. This was particularly evident in the case of the social/political climate where they went against the system to support human rights and equality in education. In addition their reflexivity and agency were also exercised through their exploration of puberty and sexuality. It is easy to see the traditional and conservative values advocated by all of the structures highlighted above. This data sets the stage for the next chapter which examines the participants' perceptions of the

new curriculum and the children they teach. This is achieved through looking at their early life experiences, teaching experiences shared, and responses to teaching Life Skills. What follows is an exploration of the perception of teaching Life Skills curriculum topics from experience reported by the teachers. The next chapter highlights some ways that experience influences understanding at different levels.

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Chapter 7

Experiences influence understanding of and interaction with life skills topics

Chapter 7 elaborates on our understanding of the influential structures of the participants' early lives and juxtaposes these experiences and influential structures with the contemporary contexts confronting them through their interaction with the Life Skills curriculum and their students. This further examination sheds light on teacher's perceptions of the new curriculum relative to the children they teach. In addition the teacher's responses to the curriculum topics and those topics which present themselves in the process of teaching Life Skills are explored. What emerges is that teachers have difficulty understanding current contexts of youth culture specifically related to the Life Skills curriculum topics. This seems to be the case because of the participants' early life experiences and highly influential structures which shape their outlook. It is those experiences and structures that have shaped the teachers understanding of youth and that are utilized in their roles as Life Skills teachers. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section 7.1 delves into the teachers own sex-“miseducation” in early life and juxtaposes that knowledge with the expected role of a Life Skills teacher. Some of the complexities of these roles are highlighted here. Section 7.2 looks at the knowledge, values, and perceptions of youth culture held by the participants and juxtaposes these with the teachers' feelings that they are unable to advocate important values in the Life Skills classroom. This chapter takes a more comprehensive look at the influences and experiences that shape teachers' responses to and interaction with topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality in the Life Skills curriculum. This chapter also illustrates the difficult job of negotiating the blurred terrain of public and private discourse inherent in being a Life Skills teacher.

7.1 New Education

This section explores the participants' experiences with the OBE educational paradigm which introduced a new style of education as well as new topics to the curriculum. This section highlights the changes in the structure of education, in particular OBE, and the participants' experiences with the demands of a new

pedagogic style and new expectations of teachers. What is explored is the process of the teachers' repositioning themselves in the light of these structural and pedagogic shifts. Of particular note is how these changes influence the teachers' navigation of the sacred and profane and traditionalism and modernity. The sacred and profane are dealt with in new ways by the Life Skills teachers. In addition, I highlight the teachers' navigation between traditional education values and the modernist paradigm from which the new OBE and Life Skills curriculum arises. This section aids an understanding of the teacher's perceptions of the new curriculum along with how their early life experiences influence their understanding and interaction with sensitive topics. It is organized into two subsections. Section 7.1.1 highlights the teachers' reactions to their experiences of "miseducation" regarding sex. In 7.1.2 the roles of the Life Skills teacher within the new education system are discussed. To contextualize both the teacher's experiences and the roles expected of them as Life Skills teachers a short overview of major changes in the structure of education follows.

As discussed earlier, the transition from apartheid to democracy greatly impacted on the structures and procedures of education in South Africa. Post-1994 policy and curricula changed much of what it meant to teach and learn in South Africa. Where in the previous system of rote learning there was no room for students' opinions, this was not the case under the new system. As Ms. Campbell said,

You had to memorize it, give it back, fine that's what the school was about to us it wasn't about critical thinking. If you thought critically they would probably question it. I mean you know because our schools were so rigid in those days today it's different. I like it this way because there's a lot of initiative you can take it's not just black and white, there're different ways you can do things (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

While the new educational paradigm has been an adjustment for them all in terms of re-training and familiarizing with new pedagogy, resources, materials, and structures the Life Skills teachers have changed with the system, and adapted their practices where necessary. However, this adds to the complexity of the teachers' task. As Ms. Abrahams said of her training,

I was trained to teach Coloured children not to teach children as a whole you know, because we weren't trained to teach children Life Skills we were trained to teach children just the academic side of work (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

Ms. Isaacs told of how she thinks the dichotomy between traditional academic work and Life Skills is a difficult 'blurred terrain' for her students to navigate. She spoke of the difficulty she and her students have when switching from other traditional subjects to the Life Skills lessons. She describes the different ways of teaching as wearing different masks. She wears a "serious" mask when teaching math and other subjects and then a more "relaxed...personal" mask when teaching Life Skills. While she makes sense of the changes in her teaching style and persona as metaphorical masks she thinks students "*can't find the balance*" between these demands (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1). Mrs. Abrahams also says that the terrain between public and private is blurred for her when students question her knowledge of topics related to HIV, sex, and sexuality because she is an unmarried woman who openly doesn't believe in sex before marriage. Her students try and undermine her authority by saying things like 'how do you know? You're not married'. It is situations such as this that introduce the teachers' personal lives, values, and sexuality into the classroom in ways unique to the topics of Life Skills. The next section deals with the participants' experience of sex education, or, as I've called it "miseducation". This reveals the participants' early life experiences regarding sex education which gives insight into their responses to teaching Life Skills.

7.1.1 Sex Miseducation

Here I've used the term "miseducation" to denote the paucity of education regarding sex, sexuality, and puberty that the participants had in their early lives. All of the teachers wanted to teach Life Skills in a way different from the how they had learned about sex/uality and puberty. Silences around the topics were instituted and perpetuated by the structures in the participants' early life, in particular the regulations of family and religion along with the influences of the history of sexuality on generally. Based on the understanding that the participants were subject to traditionalist structures during their formative years it makes sense that sexuality was a highly regulated subject and seen as largely taboo. These subjects were taboo amongst parents and children, siblings, in religious settings, and in schools. It must also be noted here that the sexuality of girls has been particularly regulated throughout our knowledge of the history of sexuality. Thus the women who participated in this study had to seek out knowledge about their changing body, emotions, and the act of

procreation. While this “miseducation” is not unique, it is important to consider as a formative early life experience which was influential on their willingness to teach and learn about the topics and values enshrined in the Life Skills curriculum. Thus, an understanding of this “miseducation” gives us a backdrop for the participants’ conceptualizations of youth sexuality today. The teachers emphasised the importance of imparting a different knowledge than the type they were given regarding these topics. It seems as though the teaching of Life Skills counteracts for them their previous state of ignorance. They are also therefore agents of change who have chosen through a reflective and experiential process of structuration to change and develop their own ways of being. This seems to be an example of how the professional venture of teaching Life Skills enters into the personal sphere in yet another way. This is particularly interesting because rather than shying away from teaching Life Skills, even if they found it initially difficult, the participants have illustrated Giddens point about agency and choice beautifully. They have chosen to look at the influential experiences in their early life regarding sex education and see their position as Life Skills teachers as an opportunity to enact agency and change in their personal lives and society at large. Thus they see teaching Life Skills as freeing them from their previously silenced and regulated sexual selves while at the same time equipping the next generation with skills to better understand their sexuality and sexual choices.

Ms. Isaacs reported that she had felt naïve about issues involving sex as a youth entering adulthood. Now, as a Life Skills teacher she attempts to enable her students with knowledge that she did not have at such a young age. She hopes that this knowledge will better equip them for the world.

