

**A discourse analysis of the construction of gendered relationships in grade  
10-12 Life Orientation textbooks in the Eastern Cape.**

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**Declaration**

I, Luvo Adams, hereby declare that this research report is my own original work.

In the instances where the work of another person has been referenced or quoted, it has been called and fully referenced according to the American Psychological Association (APA) format.

I am fully aware of the implications of using plagiarized work in a project of this nature.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

School-based sexuality education has been the subject of research in the social sciences and pedagogical spheres globally. In South Africa, growing interest among social scientists in the topic, were ignited by the introduction of sexuality education as a compulsory part of Life Orientation (LO) by the late 1990s. However, the implementation of LO has been problematic. Reviewed literature in the current study, reveals how the dominance of the heterosex discourse is foregrounded in LO content on gender and sexuality. The current study was aimed at examining the construction of gendered relationships in LO textbooks. The study sampled LO textbooks for Grades 10-12, learners in these grades are between the mean ages 16-18 years. This group is the target group, because they are legally afforded the right to consent to sexual activity with peers, within the same age bracket.

Conducted from a social constructionist perspective, the current study employed qualitative methods of inquiry (textual analysis). Against the backdrop of heterosexuality as norm, it was the aim of the current study to understand the subject positions made available for female learners to construct themselves, within the discursive spaces in LO content. Findings suggest that two discourses namely: the heterosex discourse and the discourse of danger and disease, dominate in LO content on gender and sexuality. This leads to the construction of gendered relationships as inherently heterosexual, leading to the marginalisation of relationships that fall outside of the norm. The female learner is positioned as a passive-victim, incapable of exercising sexual agency, while young men are positioned as inherently more powerful members of the intimate relationships or dangerous sexual predators. In the discourse of danger and disease, she is also positioned as a potential victim but the focus is on equipping her with skills, in a way which positioned her as an active-resistor in refusing sexual activity; and being in control of decision-making on issues of safety in relationships. The implications of these contradictions, is that they focus on the individual and disallow her taking up of sexual agency, and disregard the context in which she has to do so.

## **Keywords**

Life Orientation, Sexuality education, gender, gendered relationships, power relations, positioning

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Introduction

Sex (or Sexuality) Education has variably been defined as instruction on issues related to human sexuality. These issues include (but are not limited to) intimate relationships, human sexual anatomy, body image, sexual activities, reproduction, safe sex, knowledge about sexually transmitted infections and how to avoid them, contraception, sexual decision-making, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure and sexual abstinence (Department of Social Development, 2015). In many parts of the world, adolescents were not always given sexuality education at schools, with discussion of these issues being considered to be taboo and often thought of, as too controversial. Most of the information that young people received was obtained informally through their friends or the media.

Achalu and Achaly (2000) define formal school-based sexuality education as “a comprehensive course of action by the school calculated to bring about the socially desirable attitudes, practices and personal conduct ... to protect the individual as a human and the family as an institution” (p.73). To date, there has been a great deal of disagreement about what constitutes “socially desirable attitudes, practices and personal conduct”. Globally, sexuality education is contested as highly value-laden. Teachers, parents and community stakeholders wrestle with the content and how to approach certain controversial aspects of the content in the classroom. These disagreements can be categorised as falling into two broad approaches namely: conservative versus liberal approaches to the curriculum. The conservative approach does not tolerate or accept sexual activity amongst young people, whereas the liberal approach does. This is thus reflected in these curricula.

Generally speaking, the more conservative approaches would favour curricula in which abstinence-only programs are encouraged to delay sexual activity between young people until marriage. Contraception would only be covered in as far as its limitations are made known. This group, objects to educators becoming involved in what they believe is the private domain of the family. They believe that such programmes, violate parent’s rights to control what their children are taught about sexual morality (Goldman, 2008). The proponents of this approach are often

supported by religious or faith-based organisations that may have moral objections to the comprehensive curriculum. The comprehensive curriculum is viewed as encouraging young people to consider alternative sexual orientations and engage in sexual activities.

On the other hand, more liberal approaches to formal sexuality education propose comprehensive knowledge curricula, which include information about alternative sexual orientations, other than the assumed heterosexual orientation, (such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex), sexual pleasure, abortion and contraception. Proponents of the liberal approach, tend to view the provision of knowledge about sexuality as essential to allowing individuals to make informed decisions, about their own personal sexuality without the imposition of a moral framework. This view is in keeping with a positive and encouraging approach to enjoying many and varied forms of sexuality (Nel, 2014). These approaches argue that an open dialogue on these issues generates more self-esteem, self-confidence and general health amongst young people.

The two approaches described above do agree on the imperative to reduce HIV infections. In the last four decades, the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, give an impetus to implementing sexuality education. In those parts of the world (such as South Africa), where the rates of infection were at epidemic proportions, sexuality education is seen as a vital public health strategy. In these cases formal sexuality education is taught as part of the Life Orientation<sup>1</sup> curriculum, starting when learners start puberty (between 10 and 12 years of age). Owing to the developmental context, the dominant framing of sexuality education has been as an educational tool, aimed at prevention of teenage or unwanted pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases.

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<sup>1</sup>Life Orientation (LO) was introduced into South African schools as part of the shift in education policy post-Apartheid to Outcomes Based Education. Life orientation was introduced as a compulsory learning area for all learners in the late 1990s (Francis 2010) prior to the introduction of LO no formal provision was made in the curriculum for learners to access sexuality education.

Researchers have argued that, this narrow disease prevention focus, leads to the problematisation and pathologisation of teenaged sexuality. The concentration on danger and disease, as a motivating factor to encourage responsible sexual behaviour has serious limitations (Macleod, 2009). One of these limitations is that sexuality is powerfully gendered, in that it is primarily young women who are spoken about as victims of danger, disease and damage. In addition, current research has revealed that sexuality education (within the formal school curriculum in South Africa) may be serving to reproduce dominant gendered discourses rather than challenging them, with the LO curriculum having little effect on changing behaviour as intended in its conceptual statement. (Shefer, Kruger, Macleod, Baxen, & Vincent, 2015). It is with this problem in mind, that this study aims to focus on the construction of gendered relationships<sup>2</sup> in LO textbook content. More specifically, this project wants to understand the subject positions made available, for female learners to construct themselves within the discursive spaces in LO content.

Thus a growing number of researchers are offering an alternative view on teenaged sexuality, focusing on factors of the social and discursive context such as gendered norms, power relations and sexual diversity. It is in keeping with this alternative approach, that the present study aims to use a social constructionist theoretical framework, in order to conduct a discourse analysis of LO textbooks. The purpose will be to illuminate, which discourses are drawn upon to position the female learners within gendered relationships and what the implications of these positionings are.

In South Africa, LO symbolises the discontinuity from the Apartheid past and constitutes a vision for an exemplary future, for the schooling system, even though it might not achieve that in practice. In the section which follows, the historical context which gave rise to the implementation of LO in its present form will be delineated.

### **Historical Context**

South Africa has undergone major transformation since the advent of the democratic dispensation in 1994. The transformation was based on the fundamental concept of equality for all. The South Africa Constitution includes the provision of full citizenship rights for all, including those who were previously discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, gender and sexual orientation. Improving the quality of lives of ordinary

citizens, particularly the previously marginalised, became one of the major goals of the new democratic government. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), was adopted as a socio-economic policy framework by the national government in 1994, as a map for changes to be implemented in all areas of social life (De la Rey & Parekh, 1996).

Education was one of the main areas that required major restructuring. This was due to the education system being one of the many adverse legacies of the Apartheid system (Rooth, 2005). The emphasis on the ethics of human rights and dignity for all that currently informs education and the school curriculum, is deeply rooted in the historical struggle movements, that emerged in South Africa during the fight against colonialism and Apartheid. Restructuring in education policies saw the introduction of sexuality education as part of a new learning area called Life Orientation (LO) in the late 1990s. LO was introduced to formal curriculum as a vehicle to drive the transformation of South African education system.

As a fairly new learning area, LO has been beset by a number of problematic areas with regards to content and implementation. Challenges include content that is dominated by the preventative focus on HIV/AIDS prevention; the prioritisation of abstinence only content; and the avoidance of open discussions on sexual diversity to the endorsement of compulsory heterosexuality (Francis, 2011). Lack of detailed practice measures within the curriculum statements coupled with lack of uniformity and consistency in teacher training, and the teacher transmission mode of teaching that is influenced by moral injunctions, have led to implementation problems in LO (Prinsloo, 2007).

A broader and more general overview of the context of education in South Africa is presented below. It includes education policies from colonial and Apartheid epochs to the policies that came with the advent of the democratic dispensation.

## **Education Policies in colonial and Apartheid South Africa**

### **The Christian National Education**

Education policies in South Africa have come a long way from the Christian National Education (CNE). The CNE functioned to secure a particular type of socialisation for

the youth, in the process of enhancing group interests through education. It was adopted by the ruling National Party in 1948. Hexham (1974) asserts that the intention of the CNE was the preservation of Calvinism with the Afrikaner protestant theology religion. To that extent it has been identified as a tool utilised in the development and protection of the Afrikaner People. It is further stated that CNE has for this reason been a factor in the development of Apartheid (Hexham, 1974). The CNE's approach to learning and streaming of learners was demonstrated by the "unequal distribution of resources, racially-biased content driven curricula and separate education departments" (Rooth, 2005, p. 28).

It advocated for specificity in language, religion and cultural environment, particularly Afrikaans, the European culture, and the Christian religion, to the exclusion of other languages, cultures and religions. With its roots set in missionary schooling during colonial South Africa, CNE prioritised preparing young men for Christian ministry and producing well educated young men for the state to manage. For the female learners, the CNE instilled values that promote subservience and obedience to their male counterparts (van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2015).

### **The People's Education**

The People's Education (PE) which offered a possible alternative in the education approach for South Africa during the 1980s, was based on the principles of the Freedom Charter. Developed by the Communist Party intellectuals it was adopted by the African National Congress in 1956 (van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005). The PE sturdily opposed the Apartheid regime, exploitation and capitalist values. It advocated for a democratic, non-racial, unitary society in accordance with the educational consequences of the Freedom Charter (van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005).

A broad definition of the People's Education was that of an "education which prepares people for total human liberation, and for full participation in social, political or cultural spheres of society, helps people to be creative, to develop a critical mind and to analyse" (van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005, p.187). PE was critiqued for not being equipped with a solid educational philosophy although it focused on school teaching. The PE accentuated that curriculum development should put emphasis on issues of relevance, accessibility, critical thinking, while rejecting the artificial barrier

between academic and technical education (van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005). The PE was influential among the marginalised until the advent of democratic South Africa.

There were thus points of convergence between CNE and PE in that, both the CNE and the PE policies were informed by the historical and political situation in the country at the time. CNE intended to reinforce White Afrikaner Nationalism in response to the marginalisation they experienced during colonialism. The PE also had the emancipatory agenda of leading the oppressed Black people to rule in an African Nationalist government. These policies also had a strong focus on contextual issues related to cultural identity and language (van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005).

### **Education policies in post-Apartheid South Africa**

The legislative context in South Africa has changed dramatically since the advent of Democracy. Policy changes in the domain of Basic Education in South Africa led to curriculum and syllabus changes in the democratic dispensation. Post-Apartheid education policies were aimed at redressing the Apartheid legacy of a racially and ethnically fragmented, dysfunctional and imbalanced education system (Rooth, 2005). The major areas of focus in the transformation of South African schooling were the reorganisation of separate departments, the former Model C and Department of Education and Training respectively. The aim was to amalgamate them into one national and nine provincial departments. Transformation was also intended to ensure high levels of presentation in all levels of the education, and to establish a policy framework that prioritised progressive school reform (Taylor, Diphofa, Waghmarae, Vinjevold & Sedibe, 1999).

### **From Outcomes Based Education to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement**

The Outcomes Based Education (OBE) project was a new curriculum philosophy for South African education, introduced in the late 1990s as part of its education transformation strategy. OBE was intended to overturn the heritage of Apartheid education which was characterised by narrow visions, concerns and identities. This policy was believed to be a democratization of education, people would have a say

in what they wanted the outcomes of education to be. It was also believed to be a way to increase education standards and increase the availability of education. The then Minister of Education Prof Kadar Asmal endorsed the curriculum and the report that interpreted OBE as a “unanimous rejection of the Apartheid education principles of the CNE” (Rooth, 2005). The OBE aimed to create the sense of accepting diversity, to emancipate the previously marginalised members of society.

Since the introduction of OBE, sexuality education become compulsory as part LO in all South African schools (Francis 2010; Rooth, 2005). This was in accordance with the commitment of DoE to emphasise progressive ideas in line with the South African Constitution. Ideas included the need for curriculum that is based on human rights, equity, inclusivity and social and environmental justice and access (Rooth, 2005).