I bring my personal experience of not knowing and um, my, I think I can call it being naïve also, you know...I wouldn't like someone else to experience that and go through it. So, bearing that in mind, I would then rather try and prepare that child so it's (all the different choices in life relating to sex/uality) not such a wake up call for them like I had (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1).

Similarly, Ms. Abrahams tries to educate learners and prepare them for the world, something she felt she ‘missed out’ on.

I'm very open, you can imagine how much I missed out in developing. I don't wish that for my family and our children. So um, I don't have a problem, I won't withhold anything from my family or from the little ones you know (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

While the intention is to better the lives of learners in the Life Skills classroom by equipping them with tools to function in a world where teenage sexuality is a reality, there are also some topics that the participants felt uncomfortable talking about. One such topic was masturbation.

Ms. Abrahams reported that she tries to address all of the topics of the curriculum but at the same time may neglect some topics when she is uncomfortable. Her attempt to at least address these topics seems like an effort to undo the silence of her sex “miseducation”.

Because I feel that I was robbed, so why must I rob my kids. So I don't have a problem teaching everything that they want me to teach. Neglecting things maybe, yes, but I do go there (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

Ms. Isaacs highlighted how when topics that she is uncomfortable with must be addressed she just refers the students to the workbooks provided by the Department and does not address them in class. She was asked specifically about the topic of masturbation and seemed embarrassed to discuss it as a Life Skills topic and said that is one of the topics where she would rather take the cold and clinical route than explore with the students because of her own discomfort in teaching the topic.

Ms. Campbell seemed resentful of the silences in her sex education.

I can remember growing up, my parents didn't talk about menstruation to me and, I mean, when it happened it was 'what the...?' you know what I'm saying? So now these days I think we should be more open-minded about it otherwise our children will make wrong choices and we don't like that to happen to them (Ms. Campbell, Interview 1).

The participants seemed to have embraced the Life Skills curriculum in some ways. However the difference in both the content and demands on the teacher in Life Skills compared to other subjects is unmistakable. These teachers have been used to the traditional curriculum with specific measurable outcomes (tests, exams, written exercises) as discussed in chapter two. Actors in the implementation of schooling have been clear about these types of outcomes and expectations for generations, as described in Chapter two. However, these expectations have changed in current contexts with the need to develop a curriculum which deals directly with social problems such as sexual and reproductive health problems like the spread of HIV. The introduction of the Life Skills curriculum has been established outside the traditional

paradigms of teaching and academic success. Life Skills teaching seeks to shape and change behaviour in a very personal fashion and, therefore, expects different things from teachers. The roles of the teacher were outlined earlier in chapter two and will now be discussed further in terms of how the participants spoke of their experience Life Skills teachers.

7.1.2 Roles of the Life Skills Teacher

The role of the teacher has changed along with the changes in the education system.

At first teachers were perceived as, um, they had the higher status in the community. These days they are just plain workers as anybody else. So that has changed, the whole paradigm shift in the way teachers are perceived (Ms. Campbell, Interview 3).

Ms. Campbell also highlighted that teachers in a time of HIV/AIDS are expected to perform in a 'moral' way and be free of immorality.

I think any adult can pick it up (HIV). No matter what kind of job you do. They (prostitutes) get higher risk than what I'd say teachers are. You get teachers who are infected though. It's unbelievable because you expect them to have all the knowledge. You expect them to live a very moralistic life, you know that kind of thing. So it's shocking to see how many of the teachers are infected (Ms. Campbell, Interview 3).

While it is clear that there are multiple roles anticipated for Life Skills teachers, what is less clear is how teachers should manage these different roles. As Ms. Isaacs stated earlier, she feels that the different roles required when teaching academic subjects and Life Skills forces her to wear different masks. The Department of Education asks Life Skills teacher to be multiple things in the classroom, some of which require a degree of exposure of their private life in the public sphere. In this section some of the major roles that the teachers addressed will be discussed in terms of how they demand both public and private knowledge and action from the Life Skills teacher.

The participants reported that being a Life Skills teacher demands more from a teacher than other subjects. In the case of Ms. Isaacs, she is also the school's AIDS coordinator, which she says often equates her, in the minds of her colleagues and students' families, as a social worker and therapist.

Me being the AIDS coordinator I tend to look at social problems and stuff and now they (parents) think they own you, anytime they say they've got a problem you must listen to them and try to solve it immediately. Almost like a social worker (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1).

The roles of Life Skills teacher and AIDS coordinator create an increased work load for her. During one of the interviews with Ms. Isaacs I saw this scenario play out, when a parent barged into the room where we were meeting and before Ms. Isaacs could say a word, began speaking to Ms. Isaacs. Ms. Isaacs was visibly annoyed by this demand for her attention and then explained that she feels like a social worker. As can be seen by this scenario, families of learners also blur the line between the public and private in understanding the role of the Life Skills teacher. This seems to be because the topics of Life Skills are intrinsically personal. All parties involved in the curriculum seemed to struggle in some ways with the classic divisions between private and public knowledge and ways of being. This example not only shows how the teacher is thrust into the private lives of the students and their families because of the different expectations they have of a Life Skills teacher.

All four of the participants told of how their role as a Life Skills teacher is often in the form of mother, grandmother, or life coach. Ms. Isaacs reported taking on a mothering role with her class,

With my class I tend to adopt that mother figure. Like if there's a need then I will try and address that need. If you need shoes I will try and get you... So when I teach them it's almost like I'm trying to bring something across and trying to help them (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1).

Mrs Abrahams told that some students call her mom but others call her grandma because she's fat.

I feel great, I feel good about it (being called mom or grandma) (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 2).

Ms. Jordon and Ms. Campbell also said that they 'mother' their students in ways. The participants' may feel like this because the Life Skills curriculum asks teachers to influence and change student's sexual behaviour. Ms. Abrahams distinguishes Life Skills from other subjects in terms of what she aims to do. She has a personal investment in her students and strives to see their success not only in the academic arena but also in their personal life.

We busy moulding children, whereas a teacher will teach a other subject, you concentrate on content maybe, but with Life Skills there are certain skills a child needs to acquire and there's certain talents that the child may have that you have to bring out, you know, and you have to look at the child's self esteem, you know, and you have to look at his heart, you have to look at his social life and you have to make a difference (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

Discussions around sex/uality are problematic for teachers and students alike because they were not accustomed to (aside from with peers) discussing these matters in the public. Students may be more able to discuss these issues in the school setting because they have been introduced to more openness regarding sex from an early age. The teachers on the other hand, have only had teacher training to prepare them to speak about these issues in the public forum of schooling. As Ms. Isaacs explains, the Life Skills curriculum she teaches presses her to draw on elements of her personal identity.

When I'm teaching I take the book, I take the workshop I take own experience and I try to marry all of them, as this is how I perceive this...All of it (the curriculum) is clinical and it's not really addressing me as a person, you know, like my own experience. Because it's seen as, cold and clinical medical terms. I try to take that and add my own experiences, what I see, read up, and try to put all of them together and prepare in that way. Also, that's what makes me more comfortable presenting, by making it my own and by taking all of their information and putting it together and presenting something which I can call my own (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2)

She states that there is a necessity to make the curriculum less formal and clinical and therefore more digestible for her students and herself. She achieves this through utilizing her personal experiences in the classroom and an individual pedagogic design. What can be seen from the above section is that the teachers adapt to these new circumstances. They also seem to self define their role as Life Skills teachers and take on different roles and personal standards with regard to their task. This personal process of defining an identity as a Life Skills teacher helps one understand teachers responses to teaching sensitive topics not usually talked about explicitly in schools. This stems partly from their belief that their position as teachers of this sensitive subject positions them differently than other teachers.