OBE C 2005 was guided by the principles of outcomes-based and learner-centred education. C 2005 endeavoured to align school work and the workplace with an emphasis on experiential and co-operative learning (Rooth, 2005). OBE required a shift in teaching methods and learning styles which brought about radical changes in content and methodology. The focus was on the organisation of work according to the essentials for learners to be able to achieve at the end of the lesson. Its conceptualisation is in terms of what a learner is able to do, in contrast to the prescription of content that characterised the preceding education policies (Spady, 1994).

By 2001 people realized that the intended effects were not being seen. Specifically within LO, preliminary observations suggested that the OBE curriculum has not been optimally implemented in schools. The fact that LO is a new learning area within a restorative didactic transitional phase aggravated the situation (Rooth, 2005). By 2006 the program came to be viewed as a failure, no proposals to change the system had been accepted by the government, causing a hiatus of the program (Allois, 2007). A new curriculum improvement process was announced in 2010, stated to be implemented between 2012 and 2014 (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Curriculum policy statements in the domain of Basic Education have evolved since the inception of OBE curriculum 2005. The current curriculum is the South African National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) adopted in 2011.

CAPS replaced the National Curriculum Statement of 2004 (NCS). It aims to ensure that learners acquire and apply knowledge and skills in meaningful ways. The curriculum statement promotes the idea of grounding knowledge in the local context while remaining sensitive to global imperatives. This new curriculum is similar to OBE C 2005 since it is also based on principles such as bringing about social transformation in order to redress past imbalances (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

For this purpose educators are encouraged to support active learning and critical thinking. The curriculum addresses diverse issues such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Common in all the education policies adopted post-Apartheid is the aim of addressing and redressing the imbalances and inequities of the previous policies.

### **Life Orientation**

The shift in education policy post-Apartheid to Outcomes Based Education (OBE) saw the introduction of Life Orientation (LO) as a learning area in the late 1990s (Francis, 2010). LO is a generic part of OBE C2005 implementation, it was designed as a learning area primarily responsible for citizenship, human rights, HIV/AIDS education, environmental and social justice, and diversity. Life Orientation is a learning area that equips learners with the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to face the challenges of everyday life in an informed, autonomous and responsible way (Department of Education, 1997). The Life Orientation Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement 2011 define LO as follows:

Life orientation is the study of the self in relation to other and to society. It addresses skills, knowledge and values about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreational and physical activity, career and career choices (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

It comprises of a diverse number of components, which were previously called by subject names such as: guidance, life skills education, environmental education, citizenship, human rights education, physical education and religious education



(Rooth, 2005). The areas mentioned above were taught as separate subjects, they have thus been consolidated in a way that shows a change in priorities. LO acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of the human beings, and thus it encompasses all the diverse areas of the human being (Prinsloo, 2007) including sexuality education, since no formal provision had existed in the curriculum before.

The introduction of LO in South Africa is built on the findings of global research, that highlight the need for orientation programmes, that prepare learners for the demanding complexities of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. LO is globally accepted as the study of self in relation to others and the broader social context (Prinsloo, 2007). It is under the same conceptualisation that LO has been introduced in the South African school curriculum, grounding knowledge in local contexts. The introduction of LO was for the purpose of making a difference in the lives of a new generation of learners. It carried the realisation and acknowledgement among stakeholders, that a holistic support system of education was an important tool to reach children at risk (Prinsloo, 2007).

### **The purpose and aim of LO**

The Department of Education defines the purpose of LO as follows:

The focus is the development of self-in-society and this encourages the development of balanced and confident learners who will contribute to a just democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all. It equips learners to solve problems, to make informed decisions and choices and to take appropriate actions to enable them to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly changing society (South African Department of Education, 2003).

The holistic social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical development of learners is a major concern of LO with a focus on self-in-society stated above (Rooth, 2005). LO has six topic areas and due to the interrelatedness and holistic approach of LO, matters covered in one of these topic areas speak to each other. These six topic areas are: Development of self in society; Social and environmental responsibility; Democracy and human rights; Careers and career choices; Study

skills and Physical Education (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Sexuality education falls under the topic of 'Development of self in society' and embedded in it is learning about relationships, gender and power.

### **Historic context of Sexuality Education in South Africa**

Formal education had no provision for sexuality education in curricula before the advent of Democracy. Both the CNE and PE centred strongly on their set ideological foundations. The stance of PE with regards to sexuality education is unclear but CNE was based on conservative religious Christian values and principles, educating the youth about sexuality and related matters did not feature. The advancement and conservation of Christian values and the policing of sexuality were central to Apartheid. During this era emphasis (within sexuality education) was on disease prevention and the promotion of morally healthy habits in curricula of all Black and White SA schools. Furthermore, Christian teaching that sex should be prohibited out of wedlock and should not be the subject of discussion with young people, has left a vacuum that has adversely affected the sexual socialisation of South African young men and women. From this backdrop grew the culture of pushing sex to the sidelines, it was banished and deemed as taboo (Francis, 2013).

Since the introduction of OBE, sexuality become essential as part LO in all South African schools (Francis 2010; Rooth, 2005). This was in agreement with the commitment of DoE to emphasise progressive ideas in line with the South African Constitution. Ideas included the need for curriculum that is based on human rights, equity, inclusivity, social and environmental justice, and access to reach the children; who were prone to risk due to issues of social context that were previously neglected in education (Rooth, 2005, Prinsloo, 2007). LO teaching is highly value-laden; this has affected the teaching of relevant sexuality education. Teachers, parents and community stakeholders (who do not always share the ideals articulated in the Constitution) wrestle with the content and how to approach certain controversial aspects of the content in the classroom.

## **Sexuality Education and HIV/AIDS Prevention**

In South Africa LO is seen as intrinsically responsive to the urgent concerns such as health, environmental and safety issues to which learners are exposed, the HIV and AIDS pandemic and youth risk behaviours (Ngwena, 2003). Sexuality education forms part of Life Orientation mainly as part of the HIV/AIDS prevention programme and as a response to teenage pregnancy (Gacion, 2010). . This is in response to statistics which show that young people between ages 14-24 were the most affected (UNAIDS, 2008) by the rise in HIV infections (particularly females) (Ahmed, Flisher, Matthews, Mukoma & Jansen, 2009).

Policies such as the *National Policy on HIV and Aids for Learners and Educators in Public schools* (Department of Education, 1999), the *HIV/AIDS emergency guidelines for educators* (Department of Education, 2000) and the *HIV/AIDS strategic plan for South Africa 2000-2005* (Department of Health, 2000) and others were introduced to aid the implementation of the LO HIV/AIDS prevention programme. Situated within the public health framework and focus on prevention, these policies lack focus on broader issues of sexuality such as relationships, desire and sexual orientation (Francis, 2011).

These policies ensure that the focus of LO is on disease prevention and the provision of accurate information about the HIV/AIDS (Francis, 2011). The emphasis on the dangers of sex impact how the topic is taught and the efficacy thereof. Shefer and Macleod (2015) further assert that LO sexuality education programmes have been viewed as significant sites for incorporating education to challenging negative assumptions in respect to, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and gender-based violence. In this way, sexuality education has been viewed as a prevention programme, as it is intended to promote safer, equitable non-violent sexual practices.

The preventative element of sexuality education has led to a preference and prioritisation of abstinence-only education by most teachers, since they find it to be more in line with their own morals and values (Francis, 2011). The focus on abstinence was further perpetuated by the open-ended nature of outcomes for sexuality education, with curriculum statements not presenting details for practice and implementation. In this regard, teacher-training has specifically been deemed as

problematic for lacking uniformity and consistency. Teachers who teach LO come from an array of fields and they are not adequately equipped to roll out sexuality education confidently and effectively (Francis, 2013).

### **The National Policy on HIV/AIDS for Learners and Educators and the HIV/AIDS guidelines for educators**

The disjuncture between the expectations of the Department of Basic Education (as articulated in CAPS, 2011) and the teaching practices of Life Orientation teachers have become apparent. Policies such as the *National Policy on HIV and Aids for Learners and Educators in Public schools* and the *HIV/AIDS emergency guidelines for educators* and others mentioned above, have been revised since they were first introduced in the late 1990s and early in the new millennium. These policies now impress on educators their role in informing the youth about HIV/AIDS and other aspects of sexuality.

The aims of Life Orientation, as outlined in the revised National Curriculum Statement, include fostering understandings of the “influence of gender inequality on relationships and general well-being: sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy, violence, STIs including HIV and AIDS” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 12). Specifically, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2011), highlights the content for Grades 10-12 as that which deals with gender roles and responsibilities, gender differences, power and power relations, masculinity, femininity, and hegemonic gender influences on relationships amid other topics.

The term sexuality education, which forms part of the title of the study, will feature substantially in this study. For the purpose of the current study sexuality education will be employed to refer to the topics within the LO curriculum that deal with issues of gender, sexuality and reproductive health specifically with regards to young women as presented in LO textbooks.

Legislation and policies in education have the commonality of addressing both reproductive and sexual and gender didactic issues, relating to teenaged young people in South Africa. Adopted according to the rights based approach, aimed at emancipating the previously disadvantaged, legislation such as the Amended South

African Schools Act (No 84, 1996) has been pivotal. With regards to teenage pregnancy, the amended act allows the pregnant learner to remain in school for the duration of the pregnancy and she is allowed back into the system post-delivery. This is an example of the commitment of the legislation to gender equity as previously the pregnant girl was the only one who bore the consequence of expulsion from school; there were no consequences for the boy.

Despite these progressive and transformative policies and guidelines, many teenaged young people still struggle to access their rights within rigidly hierarchical didactic spaces. Most of the focus has been on what the youth know, while little emphasis is put on how they understand and apply acquired knowledge, in the context of their lived experiences (Francis, 2010).

### **Research Problem**

Sexuality education content in LO is problematic due to the focus on disease; the HIV/AIDS preventative element; the preference for abstinence-only education; avoidance of discussions of sexual diversity and the value-laden nature of teaching. With the narrow disease focus on the dangers of sex and the negative outcomes in terms of education and threats to health, studies have also shown that, the discourse of heteronormativity adds another aspect to the narrow focus in LO content on gender and sexuality, and the nature of gendered relationships. Heteronormativity refers to the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and the only form of sexuality that learners need to be educated about (Airton, 2009). It is reinforced in pedagogical practices within LO content. Heteronormative practices include the focus on the biological differences between men and women and consequently the different gendered roles assigned to each. With the emphasis on human rights, the Department of Education and teachers committed themselves to critically discuss controversial issues with learners. This commitment is an attempt to create citizens who are knowledgeable, reasonable, and open-minded and fair (Chikoko, Gilmour, Harber & Serf, 2011).

The sense within the curriculum currently is that heterosexual relationships are the norm. This therefore leads to issues of understanding for other sexual orientations such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual relationships(LGBT), as falling

outside the norm and therefore, as the pathologised 'other'. This serves as an endorsement of compulsory heterosexuality (Francis, 2012). In addition these curricula reproduce normative constructions of gender and gendered power relations, which does nothing to challenge discourses which entrench gender stereotypes and male power. It has been acknowledged that, if sexuality education is to achieve its set goals of equipping the young person, to successfully navigate through life's challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as autonomous, informed individuals as indicated in by the Department of Education, (1997; 2003), then that focus ought to be broadened to include direct challenging of dominant discourses.

### **Research aim and objectives**

At present the expert knowledge that is presented in these textbooks is powerful, in that it has "truth" status (Burr, 1995). These texts become a way for female learners to understand themselves and their experiences. It is therefore imperative to investigate the underlying assumptions behind the content of LO textbooks. This study seeks to use a social constructionist framework to understand discourses and constructions of gendered relationships, and specifically how they position South African female learners. Therefore the following three research questions will be posed:

How are gendered relationships constructed in LO textbooks?

How do these constructions position young women?

What are the implications of this positioning?

The answers to these questions can hopefully be utilised to improve the LO curriculum, as a potentially valuable resource for working with learners. The intended outcome is to understand what the discourses are and how they position female learners, in order to challenge those that reinforce exclusionary, violent and unequal practices.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have attempted to sketch the context in which Life Orientation became part of the education system in South Africa. The literature review follows, and commences from specifics about the theoretical approaches adopted by the different authors writing on sexuality education in schools. It is a review of global and local published research, paying attention to the outcomes of these studies, in an attempt to understand the dominant voices in literature from the different epistemological stances, and to identify the gaps. Chapter three is a theoretical framework chapter which foregrounds the theoretical underpinning that inform the current study, namely social constructionism and positioning theory. Chapter four contains detailed information about the method of inquiry employed in the current study. Details about research design, data collection, and data analysis are contained in this chapter. Chapter five will have Findings and Analysis. The findings are presented in the form of extracts from the sampled texts and an extensive detailed discussion of these findings will be presented in this chapter. The final chapter is chapter six which will have the overarching argument, sub conclusions, conclusion, limitations and implications for future research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

Sexuality is the capacity of humans to have erotic experiences and responses to stimuli. An individual's sexual orientation influences their sexual interests and attraction for another person. Sexuality may be expressed and experienced in a variety of ways from thoughts, fantasies, desires, attitudes, values, beliefs, behaviours, practices and relations (WHO, 2015). It encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors (Department of Social Development, 2015).