In the next section the tension created between the teacher's concepts of youth and those which are exposed to them in the process of teaching Life Skills are examined. The contexts of youth culture are explained and then attention shifts to how the participants, with their set of life experiences explored earlier, make sense of these new contexts. These new contexts provide insight in to current influences that shape teachers responses to Life Skills topics.

7.2 Teachers, students, and sensitive topics: Considering the intersection of lived experiences in the Life Skills classroom

This section first elaborates on the necessity of understanding the blurred terrain of public and private spheres of life and knowledge created by the Life Skills curriculum. What is shown here is how the participants are forced to deal with subjects previously defined as taboo by the influential structures which informed their early lives, and sexual selves. Subsection 7.2.1 highlights the contemporary contexts of youth culture as they were reported on by the participants. Section 7.2.2 discusses the tensions teachers reported as not being able to advocate their own moral beliefs and how they explored their own opinions in Life Skills teaching.

7.2.1 Contemporary Contexts in Youth Culture

As Life Skills teachers the participants were repeatedly confronted with the new and changing contexts of youth culture. Some of the issues included are teenage pregnancy, the breakdown of family structures, drugs, gangs, sexual preferences and sexual activity. In many cases these contemporary contexts threatened the teachers' beliefs in childhood innocence. The idea of childhood innocence is a lifelong belief they have held in their personal and professional lives. The confrontation of this belief in childhood innocence, along with what they see as a degeneration of society's morals influences how the participants interact with contemporary youth culture. They feel isolated by the experiences presented to them as Life Skills teachers both by the curriculum and the responses of the students. The teachers interviewed for this study were all concerned with youth culture today. They felt in some cases disassociated from what their students experience at home and socially. This brings to light the conflict between their ideals of private life and their values in the public sphere of schooling. One also comes to know the teachers perceptions of the Life Skills curriculum relative to the students they teach. Their experience with students also shapes teachers responses to the curriculum topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality.

The participants felt alienated from the personal experiences of their students even though in some cases they may be living across the street from these students. Their

residence in the community did not help them identify with their students' experiences. What emerged as that most influential and important were the early influential structures of their youth, which were in stark contrast with the realities of youth culture today. Those structures created a distance between their experiences and those they were presented with in their interaction with the Life Skills curriculum and students.

An issue which came out strongly in the interviews with all of the participants was a concern for the breakdown of the family structure and the changing roles of children within the family context.

Most of our kids come from broken homes, single parents, you know and um, the environment in the house, you know, where brothers are drug addicts. They see their brothers and the gangsters as their role models because they are the people with money. So we need to tell them and to teach them that is not good role models (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

The participants saw disintegration of family values as something they are left to deal with in the Life Skills classroom. Ms. Campbell spoke about how her students' respect for women and adults had changed throughout the time she has been teaching. Ms. Campbell feels like students speak to her as an equal instead of with the respect she thinks is due to her as a teacher and an adult.

I need to tell the learners you are not my equal because they see themselves like that and um it's because some of the boundaries have broken down at home already. Boundaries have been broken down, now they expect to get the same thing at school and that is where we say in Afrikaans "om dop te hou" (keep your eyes open) but in any case the thing is this, here I need to bring in life. I need to say, 'I see it'. So, it's difficult to be objective in Life Skills (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

There seem to be many situations like this, where the teachers saw that their students are taking on the burden of adulthood before they have gone through puberty. The participants had a hard time dealing with this because they did not juggle their youth with adult roles as seen in the previous chapter. A cornerstone of their experience of youth was tied to their innocence and separation from the adult world. Whereas their students already speak of responsibilities that the teachers did not assume until much later in life. Such things as trying to make money, minding children, and raising oneself are far from the participants' conceptualizations of youth.

Another marked change in youth culture was the influence of media. During and following the transition from apartheid to democracy the South African media went

through serious liberalization. While at the same time education was transforming the liberalization of media in South Africa created different sources for information and dialogue about sex/uality and relationships which did not exist in the participants youth. A major form of media education of their youth was the radio. Currently sources of media education have evolved into movies, television, the internet and video games. The participants were concerned about the content of this media education along with the unregulated messages about morals and values transmitted through technology. Ms. Campbell expressed her concern about the values imparted by this technology.

When we grew up we never had television like them you know, so television didn't play a role, we had the radio we listened to the radio when I look at that. There's a different kind of education coming through here. I would say it's about what my parents taught me, what they put in place and it's all as I said according to what the Bible says (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

Along with this interrogation of the values portrayed in modern technology, Ms. Campbell also attributed individualised social behaviour to technology and the popular games of today. She contrasts the video game to community centred outdoor fun.

The games they play today is more about to me, I will call it a selfish games because it's just that person and the video game, it's just that person on the computer do you see it's so individualistic. They don't socialize like we used to. We were all over the show, the whole block (Ms. Campbell, Interview 2).

The four participants see their students as individualist rather than family and community oriented which is a departure from their experiences of youth. This can be seen as another change of modernity manifesting in their views of youth culture, one that creates conflict for teachers.

From these teachers' perspectives, growing up today is greatly different than it was when they were young. What is highlighted are the participants' perceptions of difference between traditional and modern. What is also illuminated is the teachers' thinking and perceptions of the contexts presented to them by students in the process of teaching the Life Skills curriculum. The participants' ideas of normalcy were confronted when they were exposed to different conceptualizations of family presented by their students. This contrasted with their views of family as controlling, regulatory bodies where adults provided their basic needs. Students exposed them to home life whereas during their youth they were left to fend for themselves in many

circumstances. This exposure to new contexts went further when the participants learned about acts of physical and sexual abuse experienced by students. They all felt as though there was a situation of moral decline in society at large because of the lack of respect for adults and break down of the family structure. This judgement seems to inform the ways the participants perceive the role of Life Skills and the topics covered in the curriculum.

Overall they seemed to be uncomfortable with the exposure of youth to topics, situations, and activities previously reserved for adults. This is present in their view of media and technology. All of the participants felt that technology was exposing youth to things they need not know about at such an early age. These topics include sex, violence, and individualistic values.

Peer pressure is influential in the lives of young people. During the interviews many aspects of youth culture noted by the Life Skills teachers were raised. Their personal experiences of peer pressure were different than what was presented to them by their students. As was demonstrated previously, all of the participants were conservative and did not test social boundaries during their youth. None of them drank alcohol or smoked, or even had boyfriends or friends who smoked cigarettes. Ms. Isaacs was particularly vocal about the influences of peer pressure on her students. She spoke of her difficulty in relating to male students due to their involvement in gang culture:

Relating to the boys tends to be a bit of a problem because we have like this gangsters and peer pressure. So, it's totally a new game for me and trying to actually see their point (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1).

The role of drugs and violence in the context of gang culture must be taken into account when dealing with these influential forces and behaviors. Gang culture and the heavy use of drugs by their seventh grade students also greatly worried the participants, as Ms. Campbell said,

The 'tik' (popular Methamphetamine drug) golly it's huge, I mean people don't realize it but it's so huge it's actually wiping out our young people together with AIDS. You know the fear that we have right now is that we will have very young [and] very old people and nothing in the middle because the younger generation they are destructing and they are wiping themselves out if you look at it (Ms. Campbell, Interview 3).

The complexities of being young today seem almost incomprehensible to the participants. They were so sheltered from drugs in their youth that understanding and reaching children with that experience is difficult. These contextual experiences also

shape the way teachers respond to the sensitive topics in the Life Skills curriculum. These experiences have obviously proposed different ways of being to the teachers. They have changed the participants' view of youth.

The students not only make choices to become involved with drugs and gangs but are often victims of manipulation and violence in the form of sexual abuse. Such sexual abuse is clearly a contributor to HIV transmission. Not only is sexual abuse a problem but also the seduction of young women by the 'guys on the side of the road'. Young women are lured by such men by money and the chance to fulfill short-term dreams. This is another problem of peer pressure and also of poverty.

Especially for them in the area, there's so much pressure you can actually see as soon as these girls are going to hit grade seven then, the attention starts. Because they getting the attention of these guys who sit on the corners and that they feel very flattered and very grown up and that is where all the problems start so I tend to tell them that and also they not ready (for sex and relationships) (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2).

What makes money and other status symbols extremely attractive is the situation of poverty that most of the students live in.

As I say, I only have them for that time and then they go out there and then the pressures just too much. They just can't handle it. And the whole thing goes around money and they given money. They are being supplied and don't have, the household doesn't have, the family doesn't have, and I mean money is a big attraction and they (gangsters) prey on that (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2).

Here there was a glimpse into the overwhelming belief of the participants that they are the 'right' voice among all the negative influences of what they perceive as a morally degenerating society. This attitude regarding youth culture seems to have much influence on the teachers' actions. While they believe they are in a position to empower students they also feel very disempowered themselves because of their lack of understanding of contexts in which their learners operate.

The issues of money, sex, and drugs are very apparent to the participants who all saw teenage pregnancy as a bigger issue for their students than HIV transmission (although some did acknowledge that they are related). The issue of money seems to be particularly problematic for young women who Ms. Isaacs said were persuaded to become 'taxi queens'¹⁸.

¹⁸ A "taxi queen" is a school aged girl who has sex, sexually fondles, and/or personally accompanies adult male taxi drivers in exchange for free rides, food, soft drinks, jewelry, clothes, and phones (Salo

They (female students) walking with a cell phone, they walking with money and they then become an object. They can go buy what they want they have the best of clothing and it's a problem I don't know if you heard of the word 'taxi queen' that is what has been happening also (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2).

From the perspective of the teachers interviewed for this study teen sexual decision-making seems to have to do with money, image, and material goods. While in their youth sexual decision making was a matter concerning family, religion, and purity. While the Life Skills curriculum does not explicitly address these issues in their real manifestations it is clear through the teacher's insights that these are important cofactors considered by youth making sexual decisions.

One aspect demonstrated by Ms. Campbell, and also articulated by the other participants, is the persisting prejudices still alive in the actions of their students. This was particularly mentioned in relation to tensions between Christian and Muslim students.

There are still so many prejudices still alive to me at this point in time. They should have been, no isn't in their lives, they should have been colour blind and all those things you know, but, it is there. I can pick it up at the beginning of the year already. I've spoken about it trying to break down these barriers. One child must come today and say that person is HIV, I'm telling you, they'll ostracize this child because the bias in the class is high (Ms. Campbell, Interview 3).

7.2.2 Advocating values and exploring teachers' new experiences

All four of the participants spoke of their difficulty in keeping their personal values and opinions out of their Life Skills teaching. They found this particularly difficult when they needed to suppress their long held beliefs or the principles they live by in order to stay somewhat neutral as a teacher advising about issues related to Life Skills. How do they divorce their personal opinions and experiences from their professional identities? In the case of teaching maths or science this may be an easier task or at least much less personal but Life Skills calls upon knowledge of the lived body. Teachers reported that they incorporate some of their own experiences into their Life Skills teaching to make the curriculum less clinical. It seems that for all the teachers interviewed the incorporation of their personal life experiences and values into the curriculum is unavoidable in some circumstances.

2002). This phenomenon has been documented in the Cape Argus and Sunday Times newspapers as occurring in the Cape Flats areas of Manenberg, Grassy Park, Wynberg, Bonteheuwel, Athlone, Mitchell's Plain, Retreat, Khayelitsha, Lavender Hill, Heathfield, Elsies River and Steenberg. (Van Breda 1998, Mufweba 2001).

All four teachers were clear about the implications and unethical behaviour exhibited when a teacher forces their beliefs on students. As Ms. Abrahams said,

I cannot enforce my belief on to things so it is difficult and sometimes I feel like doing it because I believe that what I see is good for me. I would like to pass that over to my little ones in class. But I can't, I can get into trouble if I enforce my beliefs, my religions beliefs, or my principals onto my kids. I must respect them. I must guide them (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 2).

However, even with this awareness personal opinions and judgements sometimes are revealed. At the same time she said that,

They (students) don't come to me and ask for that (advice about sex) because I tell them it's best to stay away from sex you see (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 2).

Here it seemed clear that Ms. Abrahams advocated her personal beliefs to an extent. All four teachers seemed to let their values, experiences, and opinions come through in particular with regard to family values, abortion, and teen sex. Ms. Isaacs' experience of family structure seems hard for her not to advocate for her students. Her use of the phrase "better way" in the statement below seems to be an unconscious effect of her strong family structures coming through in a way she may think is neutral.

There's been a real drop of values and family standards so I tend to, I wouldn't force it on them, but I show them it can be done like this and there's a better way (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1).

In an attempt to understand what kinds of values would be difficult for the participants to not advocate to their students I asked them about a particularly hot topic which is directly related to the curriculum. I asked them what advice, other than referring her to a clinic/doctor, would they give if a student came to them and said that she thought she was pregnant. Ms. Campbell shed a light on how she'd deal with the situation.

I mean obviously you are aware that um, abortion is not an option you know. When I say abortion is not an option then I am going to because we many people still believe it's murder...So yes when it comes to that, abortion is not an option to that child. If it was a rape case then, you see so it depends on the situation if it was just ok she had sex with one of her friends or her boyfriend I mean she's 15 years old and you know this happens then you know it's a different world (Ms. Campbell, Interview 3).

The other participants said in a similar yet less direct way that 'we don't believe' in abortions. Ms. Abrahams would not even mention it as an option for the young girl,

I will never advise a young girl to go for an abortion (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 2).

Whereas Ms. Isaacs would present abortion as an option after taking care of the child.

I would give her options, that either you abort or look after the child. First and foremost, look after the child then adoption and lastly abortion. Put it in that order (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2).

While she would tell her opinion she is adamant that her morals only go so far. She would like to advocate for them more because she feels that the children are growing up with loose morals, but she ‘checks’ herself as she realizes that she cannot only advocate for ‘her way’.

I do because at the moment the area that I work in um, there's been a real drop of values and family standards so I tend to, I wouldn't force it on them, but I show them it can be done like this and there is a better way. So, I tend to try and solve that almost like they are my children. I would try and instil that in them...I try as far as possible to instil my values on them. I wouldn't say my values, but the general value of goodness and try and instil those little things in them because I feel it is lacking. Small little things like they would come in with no manners or we have a feeding scheme going so then they don't even know how to sit down and eat properly (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 2).