Researchers the world over, perceive the content of sexuality education curricula, and particularly the implications of that knowledge, as important in understanding how the learner can be empowered through education.

There is currently a substantial body of literature on school-based sexuality education. Goldman and Collier-Harris (2012) studied school based sex education programmes in the United States of America, Australia and the United Kingdom. They postulate that schools are logical sites for clear evidential, age-specific knowledge based on values of respect and rights about puberty, adolescence, sexuality, relationships and safety. In South Africa as well, researchers on the topic of sexuality education allude to schools being the key locations for delivering sexuality education (Francis, 2010). Kelly (2002) argues that schools should be safe environments for teaching and learning about sexualities and that this has the potential to positively impact the rolling out of sexual health programmes.

To a large extent the growing interest in research on the topic has been influenced by a global response to HIV/AIDS prevention and global fertility control (UNESCO, 2008). Kirby, Laris and Roller (2007) conducted a study on HIV education programmes, investigating how such programmes impact on the sexual behaviour of youth globally. They argue for sex, STI and HIV/AIDS programmes that are based on



the written, formal curriculum. Kirby et al (2007) assert that the school can potentially reach larger numbers of youth than any other setting.

Similar studies have been conducted in sub-Saharan Africa and they attest to the efficacy of school-based prevention programmes that form part of the formal curricula. Globally, socio-economic conditions are understood to accelerate the sexualisation, emotional intensification and risk taking behaviours of young teenagers (Goldman & Collier-Harris, 2012). This acceleration is argued to be faster in developing countries. In all regions of the world, impoverished, poorly educated and rural teenagers are more likely to become pregnant than their wealthier, better educated, urban counterparts. In addition, young women from ethnic minorities or marginalized groups (who have few opportunities and poor access to sexual and reproductive health) are more likely to choose pregnancy or experience unsupportable pregnancy, owing to lack of access to adequate sexual and reproductive healthcare. About 95% of teenage pregnancies occur in low to middle income countries, with 90% of these occurring within marriage (Williamson, 2013).

Zuilkwiski and Jukes (2012) studied the impact of education on sexual behaviour in the sub-Saharan region. They argue based on their findings that early sexual initiation can heighten HIV risk. Thus in-school youth can be protected through delaying sexual activity. The implementation of school based sexuality education in South Africa to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic was based on global imperatives and to reduce the high rates of teenage pregnancy (Prinsloo, 2007). Sexuality education as a response to HIV/AIDS pandemic is also reflected in the DoE (2000)'s policy: "*The HIV/AIDS Emergency: Guidelines for Educators*". This education policy impresses on the educators, their important role in educating the youth about HIV/AIDS and sexuality.

The literature which has been reviewed for the purposes of this research project, is classified according to the three main approaches to the topic of sexuality education identified in the literature. The main approach is based on the bio psycho-social theories. With democratisation in South Africa, the second approach which is the rights-based approach was developed and there is growing research that views sexuality education within this framework. The third approach is the post-structuralist

approach which encompasses critical psychology, discourse analysis, and deconstruction, and it is underpinned by the principles of social constructionism. Within the post-structuralist framework, the researcher adopts a suspicious stance to the taken for granted assumptions of the nature of social phenomena (Burr, 1995). The literature below will be structured according to these three approaches to studying sexuality education, and it will pay attention to the discourses that are produced and reproduced in the knowledge production process. Discourse is defined by Parker (1990) as a system of statements which construct an object. He further states that discourses do not simply describe the social world but that it has the categorising tendency which brings phenomena into sight.

### **The Bio-psychosocial approach to Sexuality Education**

The bio-psychosocial approach to adolescent sexuality and sexuality education, is rooted in the understanding of adolescence as a stage of rapid developmental changes physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally. The focus of this approach is on the biology of risk-taking which includes genetic predispositions, hormonal influences and brain development. Beyond biology the bio-psychosocial approach focuses on the role of cognitions, personality and characteristics in the psychology of adolescent risk-taking. Socially and environmentally, this approach focuses on familial, peer and societal relations and influences to adolescent risk-taking behaviours. The bio-psychosocial approach to sexuality education is on the regulation and censoring of adolescent sexuality (Sales & Irwin Jr., 2013).

### **Sexuality Education as a preventative tool**

Within the developmental psychology framework, literature stresses the importance of sexuality education particularly, as a preventative measure in teenaged sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

Within the bio-psychosocial approach, sexuality education is viewed as a valuable tool in combating teenage pregnancy and its negative consequences such as disruption or termination of schooling and poor obstetric outcomes. Campbell and Mac Phail (2002) argue that early sexual debut and the high teenage pregnancy and HIV infections rates, reveal that adolescents are having sex, but they lack the ability

to adequately protect themselves against undesired pregnancy and disease. School-based HIV prevention programmes are thus strongly recommended as a vital strategy for increasing adolescent HIV-related knowledge and prevention behaviour (Suleiman & Brindis, 2014). Magnani et al. (2005) assert that sexuality education in LO has the benefit of promoting sexual and reproduction knowledge and perceived condom self-efficiency for the sexuality active learner. Research has shown that South African learners are particularly at risk of negative sexual health outcomes. Sex education and life skills are thus broadly recognised as an operative vehicle in addressing HIV/AIDS pandemic and reducing other negative health outcomes associated with adolescent sexual activity (Rooth, 2005; Ngwena, 2003).

To achieve efficacy in HIV/AIDS prevention programme, refraining from sexual activity has been identified as pivotal within the bio-psychosocial approach. Abstinence remains one of the fundamental strategies of sexual education programme to combat the negative consequence of sexual activity. Over the past two decades, there has been an extensive effort and considerable scholarly and practice focus, dedicated to determining the effectiveness of sex education in schools globally. Jukes, Simmons and Bundy (2008) and Zuilkowski and Jukes (2012)'s findings suggest that keeping adolescents in school may reduce their risk of contracting HIV by extending abstinence. Jemmott, Jemmott and Fong (2010) conducted a randomised control trial with young adolescents in USA to investigate the efficacy of theory-based abstinence only intervention over 24 months. They suggest that effective, skill-based sex education may help delay the onset of sexual activity (Jemmott, et al., 2010).

The South African National Department of Education's *National Policy on HIV and Aids for Learners and Educators in Public schools* and the "*HIV/AIDS emergency guidelines for educators*" are in line with the global policies on sexuality education. With its prevention base, both abstinence-only and comprehensive school-based sex education, aims to provide young people with knowledge and skills, and the opportunity to form attitudes and beliefs, with the end goal of improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health. While abstinence-only education teaches about the "physical and emotional harm of casual teen sexual activity and strongly discourages such activity" (Martin, Rector, & Pardue 2014 p.15).

Sub-Saharan African young people are among the most affected by the HIV pandemic than young people elsewhere in the world (UNAIDS, 2008; UNESCO, 2011). Aaro et al. (2014) conducted a pilot project on promoting sexual and reproductive health among adolescents in Southern and Eastern Africa. The focus of the intervention was on, changing beliefs and cognitions of the youth in relation to sexual practices. Their findings suggest that intervention targeting adolescence may contribute immensely in the reduction of incidences of HIV. They argue that, this can be achieved by focusing on postponing sexual debut among sexually inexperienced youth, promoting condom use for the sexually active adolescent and by reducing the number of concurrent sexual partners. There has thus been an urgent call in research for HIV preventive interventions programmes that target the youth, to be reviewed and to encompass the above mentioned elements (Aaro, et al., 2014).

James, Reddy, Ruiter, Mc Cauley and van den Borne (2006) did an exploratory analysis of the impact of the Department of Education's life skills program on HIV/AIDS on secondary school learners, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Their findings show that learners who received the full intervention had more positive perceptions about sexual behaviour and social connectedness than the control group. The findings attest to the effectiveness of classroom based content in adolescent sexual behaviour (James et al., 2006).

James et al. (2006) also found that despite the positive effects of the full intervention programme on relevant cognitive determinants of sexual behaviour, the overall programme did not influence behaviour, in terms of condom-use for the sexually active students. These findings indicate that it takes more than being knowledgeable on condom-use to impact behaviour. The suggested strategy was that of practical skills and self-efficacy belief. James et al (2006) argue that as a health promotion tool, sex education should be intensively skills based if it is to achieve the desired aim of combating HIV/AIDS infections.

Comprehensive sex education aims to delay the initiation of sexual intercourse, improve sexual decision making, and increase the use of condoms and other forms of contraception at the time of sexual debut, subsequently helping young people avoid adverse health outcomes, including unintended pregnancy, STIs, and HIV (Martin et al., 2004). While few education programs include these components, when

expanded to include the broader tenants of sexuality education, sex education can also focus on positive sexual development, including the experience of healthy, safe, pleasurable sexual experiences which is currently missing in literature.

Walcott, Meyers and Landau (2008) conducted a study of adolescent sexual risk behaviours and school-based sexually transmitted infection and HIV prevention. They postulate that educational professionals interested in the prevention of sexual risk behaviours, must understand the complex process surrounding typical sexual development of adolescents. They argue against focusing on the prevention of early sexual behaviour. Walcott et al. suggest that the focus of interventions should rather be on sexual intercourse at an early age, intercourse with many partners and unprotected sex. These three factors combined dramatically increase young people's risk of STI's and HIV infection (Walcott, et al., 2008).

Thus, truly comprehensive sexuality education should expand to incorporate topics related to sexual development, interpersonal relationships, body image, intimacy, and gender roles and issues of social context. Kelly (2002) argues that schools should undoubtedly be health-affirming and safe environments, which are conducive to teaching and learning, which would lend them to the rolling-out of sexual health programmes. Kelly further posits that the decontextualized nature of disadvantaged schools, disallows the efficacy of such programmes; urging for context to be adapted into school-based sexuality education (Kelly, 2002).

This is further highlighted in a study conducted by James, Reddy, Taylor and Jinabhai (2004). They conducted a baseline data analysis of secondary school students in KwaZulu Natal Midlands district. The study focused on providing details on student knowledge about STIs and HIV/AIDS. The findings show that knowledge levels are high on causes and spread of STIs/AIDS however they noted a discrepancy between high knowledge levels and behaviour. They concluded that the discrepancy between awareness and behaviour requires a reorientation of sexuality education content in LO. They argue for content that will include elements such as gender discrepancies and negotiation skills if it is to effect change in behaviour (James, et al., 2004).

## **Sexuality Education for developing adolescents**

In keeping with the mainstream bio-psychosocial approach, teenagers are understood as being in transition within traditional psychological theories of development. Adolescence is recognised as a difficult developmental stage because it is characterised by complexities on all domains of development, which include the physical, cognitive, social and psychological domains (Berger, 2003). In all respects they are considered to be transitioning from childhood to adulthood. It is argued that the cognitive, hormonal, emotional and physical changes that accompany the onset of puberty have a significant role to play in adolescent sexual risk-taking.

Adolescence is described as a period of heightened vulnerability due to the significant changes and complexities (Theron & Dalzell, 2006). Adolescents are said to attempt multiple aspects of experimentation with different ways of expression and different ways of understanding sexuality (Suleiman & Brindis, 2014).

Lloyd (2005) argues that adolescence is a salient period in which to address matters of sexuality, as this developmental stage is characterised by rapid physical, emotional and psychological growth spurt. Theron and Dalzell (2006) postulate that, sexuality education entails helping adolescents with self-confidence, by increasing their understanding of the dangers of engaging in risky behaviour. They argue that this can be achieved by providing adolescents with the relevant tools that can produce informed, confident and responsible young people in health and well-being related matters.

Theron and Dalzell (2006) argue for life skills education to empower the adolescent to moderate the risk factors associated with adolescence, such risks include risky sexual behaviour. According to Kalichman (1998) the tendency to take risks among adolescents serves as a facilitator for sexual risk behaviours, such as sensation seeking which is a correlate of sexual risk for HIV infection.

Researchers maintain that even though adolescents may present with adult-like capacity to make cognitively-based decisions related to sexual activity, they require better support to make decisions, when they find themselves making decisions in highly affectively charged social situations (Suleiman & Brindis, 2014). Johnson, Carey, Marsh, Levin and Scott-Sheldon (2003) conducted a study on effective interventions in the reduction of sexual risk for HIV in adolescents. They posit that

adolescents often lack the internal resources to recognise their own vulnerability to threats to their health, which include STIs and HIV. They further postulate that sexual exploration and some risk taking are developmentally normative at this stage. It is argued that this is due to the simultaneous development of the social and emotional processing system during adolescence (Chein, et al., 2011; Crone & Dahl, 2012).

Theron and Dalzell (2006) assert that the developing adolescent needs to be empowered with life skills. They argue that this is imperative, if adolescents are to successfully navigate through the challenges endemic to the developmental period of transition known as adolescence; as they otherwise lack the internal resources to do so. Life skills are the non-academic abilities that include self-empowerment, cognitive skills and the promotion of personal health. These skills are important to help adolescents cope with the vulnerabilities of adolescence (Theron & Dalzell, 2006).

Further developments in this approach include the use of evidence-based developmental neuroscience, to guide the new direction for policy and practice that informs sexuality education. The new developments in developmental neuroscience include adolescent brain development and its implications for sexual decision-making (Crone & Dahl, 2012). Crone & Dahl (2012) found that teenaged young people are more prone to risky behaviours due to the impact of brain development on decision making.

Suleiman and Brindis (2014) explored the conceptual and evidence-based advances in affective developmental neuroscience. Their findings provide a new perspective and innovative approach that can inform sex education policy and practice in the USA. The general view is that adolescents lack the maturity to make rational decisions about sexual activity more so, when their emotions are highly charged. It is for this reason that researchers stress the need to protect and regulate the sexual development of teenaged young people.

Mitchell, Walsh and Larkin (2004) assert that the view of youth as children in need of protection is problematic, and that it influences the kind of information that is deemed appropriate for them. They further argue that this affects the efficacy of school-based sexuality education and the promotion of positive sexuality for young people.

### **The rights-based approach**

The right-based approach has reformed the development of policies and the implementation of sexuality education in schools globally. In USA Germain (2015) assert that rights-based approach to sexuality education, goes beyond biology and HIV to address puberty, sexuality and matters of access to sexual and reproductive health services. He further asserts that it attends to diversity and the use of critical thinking (Germain, 2015).

### **Acknowledgement of learners' needs and rights**

In British literature, Aggleton and Campbell (2000) outlined a human rights based framework for sex education that takes account of youth needs and interests. They propose an affirming and positive presentation of sexual health, that takes account of sexual pleasure and one that addresses gender inequality in relationships. Jacobs (2011) on learner's views of the curriculum, reports that learners describe issues such as, the curriculum lacking relevance, in providing them with information, that can assist them in the real life challenges they encounter outside the classroom.

It is on similar imperatives that LO has been introduced into the South African school curriculum. The rights-based approach, which is strongly influenced by the Bill of Rights is the foundational roots on which LO was introduced into the South African school curriculum. Partly informed by the *International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education*, sexuality education in schools is a comprehensive health promotion tool, useful because it reaches a large number of adolescents that are in the education system (Jones & Mitchell, 2014). Policies such as the *National Adolescent Sexual Health and Rights Framework Strategy (NASRH &R)* (2015) seek to achieve for the adolescent, the inculcating of a core value system that transcends all gender stereotyping promoting non-discriminatory attitudes, respect for human dignity, gender equality and the receipt of rights with responsibility and tolerance (Department of Social Development, 2015).

Francis (2010) argues that learners have the right to learn, not only about disease prevention. Content should go beyond danger and disease prevention to include issues of sexual agency, desire and empowerment. He further argues that learners have a right to positive sexuality education. An education that is free of blaming and



shaming young people, about their sexuality and sexual feelings and desires. Francis (2010) further maintains that a more balanced view of sex as both enjoyable and risky is likely to afford youth a sense of taking up the rights that policies bestow on them. The section of this review below looks at how sexuality education has been studied in terms of its ability to empower learners.

## **Critical areas in sexuality education**

### **Sexuality Education as an empowerment tool**

Social constructionist and critical work in the topic of sexuality education look at the ways in which gendered relations of power, gender identities and sexuality are communicated in LO, and the negotiation of safe sexual practices. It therefore becomes an integral part of understanding HIV/AIDS and STI with reference to sexuality education. Jearey-Graham and Macleod (2017) argue for empowerment sexuality education to counter the shortcomings of school-based sexuality education as it currently stands. Empowerment sexuality education includes focusing sexuality education on gender issues and designing programmes that respond to gender/power issues. There is robust evidence pointing out to gender inequality as a major reason for the gap between knowledge acquisitions and worsening sexual and reproductive outcomes (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2017).

Jearey-Graham and Macleod (2017) conducted a pilot study on sexuality with a group of Grade 10 young people, to understand their lived realities in LO sexuality education lessons. Their findings contend that it is more sexuality dialogues that are needed by teenaged young people, than formal lessons that are disempowering. They argue that the sense of agency and empowerment, of being able to have a voice and platform to take up an active agentic role in own sexual health, is paramount for sexuality intervention that are committed to empower young people (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2007). Some of the other factors that constitute an empowerment approach to sexuality education are discussed below.

## **The nature of gendered relations**

Silence is viewed as a prominent feature in gendered relations, it hinders the negotiation of safe sex and self-exploration (Morrell, 2003). Morell (2003) asserts that effective sexuality education in South African schools; need to be geared toward breaking the silence about the nature of gendered relations, to expose the power inequalities embedded in gendered relations. Research highlights that; cultural and social norms may lead to differences in needs, for the differing genders, when it comes to sexuality education. Female learners tend to be reserved and unengaging, gender norms position them as passive in sexual matters, failing which they are seen as loose or promiscuous (Francis, 2010;Shefer, et al., 2015).

Shefer et al., (2015) conducted a study on lessons learnt in sexuality education classes in South African schools. Their findings uncovered a link between the cultures of violence, coercion, feminine disempowerment, gender inequalities in youth sexuality and the dominant gender norms. They assert that LO has very little effort in changing behaviour as intended but instead, it reproduces gender stereotypes and unequal heteronormative sexualities. Gacion (2010) did a study of sexuality, gendered identities and exclusion within HIV prevention text in South Africa. The findings postulate that texts such LO textbooks, deploy a particular discursive framework that aids the construction of a 'normal' and hetero sexuality, which validates rather than question social construction of masculine privilege in gender.

## **Gendered identities**

Shefer and Macleod (2015) highlight the need for research that foreground the enmeshment of gender, age, class with particular focus on how these are played out in normalised heterosexual relationships. As girls struggle to articulate their embodied feelings, respond with silence, or proudly demand their sexual subjectivity, their words (or lack thereof) take down the window dressings of male protection and respect, to reveal the on-going pressures of compulsory heterosexuality and a wealth of responses to it (Rich, 1980). Paechter (1998) asserts that the discursively constructed and policed silence contained in gender identities is a powerful force at work in homophobia, compulsory heterosexuality and the othering of girls. The ideal

goal of LO is to equip learners with the necessary skills to successfully navigate through the complexities of being a young person in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is therefore important to understand the role of these discourses in the construction of sexuality education.

### **Acknowledging sexual pleasure and desire**

Studies in South Africa and globally are suspicious of the silence of sexuality education programme on the discussion of sexual pleasure and desire. Feminist scholars such as Fine and McClelland (2006) raised concerns in USA literature about the absence of the discourse of desire and the lack of analysis of the language of victimisation. They are concerned about the implications which could include retarding the development of sexual subjectivity and responsibility in learners', particularly female learners (Fine & McClelland, 2006; Tolman, 2012). Bay-Cheng (2003) conducted a study on teen sex in USA focusing on the construction of adolescent sexuality through school-based sexuality education. She argues that the reliance of American school-based sexuality education on a moralistic agenda and other presuppositions about the adolescent sexual subject has resulted in a biased, insufficient and unproductive approach to sexuality education (Bay-Cheng, 2003).

Fine and McClelland (2006) state that sexuality education ought to be designed to assist young women and men navigate across the dialectics of danger and pleasure. They argue that risk and pleasure cannot be divorced from each other; they further postulate that an exclusive focus on risk not only alienates, but also distorts the complexity of human relations and sexual desire (Fine McClelland, 2006). Tolman (2005) sturdily argues for the insertion of discussions on desire in sexuality education, postulating that the acknowledgement of desire will result in ownership of the embodied sexual desire. In this way, the desiring sexual subject is thus afforded a sense of sexual agency which will enable the teenage young person to protect their sexual interest, and take up their right in school-based sexuality education.

In South African research, researchers also attest to silence on sexual pleasure and desire in LO content. Bhana, Morell, Shefer and Ngabaza (2010) explore South African teachers' responses to teenage pregnancy and teenage mothers in schools. They found that schools were previously in the illusion that they are spaces of sexual

innocence, sexuality was thus silenced. The present state of affairs demands a break in the silence, creating openness and sexual visibility with the presence of pregnant teenagers in school (Bhana, et al., 2010). The dominant view of young women in general is that they are asexual, passive recipients of male desires, their own sexual desires and depictions of positive female sexuality are lacking (Shefer, et al., 2015). Macleod and Young (2015) conducted a textual analysis on sexual socialisation in LO manuals versus popular music. Their findings show that it is popular music rather than LO manuals that position female learners as desiring sexual subjects.

### **Addressing sexual diversity**

Studies show that LO fails to adequately address issues of sexual diversity, the content endorses compulsory heterosexuality through avoidance of discussing homosexual relationships (Francis, 2012). With the noted absence of a broader understanding of the complexity and multiplicity of what it means to be gendered, sexuality education runs the risk of oversimplifying teenaged young people. Teenaged young people are a group that is intersected by numerous social markers (Francis, 2010; Allen, 2007). Francis (2012) argues that LO remains silent on issues of sexual diversity. He asserts that there are no education policies that require schools to be safe places for lesbian, gay and bisexual youth. He made reference to policies such as the LO Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2002) and the Learning Programme Guidelines (Department of Education, 2006).

Shefer et al. (2015) in their study on what learner take out of LO lessons argue that the content is silent about sexual diversity. Heterosexuality is normalised and reinforcing subtly while non-heterosexual sexual identities are constructed as “aberrant or deviant” (Shefer et al., 2015, p. 78). They argue that on the rare occasions when non-heterosexual sexual identities are given a voice in discussion, the emphasis is on ‘tolerance for difference’.

Shefer et al (2015), postulate that this occludes the violent nature of heteronormativity. Homosexuality is invisible in LO, this is a contradiction of the very ideals of inclusive and equal education in the LO policy statement. Gacion argues that “This is achieved through the deployment of a scientific expertise of sexuality;

the mobilisation of a value hetero/homosexual binary to create a 'safe' heterosexuality..." (Gacion, 2010, p.429).

Studies show that rather than being intrinsically advantaged, heterosexuality relies heavily on the devaluing of homosexuality in order to achieve its privileged status. This construction of heterosexuality as 'normal' is evident with the deployment of 'marriage' as an ideal, and the supreme status it is awarded (DePalma & Francis, 2014; Morell, 2003; Airton, 2009). Silence or failure to acknowledge differences or alternatives to the 'norm', further impedes gender equality fuelling intolerance because of the dominant status of heterosexuality (Morell, 2003; Francis, 2012).

Blaise (2005) conducted a qualitative study of how gender was created and constructed in a preschool classroom, by investigating the phenomenon of compulsory heterosexuality and analysing gender from a feminist poststructuralist perspective. She explored how children take up the 'doing' of gender, by socially constructing meanings about femininities and masculinities, from the gendered discourses made available to them in their everyday social worlds (Blaise, 2005).

Blaise (2005) speaks of gender as socially constructed and categorised into hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as "...the cultural expression of the dominant form of masculinity that governs and subordinates other patterns of masculinity and femininity" (Blaise, 2005, p.86). Emphasized femininity is a type of femininity that is defined around compliance, subordination and accommodating the needs and desires of men. There is a strong influence of the heterosexual discourse in emphasized femininity. The heterosexual discourse includes stereotypical gendered norms and socially constructed expectation of perceived appropriate behaviour for males/females in society.

Through the "heterosexual matrix" Butler (1990 as cited in Blaise, 2005) describes how heterosexuality functions to produce regulatory notions of masculinity and femininity. Gender is thus seen as a kind of becoming or activity that is performed normatively. Both hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are examples of subject positions constructed by cultural authority. Even though there is no total dominance as other forms of femininity and masculinity can permeate, both these

concept are active in the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men's dominance over women.

Glover and Macleod (2016) provided an overview of research conducted in LO sexuality education. They identified five overarching themes which include the dominant discourse of disease and danger and the unknowing promotion of both, rigid versions of gender, and homophobia through heteronormativity. This promotion is implicated as an underlying factor in sexual violence. Glover and Macleod (2016) further identified the theme of teacher competencies and the lack thereof in the rolling out of comprehensive sexuality education.