Not only are the teachers’ personal beliefs drawn into the teaching of Life Skills but their opinions also change in the process of teaching this complex subject. The process of reflexivity enables the participants to revise their earlier held beliefs and opinions in light of new situations. Often being exposed to different contexts and problems facilitates the process of reflexivity. Ms. Campbell reported growing out of the strict, secretive, and conservative mindset she had become accustomed to with in her early life.

I had to grow out of what I believed in because my conservative upbringing came in there (laughs). It came in there every time, you know. So yes, you had to break it down. So now I would say if you look at it, It did a lot to my awareness, doing the course (Life Skills teachers training) (Ms. Campbell, Interview 3).

Mrs. Jordon commented about exposing her personal experiences during teaching of the course. While this can make one vulnerable it can also enhance student learning and participation. She showed an emotional and personal connection to the learners’ problems and personal lives by putting herself ‘in their shoes’ and the process of empathizing with them aids her Life Skills teaching.

I opened up with them, something they never knew about me. It's something I shared by being frank with them and open, showing them that you will also get hurt in life. If you go through this kind of experience you can actually have empathy for them (Mrs. Jordon, Interview 2).

Mrs. Jordon’s experience is like that of the other teachers interviewed. She shares bits and pieces of her personal life and her students reciprocate with a similar openness in the class. It is in this exchange and exposure of personal knowledge and the

experience of the lived body that the notion of the school as a public space comes into question. All parties involved conceptualize the school space as not just a public area but as a blurred space which is mostly public, but in some circumstances a space where the private is disclosed and explored, as in the exchanges during Life Skills teaching.

Teachers have also had to adapt their understandings of personal and private knowledge when it comes to the topics of Life Skills. Each of the teachers interviewed for this study told of how they were at first uncomfortable with the topics and language of Life Skills. This discomfort was due in part to the confrontation of private life/knowledge in the public sphere of teacher training and schooling. Ms. Campbell highlighted her discomfort with the language of Life Skills,

Before, nobody even mentioned AIDS, you know. Also, when we did the course (teacher training)...we had to break down barriers within ourselves...I know for a fact I was shocked when somebody used the word penis in my presence because nobody used it. Nobody would say it in normal company; you know what I'm saying? I'm sorry if I offended you now (Ms. Campbell, Interview 3).

In this statement Ms. Campbell is even conscious of the fact that this terminology maybe uncomfortable to me, even though I'm researching Life Skills. It is these experiences which help to illustrate how Life Skills teachers' personal life is addressed, negotiated and revised in the process of teaching Life Skills. As highlighted by Ms. Campbell, she was not exposed to such conversations until she went to Life Skills teacher training. The introduction of the word penis into her public world and vocabulary was, at first, difficult for her because of her previous experiences of silence surrounding sexuality, reproduction, and puberty.

Even though the participants are Life Skills teachers, often when confronted directly by the sexuality of their students they are shocked. Ms. Abrahams told an interesting story of students who were caught having sex in the school toilet during an after-school function. Her re-telling of this experience could be analyzed at length but here the focus is on the reaction of her and her fellow 7th grade teacher. She did not interrogate the situation directly but the male co-teacher, who spoke to the boy involved, told her about the incident in detail.

We (the teachers) were shocked! They (the students) were 12 year old kids who were born in 1992. They had sex and they will tell you, 'But we using condoms'. Not only

that but there's this one girl, oh beautiful girl, she's beautiful, got a beautiful personality and she prefers to have anal sex (Ms. Abrahams, Interview 1).

Even though the teachers admit that their student's experiences are vastly different than their own they find it almost unfathomable that students would have experiences of sex at such a young age. This is shocking as the comment comes from a Life Skills teacher who should know that at the 7th Grade level many children already have sexual experiences. As has been elaborated on earlier, none of the participants were involved in sex at an early age. Their friends were also not having sex before their twenties and some even perceived their larger peer group as being sexually inactive until after high school graduation.

Some of these issues have been dealt with, to a lesser extent, in physical education classes but there has never been a formal and examinable subject area dealing with issues of sex/uality until recently. The introduction and practice of the Life Skills curriculum changes expectations of learning and teaching. The subject area blurs the traditional boundaries of public and private life and ways of knowing for Life Skills teachers in particular. Earlier this study highlighted some of the complexities brought about by this modern subject to the traditional field of education and the expectations held by the Department of Education. One of these complexities is in the way Life Skills is taught, which is different to the methods used for the teaching of other subjects.

Teachers also highlighted that the Life Skills curriculum required them to engage with students at a different level than that of traditional subjects. This is at the level of the personal, where there is an interrogation and opening up (in some cases) of the student to the teacher and of the teacher to the student (both individually and as a group). Teachers addressed this by saying that teaching Life Skills is different from giving instruction in subjects they have taught in the past. A critical change for teachers from traditional academic work is the relationships developed in the Life Skills classroom. The ways in which teachers engage with students as young people rather than just pupils also adds a different dynamic for those who teach the subject. Some Life Skills teachers have developed a less clinical view of students and engaged with them as young people with complex experiences. This change in relationships is important in understanding the dynamics between teacher and student in the Life Skills classroom.

This type of interaction is also advocated in the curriculum through the roles of the teacher which were explored earlier. As a result teachers run the risk of getting too personally involved with students. This happens either through them exposing their personal life or becoming an ‘on call’ guidance counsellor for needy students and families. Both of these situations can be uncomfortable and in addition could compromise professionalism.

These changes in operating for Life Skills teachers seem somewhat obvious due to the subject matter’s inherent exposure of the highly personal in the public. Such an exposure/disclosure in some cases seems to form a bond between students and teachers. Relationships between teachers and students who’ve disclosed issues usually excluded from the public space of schools may create a setting where learners are more able to ask questions and for real advice regarding the pertinent issues related to teenage sexuality and HVI/STI transmission. Contrarily, such disclosure/exposure of the personal may create an environment which makes students uncomfortable and possibly feel judged by what has been exposed by the teacher. Teachers too, can feel discomfited by these disclosures. This was shown in the case of Ms. Isaacs, who had a particularly hard time dealing with private issues presented to her by students which related to sexual abuse. However, the roles envisaged for the Life Skills teacher do ask them to deal with, advise on, and be educated about issues which are personal in nature and inevitably invoke an emotional response. What we do know from the evidence in this work is that this different mode of operating in the Life Skills classroom has proved difficult to manage. While their personal lives are exposed in some circumstances, there is also the dynamic of not being able to advocate personal values which causes one to feel compromised. The charge to stay neutral in a situation where one’s practice and beliefs are called upon is difficult. This will be elaborated on in the following section.

Another complexity emerging from the experience of the Life Skills teachers is they were all initially trained to teach under apartheid structures. The differences between the methods and system in which these teachers were trained and the new OBE systems are stark. The Life Skills curriculum calls upon an even more progressive style of education in which the teacher and student become personally involved in an attempt at behaviour change. What is even more important to note here is the

teachers' own sex education. As was reported earlier in this section, the participants felt it was in some ways their duty to 'right the wrongs' of their own sex "miseducation" through teaching Life Skills. This point of departure, however, meant the teachers were ill-equipped to teach about issues around sexuality because of the silences and regulation of sex by the influential structures of their early life which impacted on the making of their sexual selves.

In the process of teaching Life Skills the participants reported that they learned a great deal about the subject matter of the Life Skills curriculum along with some of the contextual issues addressed earlier in this chapter. Ms. Isaacs felt as though she came from an extreme point of not knowing about issues related to sex/uality. This became especially apparent to her when she was confronted by students in a same-sex relationship.

We had to deal with lesbianism and cases like that. And I mean, I was so sweet and innocent when I stepped in there. It really showed me a whole different perspective of what was happening...There was a lot of ignorance around it as from my part...you can get a harsh wake up call (Ms. Isaacs, Interview 1).

That 'wake up call' for Ms. Isaacs exposed her to a totally different context of the lived body. She gained knowledge of sexual practices she had previously not even considered as an option.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the teachers' responses to the curriculum topics and the other inevitable topics presented to them in the process of teaching. This exploration has been in the form of perceptions, values, feelings, and experiences given from the participants. What emerged is that teachers first experienced a transition to the new educational structure and pedagogic demands of OBE. They then found it hard to manage the blurred boundaries between private and public/ profane and sacred as Life Skills teachers for various reasons.

To start, the teachers' found the new structure and pedagogical demands of OBE, Life Skills, and the expected roles for teachers difficult to adapt to. They went through a process of self reflection and agency to incorporate and understand this new paradigm and expectations. Through enacting agency they revised their previous ideas of

educational structure, values, and their own roles as educators in order to work with the new OBE paradigm. They were able to understand and adapt to the new modern values enshrined in the OBE system and their roles as teachers. This agency was then juxtaposed with the teachers' own experiences of sex education or "miseducation".

After experiencing overwhelming silence regarding sex/sexuality in their early lives these four teachers still went on to become Life Skills teachers, either by choice or circumstance. The participants all spoke freely about how they had 'missed out', were 'robbed', and 'naïve' about sex, sexuality, and coming of age during their youth. They seemed to feel disempowered by the silences that surrounded their youth with regard to sexual knowledge. What emerged is that all four participants' felt that through teaching Life Skills they were in some ways liberating themselves from their previous states of unknowing and powerlessness regarding sex and sexuality. While the participants saw teaching Life Skills as an opportunity to educate, they also saw it as a particularly difficult job because of the ways that their role as Life Skills teachers differed from the teaching of more traditional subjects.

What emerged from the different roles envisaged for the Life Skills teacher is that there is a blurred terrain between the private and public knowledge and action. These roles highlighted the teachers' responses to teaching topics viewed as sensitive and private which are not usually spoken about explicitly in schools. Since the Life Skills curriculum deals with inherently profane topics such as sex and sexuality it seemed that teachers, students, and families alike were unclear of the boundaries of the Life Skills teachers' job. What is of particular interest is that the teachers tend to make the curriculum and their role as teachers their own by using their personal experiences and perceptions to define content and practice.

Next we saw how the teachers were forced to confront subjects they felt were devious in youth culture. What emerged is that the participants were constantly confronted by new and changing contexts in relation to youth culture. They felt isolated by the experiences presented to them by students in the Life Skills classroom. This brought to light the conflict between their ideals in their private lives and their values in the public sphere of schooling.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored the experiences and influences that shape teachers' perceptions of and responses to topics such as sex, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, puberty and teen sexuality from the Life Skills curricula in South Africa. This was explored through in-depth interviews with four, Coloured, female, Life Skills teachers on the Cape Flats of Cape Town, South Africa. The informants were chosen based on geographic area, gender and racial classification. The aim of this research was to explore the teachers' perspectives, experiences, and responses on the Life Skills curriculum topics. It was found that the Life Skills curricula topics change the traditional educational paradigm by introducing private subjects into the public space of schools. The implications of bringing these otherwise profane topics into the sacred space of schools impacted the participants in both personal and professional ways. The Life Skills curriculum also stipulated new roles for Life Skills teachers that explicitly asked them to model responsible sexual behaviour, further complicating their management of personal knowledge regarding these sensitive topics in the public space of schools.

To further understand the research a theoretical paradigm was employed. This thesis utilized Emile Durkheim's theoretical paradigm of sacred and profane to aid an understanding of how certain information is privileged as sacred and suitable for the public sphere or profane and traditionally restricted to the intimate and private sphere. The values enshrined in both traditionalism and modernity were explored and utilized to contrast the participants' early experiences to those presented to them in the process of teaching Life Skills. The history of sexuality was then explored and used to contextualize the participants' experiences of sex 'miseducation' and larger silences around sexuality. Giddens' theory of structuration was utilized in multiple ways to demonstrate the both constraining and enabling nature between structures and agents. The theory of structuration was employed to frame some of the influential structures which informed the participants' lives. Their actions, reactions, perspectives, and

opinions were explored in relation to the curriculum topics of HIV/AIDS, sex, and sexuality.

Firstly, this research found that teachers had complex identities which informed their jobs as Life Skills teachers. Secondly, it was found that there is a chasm between teachers' values and experiences and those presented to them in the process of teaching Life Skills. Thirdly, the research illuminated the participants' struggles of managing private/profane knowledge in the traditionally sacred/public space of schools. These themes will be discussed in the sections which follow. The thesis will then draw to a close by making overarching conclusions and recommendations regarding further research.

8.2 Complex identities

With the advent of OBE teachers were forced to re-conceptualize their role as teachers. They were no longer simply to be knowledge disseminators but also agents of social change. What emerged is that the teachers' identities are complex even when in the classroom and were not bound to their job as teachers but are rather informed by many different life experiences. Even in the role of the teacher these identities play a part in the teachers' understanding, emphasis, responses and perceptions of subjects. Through looking at the influential structures in the participants' lives a greater understanding of the experiences which inform their identities was achieved.

In addition, through examining the participants' lived experiences of these structures we've come to understand them as women who grew up in a particular place at a particular time and who function as Life Skills teachers in very differing contexts from those in which they grew up. These experiences shed light on teachers' early lives and the experiences that have influenced their understanding and interaction with topics of HIV, sex and sexuality. Because of strict delineations between private/profane and public/sacred dictated by the structures of family, religion, and political climate all of the participants' began their adult lives with little knowledge of these topics. In addition they were both educated and trained under the conservative system of CNE which influenced their ideas of education, acceptable topics and their role as teachers. However, despite all of this it was through the process of

structuration and enacting agency that the participants went on to act as agents of change who sought out restricted information about the profane topics of sex, puberty, and coming of age. So, while traditional values defined barriers between sacred and profane, and silences around sex/sexuality (enshrined in the history of sexuality) persisted in their youth, these women still went on to become Life Skills teachers because of their agency.

The participants were often faced with conflict in terms of the influential structures of their early lives, their own agency, and the situations presented to them as Life Skills teachers. Teachers drew on their early life experiences but in the end their identities were shaped by their experiences and manifested in different ways. One example of this is the silence around sex in the participants' early lives. They experienced overwhelming silences regarding sex, sexuality, and puberty as young people due to the constraints and regulation of their lives by the structures of family, religion, along with the political/social climate and the educational system of that time. Thus structuration served as a constraining force. However, they are now Life Skills teachers and do educate children about topics deemed devious during their childhood and early adult life. This left teachers with a feeling of empowerment to 'right the wrongs' of their sex miseducation by better equipping the next generation to live life in a more informed way. Thus their early influential structures directly conflicted with their job as Life Skills teachers where their role was of 'change maker' and teacher of subjects they had previously seen as devious and strictly profane. This example shows how structuration both constrains and enables the participants in life.