### **Short-comings of Sexuality Education**

Learners are positioned as rights-bearing citizens in policy, however, it is not easy for them to take up these rights in practice. Research shows a notable disjuncture between policy, implementation and practice. Jearey-Graham and Macleod (2017) attribute the shortcomings of sexuality education on an over-emphasis on discourses of danger, disease and damage and on a disconnection between learners' rights and the classroom realities of what is provided in LO lessons (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2017). Government develops policy, teachers implement and the female learner as a rights bearing citizen has to take those rights (Francis, 2010; Prinsloo, 2007). The CAPS Life Orientation policy document assert that inclusivity should become a central part of the deliverance of material covered in LO textbooks.

Research has pointed to a disjuncture between policy and implementation as a major problem facing effective rolling out of comprehensive rights-based sex education programme, that take the youth's needs and interests into account (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000). Many researchers in the topic point to how LO content on gender and sexuality is presented in LO textbooks, barriers to the realisation of the ideals of sexuality education in LO includes lack of consistency and uniformity in teaching the learning area, individual teacher characteristics are also implicated. These areas are looked at and discussed below.

### **Lack of consistency and uniformity in teaching LO**

As a fairly new learning area in the South African school curricula LO, sexuality education in particular, has major problems in implementation such as lack of uniformity and consistency. Prinsloo (2007) conducted a study of the perspectives of school principals and LO teachers on the implementation of the learning area in the new curriculum in South Africa. From the findings it became apparent that teachers from rural previously disadvantaged schools are ill-equipped to cope with the demands of LO programme than their former Model C counterparts. The challenges faced by teachers, resulted in them struggling to maintain learner interest in the content of LO.

Francis (2010) reviewed published literature on the status of sexuality education in South African schools. The findings of the study suggest that, the considerable amount of responsibility and autonomy afforded to schools and teachers, indirectly infringes on the rights of learners. Understanding youth needs and approaches to teaching sexuality vary considerably. Teaching about HIV/AIDS and sexuality is value-laden, with many teachers reporting a preference for talking about abstinence instead of safer sex practices and sexual agency.

Research also suggests that the asymmetrical structure of the classroom setting infringe on the learners' rights to critically engage with the content of LO (Ahmed et al., 2008; Francis, 2010; Helleve et al., 2009). As a result of the structure of the classroom, Francis (2013) found that some teachers found it difficult to provide information based on learners' needs. Choice of content and lesson plan is heavily reliant on teachers' own level of comfort in engaging with topic. Francis (2013) argues that it should however be based on a collective sense of what learners need, or the shared structured curriculum. Teachers have the need to establish and preserve their authority in the classroom, critical engagement can thus be viewed as challenging that authority (Helleve, et al., 2011).

### **Teacher characteristics**

Teacher characteristics have an impact in the implementation of sexuality education. They have been emphasised as an important factor in understanding the delivery of sex education in schools (Helleve et al., 2011). Helleve et al (2009; 2011) have

shown how in the classroom setting, teachers generally tend to neglect focusing on the rights of the youth. They studied perspectives of SA teachers on teaching about sexuality and found that teacher individual characteristics such as personalities, life experiences, marital status and openness were reported as important in the delivery of comprehensive sexuality education that is centred on the rights of learners.

Prinsloo (2007) arrived at similar findings when she studied the perspectives of principals and teachers on successful implementation of LO programmes. Principals highlighted challenges they experience in establishing the necessary climate. These challenges were attributed to lack of value system among learners, lack of parental involvement and the influence of the larger community on the life, value system and behaviour of learners. Principals further stress the difficulties with implementing policies of the Department of Education. They complain about the top-down instructional approach of the provincial departments, when it comes to policies without proper engagement with school principals. This affects implementation adversely (Prinsloo, 2007).

The preconceptions among educators about the non-examinable status of the previous constituents of LO such as Physical Education, Religious Education and Guidance contributed to the open-endedness with which LO was introduced into curriculum. Inadequate teacher training was found to be a major hurdle in LO teaching, with Rooth (2005) and van Deventer (2009) calling for specialists in LO. Teacher perspectives affect the incorporation of topics such as healthy sexual development, sexual pleasure and gender identities issues in sexuality education. Rooth (2005), Helleve et al., (2009), van Deventer (2009) and Francis (2010) argue that lack of skills necessary for teaching comprehensive, all inclusive sexuality education as mandated by policy.

These researchers suggest that, this has a ripple effect on the ability of learners' to take up their rights, even though they are positioned in policy as rights-bearing citizens. To address this, Rooth (2005) suggested that "Inter-sectorial and collaborative efforts are needed to help LO to occupy its rightful place in schools, together with sustained training and support of LO educators, with an emphasis on experiential and participatory methodologies" (p.iv).



## Conclusion

Even in light of what is discussed above, one of the desired outcomes of the new curriculum is for sexuality education to be viewed as a way of ensuring optimal health, and this view is informed by the public health framework with the focus on prevention. The focus and aim remains strongly influenced by mainstream approaches that focus on prevention. There is a tendency to view adolescent sexuality as risky and needing regulation. Educating the youth on abstinence is prioritised with noted silences on alternative ways of experiencing sexual pleasure, without the risks and negative consequences associated with sexual activity.

Furthermore, heteronormativity is a limitation in the curriculum presently, with the reinforcement of rigid gender categories and roles, with males positioned as dominant and sexualised while females are submissive and lacking in sexual desire (DePalma & Francis, 2014). The avoidance to address aspects relating to sexual diversity in LO serves to maintain the silence about same-sex sexual relations (Francis, 2012). It therefore leads to issues of understanding for the homosexual, transsexual, bisexual community, as they are not often considered within the classroom (Gacion, 2010). Francis (2010) argues that in order to effectively provide a comprehensive, holistic approach, the content of sexuality education warrants revisiting. It needs to be all inclusive, including all forms of sexuality and sexuality related topics, such as gendered relations and sexual diversity.

The literature reviewed above provides an overview of the approaches researchers use to study the content of LO textbooks with regards to sexuality education. From a social constructionist perspective the literature reviewed above, foreground the heterosex discourse. The *Perspectives in Education* special edition (Shefer, Macleod & Baxen, 2015) and the Life orientation policy brief (Glover & Macleod, 2016) have been pivotal in the conduction of the current study. Heterosexism is defined as a pervasive and systemic assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and the only true form of sexuality (Airton, 2009).

The recommendations by Glover and Macleod (2016) include a recommendation for the Department of Basic Education to take heed of lessons learnt from research on LO sexuality education. Through the active challenging of young people's role in

maintaining gender power relations and undermining heteronormativity and gendered binaries, effective change can be effected. Explicit or implicit, this discourse is salient in literature on sexuality education. This then provides a departure point for the current study. It analyses the sexuality education content of LO with the aim of understanding, how this discourse contribute to the construction of gendered relationships in LO textbooks and the subject positions made available for female learners.

## Chapter 3

### Theoretical Framework

#### Introduction

Social constructionism is the meta-theoretical framework that informs the current study. According to Burr (1995) social constructionism underpins a number of new approaches to social science inquiry, which include critical psychology, discourse analysis, deconstruction and post structuralism. Social constructionism is concerned with the social processes by which people create experiences, ideas and knowledge, which are experienced as objective truths and facts. It is thus a very suitable framework for a qualitative research study intended, to explore the construction of gendered relationships within the Life Orientation curriculum (as presented in three textbooks prescribed for Grades 10 to 12 in the Eastern Cape).

The key assumptions of social constructionism which include a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge, and an emphasis on the historical and cultural specificity of worldviews (Burr, 1995), are useful for the purposes of producing new knowledge on the complexities of problems, regarding gendered relationships in South Africa.

More specifically, this theoretical framework allows the researcher to be suspicious, and political in the sense of paying attention to power relations at work in gendered relationships, and the way in which female learners are positioned in those constructions. The remainder of this chapter discusses the use of the concepts of biopower and disciplinary power, to articulate how discourses construct gendered intimate relationships. In addition, Davies & Harrè's positioning theory will be used to illuminate the positioning of female learners within the constructed gendered relationships.

#### Discourse

The "turn to language", and social constructionism have been described as central to the understanding of how meaning, realities and various subject positions are produced and reproduced in talk and texts (Baxter, 2003). The theoretical principles of discourse, are that it is action-oriented, situated and constructed (Potter, 2004).

Discourse analysis is rooted in social constructionist thought, thus it also focuses on texts and talk as social practices (Parker, 1992). In this project we are interested in studying the textbooks because we acknowledge the power of language. Weedon (1987) defines language as:

the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation ...and their consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of selves, our subjectivity is constructed (Weedon, 1987, p.21).

Language is fundamentally a social phenomenon, occurring between people, as is the case between educators and learners in a classroom, and between learners as peers. According to Foucault (1972) discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p.49). The Foucauldian approach to discourse as described by Parker (1992) focuses on how relations of power are reproduced through discourse, and the resistances that usually accompany oppressive discourses. Firstly, discourse assumes that the world is in motion and it is concerned with actions and practices in the continually evolving social world. Parker (1992) asserts that discourses enable certain subject positions to be foregrounded and that it has the potential to limit what could be said or done by both the speaker and receiver of the message (Parker, 1992). Discourse is put together with the function of performing actions, thus the crucial concern in analysing discourse is the activity. Discourse analysts have to ask themselves what it is that the discourse is doing. Thus the analysis is about “unpacking and rendering visible” the actions of discourse through deconstruction (Potter, 2004, p.609).

Secondly, discourse is situated in sequences of interaction, however in its occasioned nature, discourse is not a “contextual determinism” (Potter, 2004, p.609). In other words the meaning of the interaction is not only determined by the context in which it occurs. Discourse analysis considers how talk and texts are embedded in sequences of interaction and oriented to institutional settings and identities put together rhetorically.

Lastly, discourse is constructed. Social constructionism is particularly concerned with understanding the production of particular subject positions through the internalisation of social relations (Potter, 2004). In the broader social constructionist viewpoint, proportions of social difference such as gender, power relations and

sexuality do not exist in isolation but are rather constructed and embedded in context. It is from this standpoint that the proposed study aims to explore the construction of gendered relationships in LO textbooks, and the functions served by various discourses drawn on in the texts.

Foucault's work on biopower (1991) provide the theoretical tools for feminist enquiry to shift their analyses of power from a structural definition, to one in which power relations and the power/knowledge nexus become focal (Macleod & Durrheim, 2002). Foucault emphasises the way in which "power operates to organise and regulate space, to observe and discipline those who inhabit particular positions within it" (Parker, 2013, p.231). This concept will be explained in more detail in the section which follows.

### **Biopower**

"Biopower" is the term Michel Foucault coined in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (p. 140, 1976) for understanding the operation of disciplinary power on the body. It has two inter-related aspects, first, is the control of the human species in the form of the population and the second, is control of the body (Nilsson & Wallenstein, 2013). Foucault used the term biopower to label forms of power exercised over persons specifically, as they are thought of as living beings. Burchell, Gordon and Miller (1991) refer to the body of the individual as one pole and the population as the other. It is a form of politics concerned with subjects as members of a population, in which issues of individual sexual and reproductive conduct interconnect with issues of national policy and power (Burchell, et al., 1991).

Biopower incorporates both disciplinary techniques geared towards mastering the forces of the individual body, and a biopolitics centred on regulation and management of the life of the new political subject, which is the population (Burchell, et al., 1991). LO is an example of the practice of biopower in that it creates knowledge that is taken for granted as true about the development of self in relation to society. Disciplinary techniques are employed by means of the LO content on gender and sexuality through the process of normalisation. Normalization refers to social processes through which ideas and actions come to be seen as 'normal' and taken-for-granted or 'natural' in everyday life. Thus actions of the individual learner

are regulated and managed in terms of how they understand themselves and their gendered relationships, as fitting in with the broader social context. In these textbooks the behaviours, attitudes and interactions of the young person are constructed to be in line with the historically contingent, socially acceptable ways of being.

Power is also defined as actions on others' actions. Although power maybe an omnipresent dimension in human relations, it is never a fixed regime in society. It is rather an endless, fluid and open strategic relational game. In biopower, power operates according to the maxim of fostering 'life or disallowing it' (Nilsson & Wallenstein, 2013). It entails new forms of government and social regulation that do not rely on physical force. This form of power no longer operates through violence imposed from authority (in a top down approach) but rather through all subjects taking on the normalising regulation, in a bottom-up approach. For example, when a young person reads a LO textbook about gendered relations they are not forced by authorities to accept it as true. But they might (of their own volition) understand themselves and their own romantic and familial relationships in those terms since those texts are presented as expert knowledge. How this normalising regulation occurs will be explained in the section which follows.

### **Disciplinary power**

This understanding of power is rooted in the historical shift from sovereign power to disciplinary power. Prior to the 1700s, sovereign power was displayed or exercised through public torture. The King was the ruler and maker of the law, torture represented the activation of his power on the body of the criminal. By the end of that epoch through the influences of humanist reformers an alternative was introduced. In the new regime, crime was seen as a breach of contract in which, society as whole was a victim and not just the individual as before (Foucault, 1975).

Under the new regime, the body was no longer tortured and dismembered; it was trained, exercised, educated and supervised. This is what Foucault terms 'disciplinary power' (Foucault, 1980). The aim of disciplinary power is that of regulation and normalisation of subjects. Foucault asserts that power is not exercised from the outside, neither is it possessed by the individual, class or group,

nor is it centralised in the law or the state. He understood it to be immanent to, power that is operating within everyday relationships including economic exchange, knowledge and sexual relationships (Foucault, 1980).

The field of sexuality education can be utilised in the exercise of biopower. The teenaged young person's body needs monitoring and patrolling, owing the development of sexual organs that come with the developmental stage of adolescence. This monitoring and patrolling, which Foucault termed surveillance produces "docile bodies". Docile bodies are defined by Foucault (1975) as bodies that "may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved ... through a strict regimen of disciplinary acts". Disciplinary power is exercised over teenaged sexuality through controlling and normalising sexual activity amongst young people.

Foucault's notion of disciplinary power has provided useful theoretic tools for feminists to understand how power relations and the power/knowledge nexus become important in sexuality education (Macleod & Durrheim, 2002, p.44). Although the applicability of Foucault's work on feminist inquiry has been contested, Macleod and Durrheim (2002) highlight important points of convergence between Foucault's work and the broad field of feminism. Such include the focus on sexuality as a key area in political struggle, a critique of the rational subject and the biological determinism, humanism and the search for the empirical scientific "truth". Foucault like feminism puts emphasis on the analysis of politics of personal relations and everyday life (Macleod & Durrheim, 2002). The Foucauldian feminist researcher is afforded a theoretical tool "with which to analyse the complexity of oppressive relations of power..." (Macleod & Durrheim, 2002, p.57).

Sexuality education is an important domain of feminist inquiry, as various underlying assumptions concerning the nature of gendered relationships are invoked in discursive and social practices. Political issues such as gender relations, education, population control and welfare, inform discussions about teenaged sexuality (Macleod & Durrheim, 2002). For example in the traditional approach to sexuality education used in many LO textbooks, the primary goal is prevention of HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancy with specific recommendations, such as the abstinence from sexual activity. Thus traditional gendered and institutional power relations are invoked in this approach to sexuality education. Therefore Foucault's analysis of

disciplinary power (as installed in everyday educational interactions) can be supplemented by using positioning theory to understand the ways in which the female learner is positioned within discourses, which are drawn upon to produce information within sexuality education textbooks. Positioning theory will be the focus of the section which follows.

### **Positioning theory**

Positioning theory will be used to further explore the various ways in which the female learner is positioned, in relation to the (assumed) male partner in gendered relationships. Initially developed as a tool for research on the dynamics of interpersonal relations, positioning theory has since been expanded to intrapersonal and intergroup levels of analysis. The focus of positioning theory has been on bringing to light, the normative frames within which people carry out their lives when they are positioned in particular ways. The theory aims to reveal the explicit and implicit patterns of reasoning, which are realised in particular ways of interaction between people (Harrè, Moghaddam, Pilkerton Cairnie, Rothbart & Sabat, 2009).

With its strong traditional psychology roots, positioning theory has been expanded for use in strands that are critical of the stagnation of traditional psychology. Located within discursive psychology, positioning theory attends to matters or features of local context. It looks at the rights and duties that are distributed among people as they are positioned discursively in speech. According to Burr (1995) “discourses provide us with ....ways for describing a person. Each discourse provides a number of subject positions which are available for people to occupy when they draw on that discourse” (p.264). According to Harrè et al (2009) these patterns are themselves the product of higher-order acts of positioning through which, rights and duties are ascribed to individuals or groups. Certain positions determine a particular set of outcomes by allowing or disallowing a train of consequences.

Furthermore, positioning theory looks at what a person may and may not do when positioned in a particular way. It is a product of power dynamics. Dominant groups have more legitimate voices and produce more “valid” representations. They are more entitled to be heard (such as authoritative textbooks or educators). Learners, who are positioned as less powerful, lack the power to contradict and challenge



dominant discourses in a meaningful way. What we take to be the rights and duties of individuals or groups, are shorthand terms for moral presuppositions. In such presuppositions by virtue of being positioned in a particular way, people take up appropriate ways of being in which they are momentarily bound in what they say and do. Thus a subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that discourse (Davies & Harrè, 1990). LO textbooks have certain subject positions that they make available for female learners in their content, which draws on discourses of sexuality. These subject positions are taken up by the female learner in her experience of herself in relation to gender relations; and they influence how she locates herself within them. The main relevance of the concept of positioning in feminist inquiry is that, it serves to direct the researcher's attention to a process by which certain acts are allowed and others disallowed.

Within the context of the school, as an example of a social institution, it is the duty of the teacher to teach on sexuality and other material within the curriculum, and the learner cannot contradict or dispute that. Social constructionism acknowledges that discourses are active in the production of certain subject positions and that they may frame what can be said and done (Parker, 1992). By the same token, positioning serves to direct our attention to a process by which certain series of consequences are set in motion, both intended and unintended (Davies & Harrè, 1990).

Positions are clusters of beliefs about how rights and duties are distributed. The most powerful attributive schemata are based on a range of presuppositions and taken for granted assumptions, which are usually embedded in practices such as the "duty" of the more powerful male to protect the female, who positioned as less powerful in dangerous situations. Positioning is accomplished as a feature of discursive fluxes of various sorts and is implicit in various modes of presentation which include words, signs, gestures, architectural conventions and so on (Harrè, et al., 2009).

Stating that positions are often embedded in discursive practices is not to say that they are stable and fixed. Contradictions are inherent in positioning, which is fluid as subjects shift in ways of thinking about themselves as discourse shifts. Different subject positions and the various cultural and socio-political meanings inferred to

each, work to legitimise the choices that are being made (Davies & Harrè, 1990). With positioning as used in the current study, the focus is on the way in which the discursive practices of sexuality discourses constitute the female learner in certain way.

Creating subject positions in text, is a practice of representation, which becomes a means of providing locations that individuals must occupy, if they are to have the status of being subjects of a particular kind. Female learners' understanding and experiences of topics related to gender and sexuality as well as their social identities, can be understood through the categories made available to them in discourse (Davies & Harrè, 1990). The content of sexuality education as presented in LO textbooks carries with it a set of discursive locations (as depicted in words and graphics), which position the female learner in particular ways. If the positioning of the subject is happening at a collective level (as in the prescribed textbook), positioning is to a large extent forced and difficult to challenge. The aim of the current study is thus, to analyse these texts to understand the positioning of the female learner in the discursively constructed social world of the LO textbook.

## **Conclusion**

Against the backdrop of political issues such as violent and exclusionary gendered relations in South Africa, the curricula of sexuality education is an important site of analysis. The social constructionist approach is suitable for the discourse analysis, to reveal the multiple discourses and fluid positionings afforded to female learners within them. In this chapter I have shown how , by drawing on the work of Foucault, specifically the notions of biopower and disciplinary power, the relationship between discourse and subject positions is explained. The discourses continuously construct and reconstruct female learners to suit the contemporary context. These positions are configurations of power which allow for certain possibilities while simultaneously constricting others. By utilising these theories, the intention is not to uncover an underlying essential and stable reality, but rather to use it as a lens through which the explicit configuration of power relations can be analysed. In the chapter which follows, the specific application of this theory to the methodology will be discussed in detail.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study is to explore the constructions of gendered relationships with regards to sexuality education in LO textbooks. More specifically, the intention is to examine the power relations within those constructions, which position young women in particular ways. The objectives are to investigate how these constructions position the female learner, and the implications of such positioning for achieving full reproductive and sexual agency, in keeping with the stated conceptual principles of LO. Looking through the social constructionist paradigm, the researcher adopts a suspicious political stance, which allows for the deconstruction of versions of reality (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). In texts, language is the passage through which meaning, realities and subject positions are produced (Baxter, 2003), thus the method used allows the researcher to describe the construction of particular discourses, the possible positions and the underlying implication of those positions for the female learner.

#### **Research Design**

The study is a qualitative, descriptive, applied research design, aimed at providing rich description of discourses and positions. “Qualitative research subsumes several diverse research methods that differ from each other considerably (Bryman, 2012, p.383)”. Within the qualitative research paradigm, the goal of the researcher is to explore the data and provide descriptions that are context-laden (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). The importance of in-depth qualitative work is increasingly being recognised as a previously neglected, but nevertheless important approach to supplement quantitative studies.

In qualitative research, the aim of social enquiry is towards a consideration of how certain forms of knowledge are achieved, in interactions in talk and texts (Burr, 1995). The researcher thus utilised Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). FDA is constructed as a specific methodology inside psychology; Foucauldian Discourse Analysis is a form of discourse analysis and a research method that is underpinned

by the principles of social constructionism. For Foucault, discourses are made up of a system of statements that set up relationships with other statements (Foucault, 1972). According to Foucault, discourse approximates the concept of discipline in two ways. Firstly, it specifies the kind of institutional positioning of knowledge. Secondly, it refers to the practices through which certain objects, concepts and strategies are formed (Foucault, 1972). Parker (1992) further asserts that among other things, discourse is realised in texts and that it is a coherent set of meanings that are historically located.

Due to its applied nature, the current study is aimed at contributing towards practical matters, such as decision-making in policy and implementation in Life Orientation curricula in future. The current study used existing data, aimed at providing descriptions of the content, which was readily available within the public domain.

### **Research Questions**

The Foucauldian Discourse Analysis which was applied to this data focussed on the social construction of sexuality education in Life Orientation textbooks. More specifically, the questions which were posed were:

How are gendered relationships constructed in LO textbooks?

How do these constructions position young women?

What are the implications of these positionings?

### **Data Collection**

In order to answer these questions, data had to be collected from the most commonly prescribed Life Orientation textbooks in Eastern Cape according to the local textbook distributors, African Book Connection (personal communication see Appendix 1). These textbooks are published by Maskew Miller Longman, Shuter & Shooter and Oxford respectively. Three different Life orientation titles (namely: *Focus*, *Top Class* and *Successful*) were identified and the textbooks prescribed for grades Grade 10 to Grade 12 constituted the sample frame. The textbooks used in this study are listed below:

1. Attwell, T., Clitheroe, F., Dilley, L., Falken, J., Lundall, B. & Mieke, S. (2011). *Oxford Successful Life Orientation Learner's Book Grade 10*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
2. Attwell, T., Bottaro, J., Clitheroe, F., Dilley, L., Engelbrecht, B., Peasnall, H., Perez, N. & Visser, P. (2012). *Oxford Successful Life Orientation Learner's Book Grade 11*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
3. Attwell, T., Bottaro, J., Burger, R., Clitheroe, F., Dilley, L., Hornsveld, M., Mahlangu, A., Naidoo, Perez, N. & Visser, P. (2013). *Oxford Successful Life Orientation Learner's Book Grade 12*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
4. Doubell, S., Haddon, C., Holgate, S. & Martinuzzi, H. (2011). *Shuters Top Class Life Orientation Grade 10 Learner's Book*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.
5. Bird, D., Martinuzzi, H. & Dickinson, J. (2013). *Shuters Top Class Life Orientation Grade 12 Learner's Book*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.
6. Martinuzzi, H., Bird, D., Haddon, C. & Dickinson, J. (2012). *Shuters Top Class Life Orientation Grade 11 Learner's Book*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.
7. Rooth, E., Seshoka, A., Steenkamp, S. & Mahuluhulu, S. (2011). *Focus Life Orientation Learner's Book Grade 10*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.
8. Rooth, E., Steenkamp, S., Mathebula, M., Mahuluhulu, S., Ramzan, A. & Seshoka, A. (2012). *Focus Life Orientation Learner's Book Grade 11*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.
9. Rooth, E., Vethe, B., Steenkamp, S., Mahuluhulu, S., Ramzan, A., Seshoka, A., Eyssell, E. (2013). *Focus Life Orientation Learner's Book Grade 12*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

The sample was delimited to include only grade 10, 11 and 12 learner textbooks. This is an important factor in the delimitation, as the learners in these grades are sixteen years and above. This is the legal age of consent to sexual activity, thus it is of particular importance to understand, which discourses are drawn upon to construct sexuality education for learners, who are already legally able to consent to sexual activity.