The teachers also found that their interactions with students influenced their perceptions of the world. Through teaching Life Skills they were presented with new concepts of youth and teen sexuality in particular.

8.3 Disconnection between teachers and learners

Influential structures helped the participants to make sense of their world early in life. Those structures influenced their experiences and ideas to an extent that extends into their present-day attitudes. However, though teaching life skills they have challenged

some of the traditionalist values advocated by the restrictive social environment of their youth, this in turn, created new understandings of the world.

For instance, the teachers all believed that today there was a disintegration of family structures and a moral decline in society. Because they had such traditionally based families, education and values, any deviation from that paradigm was hard for them to comprehend. This was particularly hard in relation to family and religion because of the influential role of these in their early lives. Those same traditional values were upheld and reinforced by the political climate and educational system of the day which left them striving for 'rightness' not only in moralistic terms but also in socially acceptable politics. Now, as Life Skills teachers with new information and experience of youth behaviours the teachers' were forced to re-think what it meant to be a young person. Through structuration the teachers reconsidered their ideas of childhood innocence, family roles and moral values, and learned about the role that money/ drugs/ peer pressure /and gangs play in teen sexuality.

Thus there is conflict between the teachers' conceptualization of youth, based on their own experiences, and what is presented to them through interactions with the youth today. They constantly deal with the conflict of their own feelings and experiences. Firstly, they spoke of their jobs as Life Skills teachers as being a liberating experience, one allowing them to 'right the wrongs' of their own sex "miseducation" while at the same time imparting societal values otherwise neglected by parents. In contrast they spoke of how they felt as though they weren't reaching students and that their efforts seemed to be overshadowed by the overwhelming moral decline and peer pressure dealt with by their students each day. The discrepancies between their traditional values and the modern contexts of youth and families that their students experienced were difficult for them to reconcile. At times teachers wanted to act as mothers to their struggling students, instilling values they hold important. Yet, in the same breath, they knew that advocating such values in an explicit way would overstep the bounds of their job. So the question they continuously faced was *to what extent* should the private/profane enter into the teaching of Life Skills? They also had to constantly consider what was at stake and what they would reveal about their personal life and views by making statements. This conflict brings into question how teachers'

learn to manage the profane in the public space of schools and come to terms with their own personal values and identities as Life Skills teachers.

8.4 Managing the profane in public spaces

The Life Skills curriculum in particular thrust upon teachers' topics they had never spoken of in the public space of schooling before, such as HIV, sex, sexuality, masturbation, biology of sex organs, and other issues related to sexuality. The introduction of these topics to their teaching load was not only new to them but it proved difficult to manage their own knowledge and experiences of the subjects in the school space. Their personal knowledge was called upon in different, controversial, and uncomfortable ways compared to when they were teaching other subjects. What emerged is that that teaching Life Skills required teachers to engage with their personal and professional knowledge, their lived body experience, and intellectual reasoning through teaching Life Skills. This ultimately brought their profane experiences into the sacred space of schools in new ways. Therefore, teachers responded to teaching the topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality in a variety of ways. They seemed to enjoy the opportunity to 'right the wrongs' of the sex "miseducation" of their youth and act as agents of change. At the same time, they struggled with the ways these topics called into question their personal values and experiences. They felt compromised when having to teach topics that they were uncomfortable with, for instance masturbation and abortion. Their personal lives and choices were questioned. The participants' sexuality and sexual experiences were called upon in ways normally reserved for the intimate and profane sphere of the private.

What emerges is that the practice of being Life Skills teachers demands more from these teachers than they had expected. This takes two forms, first in terms of how they personally must grapple with the issues they are asked to teach, and second how they manage their personal/profane knowledge and lived experience in the public space of the school. We know that personal experience and the influential structures of early life impact on how the teachers' respond to and perceive the topics of HIV, sex, and sexuality in particular. What is of particular note is that the teachers' enacted agency and reflexivity to deal with the curriculum topics in light of their traditionalist, conservative backgrounds. They also were influenced by the knowledge they gathered

in the process of teaching Life Skills. The situations, contexts, and ways of being presented to them by students had caused them all to consider new viewpoints on sex, sexuality, and youth culture.

In addition to considering new topics and situations they had previously thought impossible, they also managed their personal/profane knowledge in the space of schools in ways different to those when they taught other subjects. The teachers tried to make sense of their personal values, morals, and experiences in light of their jobs as Life Skills instructors. They revised their knowledge, adapted to changing contexts, and made the Life Skills curriculum their own through using their experiences to inform their interaction with the Life Skills topics.

8.5 Conclusions

It is important to re-situate the data in light of the public and private. The changing contexts, topics, and situations such as gangs, drugs, teen sexual activity, different family structures, and situations of poverty are what they say called into question their personal viewpoints in the public space of the Life Skills classroom. The Life Skills curriculum called on teachers' experiences and forced them to develop responses to situations/topics to which they had previously not been exposed. This exposure to new and changing contexts caused the teachers to navigate between personal and professional knowledge in new and distinctive ways that differ from teaching other subjects. This exposure and confrontation ended up unearthing personal knowledge of the lived body and brought into question the school as a sacred public space. The inherently profane and modernist topics of the Life Skills curriculum change the traditional school setting into a place where the private lives of students and teachers are explored in new ways. This change in conceptualization and practice did not come easily. All four teachers spoke about the difficulties in navigating of the blurred boundaries of public and private life/knowledge as Life Skills teachers.

The Life Skills curriculum created tensions between the curriculum topics and the participants' life experiences. Multiple contexts were raised by the participants as difficult due to the ways those topics caused them to re-think their experiences and values. The Life Skills curriculum not only asks teachers to disseminate knowledge

but also to empower students to deal with the changing contexts which influence and shape practices of sex/uality. These practices, presented to the Life Skills teachers via students, were in many cases foreign to them. The tensions created by the presentation of these foreign contexts brought into question the participants deeply rooted values. Thus, the Life Skills curriculum caused the teachers to go through a process of self-reflexivity and structuration in which they examined their values, experiences, and the influential structures of their lives in new ways. The Life Skills curriculum therefore questioned the private life and knowledge of all four teachers in the public space of schooling/teaching and forced them to reconceptualise their identity with these new contexts in consideration.

When personal values and experiences were in tension with these changing contexts teachers' *learned from* and *revised* their previously rigid and conservative points of view to *incorporate* and *consider* their new knowledge of different contexts. However, they still struggled to not advocate their personal perspectives and beliefs.

This example demonstrates the recursive relationship between structure and agent through this process of revisions and considerations of new contexts. This act of reflexivity is characteristic of Giddens' theory of structuration as the teachers demonstrate the constant revision of their understanding and judgement of the world. In other words they are constantly revising knowledge and responses to situations based not only on the structures of their early life which were particularly traditional and conservative but also considering the new and changing contexts they confront.

Thus, what emerges is that teaching Life Skills was a complex task that called teachers' personal knowledge/identity into the public space of schools in new ways. The teachers' were therefore forced to learn, adapt, and manage these complexities with great care.