The data was collected from one relevant module entitled “Development of Self in Society” (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

The module within the Life Orientation curriculum that deals with sexuality, reproductive health and gendered power relation in LO textbooks is called: “Development of Self in Society”. It is stated in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement of LO (Department of Basic Education, 2011) that this specific content deals with gender roles and responsibilities, gender differences, power relations, masculinity/femininity and hegemonic gender influences on relationships, amid other similar topic areas. It is taught during the first and third term of the school year with a maximum of 10-11 hours, out of the 72 hours allocated to teaching the subject per annum (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Data for the analysis was taken from this topic area, since it was relevant with regards to answering the research questions within the current study. The other five topic areas in LO which include Social and environmental responsibility; Democracy and human rights; Career and career choices; Study skills and Physical Education were not included in the sample as they did not speak to the topic of the study. Table 1 in the section below tabulates the data analysed in the study.

### **Development of Self in Society**

The module “Development of Self in Society”, deals with topics that have to do with the holistic development of the teenaged young person into a responsible citizen. Topics covered in relation to this module include self-awareness, self-esteem and self-development. It also deals with changes associated with growing towards adulthood, focusing on the physical, emotional and psychological changes, associated with the developmental stage of adolescence. Development of self in society also covers topics related to sexuality, looking at attitudes, values and behaviours that lead to sexual intercourse (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The dangers of early sexual debut such as teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS are also part of the content. Skills, attitudes, assertiveness and refusal skills to prevent sexual abuse and rape also form part of what is taught under this topic. Gender roles, power relations, power inequalities, power imbalances and power struggles and the impact of such relations on the holistic

wellbeing of society are also covered (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This was thus the most likely module in which to find discursive constructions of gendered relationships for analysis.

**Table 1: The data set**

<b>Textbook</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>No. of pages</b>	<b>Total</b>
Focus	10	8-22	15	35
		171-191	20	
Oxford successful	10	12-19	08	27
		99-117	19	
Top class	10	5-12	08	25
		103-119	17	
Focus	11	16-21	06	35
		172-186	15	
		248-261	14	
Top class	11	14-32	19	38
		148-152	05	
		195-208	14	
Oxford successful	11	122-131	10	20
		166-175	10	
Focus	12	19-36	18	20
		191-192	2	
Oxford successful	12	127-146	20	20
Top class	12	138-148	11	11
<b>Total no of pages</b>				<b>231</b>

It can be seen from Table 1 above that in Grade 10 and Grade 11, most of the content in Development of Self in Society in the textbook is devoted to topics, which relate to gender and sexuality. Lesser emphasis is put on gender and sexuality as learners progress and approach the end of formal schooling in Grade 12.

The next step was to analyse the constructions so as to understand the possible subject positions made available for teenaged young women. Subject positions

locate persons or groups within a structure of rights and duties, for those who use the resource (Davies & Harrè, 1990). The group in question for the proposed study are the teenaged young women. Extracts from the texts were used as evidence of the implied positions. Assisting the researcher to answer the sub-questions of the study, which have to do with how the female learner is positioned as a sexual subject, within the sexuality education component of the LO syllabus, and the implication of such positions (Davies & Harrè, 1990).

### **Data Analysis**

The unit of analysis in the current study was sections within each textbook, which referred directly to gendered relationships. This includes references in textbooks to relationships which are specifically gendered. In other words, units of meaning, which refer to either relationships between biologically male and female individuals or relationships with, clearly delineated masculine and feminine roles. These are mostly so-called romantic or intimate relationships, but they also cover familial or violent relationships.

The approach of discourse analysis employed in the current study is Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). FDA was constructed as a specific methodology inside psychology and as a collaborator of critical psychology (Parker, 2013). FDA calls for consideration of the ways in which the power/knowledge nexus functions to achieve certain subject positions, subjectivities and ways of being (Parker, 1992). Not only did FDA offer the possibility to examine the issues directly relevant to the research, but it also further provided coherence in the process due to the suggested series of steps. Hanna (2014) supports the applicability of FDA and its usefulness in providing coherence in the analysis of texts.

The data analysis in this study was carried out using a form of FDA developed by Carla Willig (2008), who has described a six stage analysis of the relationship between power, knowledge and language. In the original FDA process, Parker identified twenty steps which Willig was able to condense into six steps, without compromising the analytic strength of the method. This method emphasises the interpretative dimension of the social construction of knowledge: what a person



chooses to include in data collection positions them in relation to the object(s) of the analysis (Branson, 2013).

In this study, it is shown that discourses relating to heterosexuality, gendered power relations in Life Orientation textbooks, interact with other discourses to construct the particular identities of the female learner. According to Willig (2008), FDA includes discursive constructions which are concerned with ways in which discursive objects are constructed. It also looks at discourses, how different discourses determine the way a discursive object is constructed differently. The action orientation of FDA looks at what the constructions achieve, and the positioning that result from such constructions. Overall, it looks at practice mapped out by these constructions and subjectivity, which looks at what can potentially be felt, thought and experienced from the available subject positions (Willig, 2008). It looks at what is allowed and disallowed for someone in that position, and the inevitable consequences which follow on from being positioned as subject of a particular kind.

The analysis was carried out more with an awareness of the steps of Willig's approach, rather than an unquestioning adherence to each step. This approach is supported by Walton (2007) who states that doing discourse analysis has more to do with being confident in the use of analytic concepts, which are part of discourse analysis. He also states that reporting the analysis must be consistent with the epistemological underpinnings of discourse analysis.

Willig (2008) conducts the discourse analysis by describing discursive objects, action orientation, positioning, practice and subjectivity as analytic concepts. Discursive objects are the themes or foci of discourses used to construct a personal worldview. Action orientation refers to the indicators of personal stance(s) being taken in statements about discursive objects, which prompt questions about motives for recalling events related to the discursive objects. Positioning identifies subjects within the structure of rights and responsibilities, as will be shown in the analysis, the positions adopted by female learners regarding gender and sexuality.

Practice refers to the ways in which "discursive constructions and the subject positions contained within them open up or close down opportunities for action" (Willig 2008, 116). By constructing particular versions of the world, and by positioning subjects within them in particular ways, discourses limit what can be said

and done. These concepts are used as guides to the data analysis. For example, the social construction of sex and, dangerous and risky behaviour in adolescence, and by positioning teenaged young people as at risk, due to being developmentally unable to make decision about engaging in sexual activity. This discourse limits their sense of agency, regardless of the fact that the law describes them as agentic from age sixteen.

The method utilised was to read and reread the texts so as to become very familiar with them. Notes were taken during the reading process to identify discursive objects, action orientations, practices, positions and subjectivities, which made up the discourses. These discourses were defined, tested, limited or elaborated on throughout the analysis phase, so as to verify their applicability and suitability for inclusion. While there was a sufficient degree of consistency between analysts (namely myself and my supervisor) during the pilot phase, it has to be reiterated that based on the qualitative and discursive nature of this research other researchers might have analysed the same texts differently.

### **Trustworthiness of the research process**

It is important to note that the concepts of reliability and validity are not useful when working from a social constructionist framework. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have shown how a concept like trustworthiness is utilised within qualitative research to decide whether or not, the researcher has done justice to the research material. The notion of trustworthiness can be established through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each of the four concepts will be discussed briefly with reference to how they were achieved in this project.

Credibility refers to how accurately the phenomenon under scrutiny is recorded. The following provisions were made within the research project to promote credibility: well established research methods were adopted; the researcher became very familiar with the data and consulted regularly with a second analyst for clarity about coding and analysis.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to different research contexts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the qualitative researcher

should ensure that thorough and sufficient contextual information regarding the data is provided, so that adequate descriptions of all aspects of the research process are provided. In this case the researcher made every effort to do this.

Dependability is valued in qualitative research as opposed to reliability. Rather than insisting that others would get the same results if the study were to be replicated, it is sufficient to suggest that others would concur that given the data collected the results would definitely make sense, hence they are dependable. In this project, the researcher made sure that the assumptions and theory behind the study were carefully explained and the details of the data collection was provided.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which, the findings of the study are the product of the focus of the inquiry, or the bias of the researcher. Confirmability in this project was established consistently through consultations during the methodological process so as to reduce bias.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study does not involve human participants and the information that was used for the analysis is already published in the public domain. Thus, the ethical considerations that apply to the study have been to ensure that the document is not plagiarised and that the findings are trustworthy, empirical and scientifically valid (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2010). An application was made to the University of Fort Hare Ethics Committee and permission was granted. All the work cited in the study is properly referenced to guard against plagiarism. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that there was no falsification of data. The topic is of high relevance, which can benefit the education sector in areas of policy and practice in sexuality education.

The reflexive element of the researcher becomes important in her understanding of her own role in the co-construction of knowledge about the topic. For reliability purposes, the research design, data collection and data analysis are thoroughly outlined above. However, these processes do not and neither can they overcome the partialities and biases that the researcher brings to the research design process (Blaise, 2005). Potter & Wetherell (1987) emphasise that in some form of discourse-analytic research, researchers are of the opinion that researcher demographic and

personal characteristics, have a role to play in the eliciting of research data. The researcher's gender, race and culture influenced the data analysis. The theoretic stance that guides the analysis was influenced by the researcher's own subjective viewpoint. Information obtained in the analysis that follows in the next chapter makes visible the multiple 'truths' that are constructed and perceived as imperative in our understanding of the intricacies of gender.

### **Limitations of the study**

The study was conducted using three textbooks; the analysis missed a broader view of the topic in sexuality education in general. The focus on sampled grades 10 to 12 limits the understanding of the construction of sexuality and gendered relationships in LO textbooks for the entire high school level of education, which include grades 8 to 12. Due to the textual nature of the study with its focus on language, it lacks a direct connection between language and the lived experiences of the subject group.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I provided a detailed account of the methodology that was used to conduct the current study. This included discussions of the research design, data collection procedures, and the method of data analysis. The sample frame and delimitations were explained and the rationale for the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis to answer the research questions was discussed. Trustworthiness of the research and ethical considerations were discussed and they included a reflection on how I as the researcher might have been implicated in the research. In the following chapter, the researcher presents a comprehensive account of the analysis of the data and a discussion of findings.

## Chapter 5

### Findings and Analysis

#### Introduction

In this chapter the findings and analysis of extracts, taken directly from the Life Orientation textbooks prescribed for grades 10, 11 and 12, will be presented. Data was collected from three textbooks namely: *Focus*, *Top Class* and *Successful*. The analysis below provides an analysis of discourses that construct gendered relationships and specifically, how these discourses position the female learner.

In this chapter attention will be paid to the discourses which are drawn upon in the textbooks, in talk about relationships which are specifically gendered. This means those that refer to either relationships between biologically male and female individuals, or relationships with clearly delineated masculine and feminine roles. More specifically, these discourses will be examined to understand how the female learner is positioned in them and what the implications of such positionings are.

In the section which follows, the two main discourses, namely: the discourse of heterosex and the discourse of danger and disease, will be introduced briefly. This will be followed by extracts which are illustrative of these discourses, and discussion pertaining to the subject positioning of the female learner.

#### Discourse of Heterosex

The discourse of heterosex focuses mainly on the biological differences between men and women, sexual differences, roles and the unequal power relations. Heteronormativity is related to the term heterosexism, as it refers to those gendered norms which keep in place patriarchal power and compulsory heterosexuality. The organising concept is the assumption that males and females are fundamentally different, and should be socialised into different gender roles to maintain the “normal” order of things. Heterosexist practices and institutions legitimize and privilege

heterosexuality, heterosexual relationships, and traditional gender roles as fundamental and "natural" within society.

A heterosexist discourse involves the alignment of four key elements namely: biological sex as binary, sexuality as always heterosexist (compulsory heterosexuality), gender identity as binary and gender roles as hierarchical (Kehily, 2002). In the extracts below the operation of these four elements is foregrounded as noted or observed in the data.

Gender roles refer to the socially constructed roles for males and females. In Extract 1 below the issue of appropriate gender roles is foregrounded.

#### Extract 1

Unequal power relationships are often seen in families. For example, household decision-making, such as making choices on healthcare, household purchases and visits to relatives, is not always equally shared between women and men. Many men make decisions about their wives' health care.

(Rooth, Seshoka, Steenkamp & Mahuluhulu 2011 p.18)

In the extract above, the writer draws on the discourse of heterosexism. Heterosexism is a central site for the production and reproduction of gendered power inequalities (Shefer, 1999). First and foremost it is assumed that the man is married to a woman. The husband and wife dyad is assumed. This is depicted in the way in which the power relations between the couple is configured. In such constructions the female is positioned as a wife, as having less power and therefore as a dependent person, with no autonomy over her own health related choices. The family structure as depicted in Extract 1 above reinforces women's dependence on men.