8.6 Recommendations for further research

Little of the discourse regarding teachers and sex/uality and HIV education takes into consideration the complexities of public/private which confront the teachers and students of these subjects. This study highlights the need for further research into the

ways that teachers' complex experiences and perspectives along with the tensions discussed above play out in the Life Skills classroom. While this study shed light on the complexities of teacher identity in relation to the curriculum topics this shows that there is need to address the difficulties in teaching this subject with teachers directly. A further investigation into these dynamics should include dialogue with learners in addition to intensive classroom observations to inform teacher training and materials development. In addition, further research should highlight other population groups in terms of race, class and gender variations of experience. The development of a discourse regarding teachers of sensitive topics in South African contexts could serve to strengthen the entire practice of teacher education, training, and materials development for topics such as sex/uality and HIV/AIDS education. A discourse which investigates teachers' roles in relation to the Life Skills curriculum would be particularly useful in the South African context with regard to sex/uality/HIV education. Of particular note is how such research could inform teacher training, teacher resources, and even policy related to teaching sensitive topics in South African schools.

University of Cape Town

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Appendices

University of Cape Town

Appendix 1: Permission for research from Western Cape Education Department

Name
Enquiries
Ishizuo
Tel-faan
Telephone
Ifoux
Faks
Fax
Weksa

Dr RS Cornelissen

021-467-7286

021-425-7445

Verwysing
Reference
Katalisa

ZHOSON12-0016



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

IShe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Ms Amy McCulla
3 Highstar Hoar
FRONDEBOSCH
7703

Dear Ms A McCulla

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: A CASE STUDY OF SEVENTH GRADE LIFE SKILLS TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF SUBJECTS FROM THE LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **16th August 2005 to 23rd September 2005**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2005).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as submitted to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director, Education Research.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director, Education Research
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 15th August 2005

SIJL E-ASSIEBLYE VERWYSINGS-NOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE (PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE)
SIJL E-CHIEF IIMBIBU IZISALA IMBIBU KAVU YONKE IMBIBU WAWU

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG 9114, CAPE TOWN 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG 9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

INBELSENTRUM KALLI CENTRE

INDIBENYEMING-EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎ 0861 92 33 22
VELI IZIKO SKOLES/SAFE SCHOOLS ☎ 0800 45 46 47

Appendix 2: Consent form

Consent Form A Case Study of Some 7th Grade Life Skills Teachers' Perspectives and Experiences of Subjects from the Life Skills Curriculum

I am a student at the University of Cape Town in the Graduate School of Humanities. I am a candidate for the MPhil in HIV/AIDS and Society which is a two year program focused on the sociological effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa. My thesis advisor is Jean Baxen from the Graduate School of Education at UCT. I have obtained written permission to carry out this research from with the Western Cape Department of Education's research approval office. I have also been in contact with the Central EMDC and received consent to carry out research with Life Skills teachers from Tropsky Jacobs

I am interested in how teachers' personal experiences impact the ways in which they teach and understand topics including HIV/AIDS and issues around sexuality. I have asked you to participate in my research because I believe you have a unique and valuable perspective which will help me to understand how the lived experience of some Life Skills teachers impacts the ways they think and approach teaching topics that include HIV/AIDS and sex/sexuality in the life skills classroom.

All interviews will be recorded to ensure accurate portrayal of your responses in my research. If at any time the participant wishes to speak with out being recorded please make verbal indication of that to me and I will turn off the recording device for that period. I do not foresee any negative effects on you due to your participation in my research. I would like to use as many details of your responses as possible, as this will make my thesis richer and portray the perspectives and experiences of some Life Skills teachers' more accurately

Please tick 1 option:

_____ My name and all material gathered in the interviews can be used including any geographic area I may name. The name of the school where I currently teach will never be revealed unless otherwise stated by myself the participant.

_____ I would prefer if a pseudo name be assigned to me and any others I may name by the researcher. The use of geographic area names may be used directly from my responses. The name of the school where I currently teach will never be revealed unless otherwise stated by myself the participant.

Other requirements set out by the participant regarding anonymity:

The Western Cape Department of Education has requested a copy of my final Thesis. My thesis will also be read by two external examiners, my advisor Jean Baxen, the transcriber, and colleagues who I plan to consult in revision stages. A copy of my thesis will be available in UCT's Department of Sociology for internal use only. I am bound to contact you if I wish to use any of the material generated in our interviews for further/future use.

I understand all the information above and agree to participate in the proposed research.

Surname _____

First Names _____

Signed _____ DATE: _____

Please feel free to contact me with additional questions or concerns

Amy McCulla
8 Breda Court, Breda St., Gardens 8001
072 959 2600
amyforpeace@gmail.com

Appendix 3: Interview guide

7th grade curriculum topics:

peer pressure, dating, teen pregnancy, contraceptives, abstinence,

reproductive systems, puberty, conception, pregnancy and birth

being a 'whole person' (described as social, emotional, intellectual), problem solving,

rape, sexual harassment,

illness, immune system, being HIV positive, ways to transmit HIV/AIDS,

progression of HIV to AIDS, interacting with people who are HIV positive and AIDS sick.

Name group	Gender: F	Age	Area live in	Racial
Marital status teaching life skills	Children? Ages	Years teaching	Years	

What is the first thing that you remember being good at doing?

Where and with whom did you grow up?

What was the highest standard you completed? Did you matriculate?

What led to you becoming a life skills teacher?

Think back to your first year teaching life skills, what was the most challenging part of teaching the curriculum? Rewarding?

Do you have experience teaching other subjects?

How do you think being a life skills teacher is different from teaching other subjects?

During your adolescents, what was one of the hardest issues for you to deal with in relation to *peer pressure*?

What is your experience of being a *female life skills teacher*?

At what age do you remember your *peers started to talk about having sexual relationships*? At what age is it acceptable to start sexual relationships?

In what ways do you feel that you *personal experiences come into the classroom* as a life skills teacher?

How did you learn about menstruation? Sex?

If your class were made up of your *friends and family* what topics from the 7th grade curriculum would you have reservations or feel uncomfortable teaching?

Are there some topics in the curriculum that you wish you did not have to teach?

Were there any teachers who stood out when you were in primary school? Why?

If someone were to ask you to describe your value system or the principles you live by, how would you describe them?

What is the most embarrassing question a learner has ever asked you?

As a Life Skills teacher do you ever feel like you have to hide your personal opinions of a subject or situation?

What do you see as a bigger issue for your students? Teen pregnancy or HIV/AIDS? WHY?

What is the easiest aspect of teaching life skills?

What are the most challenging topics for you to teach? What makes those topics hard to teach?

How has your life outside the classroom impacted on the ways you teach about HIV/AIDS?

Do you feel that the life skills workshops, training, and materials address you as a whole person? Woman with personal life and teacher

When you were younger who did you talk to about sex?

What is the most important value you bring to the life skills classroom?

What are some of the things you would never compromise on?

In what ways do you think that men and women teach life skills differently?

Do you know someone who is living with HIV?

...before you were a life skills teacher?

How has the experience of knowing someone living with HIV informed your teaching?

If you were HIV positive would you disclose your status in your personal life? Professional life?

Who do you think is most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS?

What advice, other than referring her to a clinic, would you give to a student who is pregnant?

What is the hardest question a learner has asked you in relation to sex, sexuality or HIV/AIDS?

What role does your upbringing play in the way you teach about sex, sexuality and HIV/AIDS?

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