When the female is positioned in this way other possible subject positions are invisible. Such include the positioning of her as autonomous and rational, able to make informed decisions in issues concerning her own wellbeing. Configurations of the relationship which fall outside the heterosexist norm are not acknowledged. In the above articulation of the relational dynamics in the husband/wife dyad, the heterosexist norm is taken the way it is, and the unequal power relations are simply

stated not questioned. They are taken for granted as how things are normally or naturally between husbands and wives. Thus this inequality is not challenged.

While the extract above shows the imbalances of power in gendered intimate relationships, the effects thereof can be seen in Extract 2 below.

#### Extract 2

The effects are that when women cannot make health care choices for themselves, and they may be more exposed to illness and disease. Relationship power inequality also increases the risk of HIV in women.

(Rooth et al., 2011, p.18)

In the extract above, the reader is thereby alerted to the issue of the risks of “relationship power inequality” without any overt challenging of that power relation. The heterosex norm is stated as the taken for granted way in which relationships usually stand between men and women, as was also seen in Extract 1. This articulation is in line with the dominant construction of men as leaders and authority figures in the public and political spheres. This has a significant role in how gender roles are allocated within the household and the effects thereof (Shefer, et al., 2008). The power imbalances embedded within the heterosex norm are depicted tentatively, by informing the reader on some of the risks to women’s health, when men are the sole deciders on issues of healthcare in relationships.

Reference is made to ‘increased risk of HIV’. It is arguable that even though it is important to highlight women’s lack of negotiation within heterosex norm, it is equally important to be mindful of the dominant discourse that is reinforced. The discourse of women as inevitable victims of male power is reinforced. This discourse reproduces the dominant stereotypes of women’s passivity in relationships (Shefer, 1999). This reinforced discourse of male dominance and female subservience, is further implicated in other gendered relational issues, such as intimate partner violence which is discussed later in this analysis (Shefer, et al., 2008).

The changing roles that challenge the stereotypical roles in the husband/wife dyad are depicted in Extract 3 below.

### Extract 3

Traditionally women were the caregivers and housemakers, but these roles are changing. It is best to use common sense and to discuss and agree together about the duties for women and men. Most roles in society are outdated and changing: it is up to individuals to modernise gender roles and responsibilities.

(Rooth et al., 2011, p.19)

In the extract above, the writer introduces the possibility of a shift or change in gender roles and relations, within the husband/wife dyad. The writer is putting the responsibility for changing the gender roles on the individual. It is tentatively suggested that, this is an individual responsibility that has nothing to do with the social construction of gender roles in society. Reference is made to “common sense” and it is suggested that couples “discuss and agree” on issues of roles in relationships. The female is positioned as an autonomous, rational woman who is able to influence and foster change in the stereotypical socially constructed gender roles. The man is further positioned as a flexible, modern man, the “new age man”, who is able to share both parenting and housekeeping duties.

However, in unequal relationships discussion and agreement on equal terms are not possible. The alternative depiction and experiences of heterosexuality and heterosex presented in the extract above are problematic, even though it holds the possibility of increased power for women (Shefer, et al., 2008). The individuals in a heterosexual relationship are constructed as able to effect change, on the systemic and structurally constructed sexist practices.

The way in which the heterosex discourse reinforces Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) by individualising violence against women and not challenging patriarchal power relations can be seen in the following extracts. The structural and patriarchal ideology reinforces male and heterosexual hegemony, by silencing alternative discourses on women’s accounts of IPV, such as unequal distribution of power in relationships (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2004). This can be seen in extract 4 below.



#### Extract 4

Some men are violent towards women and beat women up. These men are uneducated and don't understand that their greater body strength does not give them the right to abuse women.

(Rooth et al., 2011, p.21).

In the extract above, the perpetrators of violence are positioned as ("some men ... who are uneducated and don't understand their body strength" Extract 4, line 1-2 above). This is an individual psychological perspective, which draws on learning theories, and focuses on individual characteristics of the perpetrators, such as level of education and lack of personal knowledge or understanding of abusive men. Power disparities of traditional masculine hegemony; serve as rationalization or justification for violence against women. The classing of acts of violence depicted above implies that, it is only among 'blue collar' working class with less education that acts of violence occur in intimate relationships. Such a view does not acknowledge the broader social construction of heterosex, which is underpinned by unequal power relations which supports violence, making it more acceptable.

IPV is pathologised and associated with lack of education, foregrounding the individual perpetrator's characteristics such as level of education, this indirectly excuses behaviour. It can make the reader take a more sympathetic approach to the perpetrator, mitigating the violence. Absent in this discourse is men's responsibility and accountability for his behaviour and actions. Contextual factors of cultural and patriarchal, and gendered power relation that influence intimate partner violence are absent in such articulation.

The social constructions of gender discussed below are implicated in IPV. Understanding the socially constructed gender roles and power relations thereof, is of pivotal importance in attempt to address persistent gender inequalities, resistance to gender transformation and related social problems, such as high rates of violence in intimate relationships (Shefer et al., 2008).

## Extract 5

We live in a world that gives men permission to look upon women and children as their property. Society makes men feel that they have to be dominant to be accepted as “real men”. Men are supposed to be strong and powerful, while women and children are more often seen as weak and submissive. Even though lots of people do not fit these stereotypes, the myths are strong and carry through into the way people behave.

(Atwell, et al., 2011 p. 16)

In Extract 5 above, the writer alludes the social construction of gender and how it informs inequality in relationships. Reference is made to the “real men” discourse, which includes the assumed role of men, which position them as powerful and dominant, while women are combined with children, and taken as weak and submissive. Gender conformity and heterosexuality are reinforced through violence within the broader social context of violence, which is related to gender hierarchies (Shefer, et al., 2008). This is also in keeping with the dominant construction of men as leaders and authority figures in society.

To depict this the writer states that (“We live in a world that gives men permission...Society makes men feel that they have to be dominant...”, Extract 5, line 1-2). Here the reader tentatively exposes the socially constructed gender stereotype that influence behaviour, and how roles are allocated within the household. Further acknowledged in Extract 5, is the rigidity of the socially constructed gender roles regardless of “...lots of people” not ascribing to these stereotypes. For example, the writer writes (“...the myths are strong and carry through into the way people behave”, Extract 5, line 5). By referring to these socially constructed discourse as ‘myths’, our collective social contribution is discounted.

## Extract 6

There are people who need to have control, power or domination in their personal relationships-especially sexual ones. This leads to various types of abuse...Girls and women are often victims of sexual abuse as they are physically weaker than boys or men.

(Atwell, et al., 2011 p. 16-17)

Extract 6 speaks to the use of male power and domination in “personal relationships-especially sexual ones” (line 1 & 2). The writer make reference to “various types of abuse”, as a by-product of power and domination in sexual relations, as depicted in IPV above and in rape as discussed below. The continued reference to male domination and girls and women’s subservience reinforces the traditional gender construction and power disparities embedded in “personal relationships”. And, it may indirectly serve to mitigate the effects.

The writer makes reference to the dominance of the stereotypes and difficulty in challenging them. While discourses are constructions, they have very real effects. No substantial provision is made for overthrowing these dominant heterosex discourses. Acknowledging the dominant societal adherence to these discourses reinforces them, as opposed to challenging and overthrowing. The reference on differences in physical strength between girls and women/boy and men, reproduces the weak/strong natural binary between the sexes. The naturalisation of the innate binary serves to rationalise or justify acts of domination by the strong sex, and indirectly legitimises hegemonic heterosexual practices and abuse against women.

Gender roles are thought in traditional mainstream psychology, to be partly determined by the physical biological differences between boys and girls, who grow to become men and women. The section below looks at the differences between males and females as constructed in the LO textbooks, and its implications for the heterosex discourse. Biological sex speaks to the biologically determined differences between sexes. In the textbooks such is centred on the physical changes linked to puberty in preparation for adulthood. Biological sex and differences lay the ground work for understanding sexuality, and it reinforces the differences in roles between the males and females.

### Extract 7

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Girls	11-13	Growth	...Total body fat increases from 15% to 19 %
Boys	10-20	Growth spurt	Boys are more muscular, especially in the upper body and shoulder areas

(Doubell, Haddon, Holgate & Martinuzzi, 2011 p.108-109)

In the extract above, the physical strength of males as they develop into adulthood is highlighted. This positions them as physically strong and females are counter positioned as gaining weight, as opposed to physical strength. As an essentialist approach, biology implies that these differences are natural and predetermined by genetic and physical mechanisms, thus gender identity is understood as fixed with no possibility for change. The social construction of the differences and the variation in biological bodies is not acknowledged. The effect of the foregrounding and fixing of biological differences is that, they can be used to justify the unequal distribution of power in relationships (Shefer, et al., 2008).

In this view, the LO curriculum produces and sustain the binary opposites highlighted by Kehily (2002). Kehily asserts that these binaries may be invoked in stereotypical ways such as masculinity/femininity, strong/weak, active/passive, hard/soft etcetera. In this way the unequal relations of power are depicted as based on biological facts, supported by natural science and thus as an issue which cannot be confronted.

The taken for granted binary of male/female transcends to the construction of sexual relationships as portrayed in Extract 8 below.

### Extract 8

The relationships of adolescents with other people change.

- Younger adolescents often form groups of friends of the same sex; they behave the same as each other, dress and do the same things.

- Older adolescents make friends with the opposite sex, start having romantic relationships and start dating.

(Rooth, et al., 2011, p.172)

In Extract 8 above there is the implied message that romantic relationships and dating will always occur with the opposite sex. The opposite sex partnership is assumed and seen as natural progression, associated with the changes that are an inherent part of the developmental stage of adolescence. The writer impresses that as adolescents mature, they start taking noted romantic interest in the opposite sex. Understanding adolescent sexuality through the heterosexual matrix (discussed in chapter 3), makes it possible for the reader to see how adolescents use these discourses, to actively and discursively establish themselves and others as gendered beings, and the heterosexual sexual subject position is implied.

This is an example of what Rich (1980) referred to as compulsory heterosexuality. This depiction impress heterosexuality as the norm for older adolescents, while same sex relationships are associated with friendship and immature impressionist inclinations to dressing and behaving the same way. It is implied in the extract that dating will inherently occur with the opposite sex (Macleod, Moodley & Young, 2015). Same-sex dating and romantic relationships are not explicitly mentioned and discussed, as an option available for adolescents who do not display interest in the opposite sex.

There are a few instances where gender complexity and fluidity are acknowledged as shown in Extract 9 below. Understanding gender discourse as complex and fluid reveals how gender is socially constructed and does not reside within the biology of the individual.

Extract 9

Sex and gender can be complicated and confusing. There are people who are born one sex and take on the opposite gender...Others are unhappy with the sex they are born with and have operations to change their sex.

(Doubell, et al., 2011, p.11)

In Extract 9, the writer speaks to the fluidity and contradictions that exist in the constructions of sex and gender. The writer refers to this fluidity as “complicated and confusing”. Binary gender identities are normalised and reinforced subtly, while non-binary gendered identities are constructed as causing unhappiness. The process where “people who are born one sex take on the opposite gender” and “others are unhappy with the sex they were born with” (line 2 above) is pathologising, depicting this group of people as deviating from the norm, and the word “unhappy” makes it sound trivial. This is a common insult to transgendered people, namely: that they are simply “unhappy”. The reader is hereby alerted to the possibility of alternatives and resistances, to the taken-for-granted understanding of sex as biologically determined and fixed.

The ‘truth’ of gender and heterosexuality examined in the analysis of the Extract 9 above, relies on the construction of ‘proper’ gender identities, the deployment of a valued normal/confusing binary, and the naturalisation of heterosexual masculine and feminine gender identities (Gacion, 2010). This conceptualisation of fixed biological sex, can impact the readers’ viewing of non-binary gendered identities as “aberrant or deviant” (Shefer, et al., 2015, p. 78). This view may indirectly inform intolerance and discrimination. The mere mention of this more complex understanding of sex and gender does little, to challenge existing stereotypical discourses. The alternative broader understanding of the complexity and multiplicity of what it is to be gendered is only alluded to in passing, and thus missing in the curriculum (Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006).

### **Discourse of Danger and Disease**

It has been shown how LO sexuality education focusses chiefly on the negative consequences of young people engaging in sex, by highlighting the possibility of sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV); sexual violence and pregnancy. The conservative approach to teaching sexuality education relies heavily on this discourse. The extracts which draw on this discourse can be divided into two sections. Firstly, there are those that actively promote abstaining from or delaying sexual activity to avoid disease. The second section is devoted to extracts which

instruct learners (mostly female learners) on decision-making, becoming assertive, and resistance, and negotiation skills as a way of avoiding the danger.

Sexuality is defined as a central aspect of being human, which is present throughout life from childhood. However, in the LO textbooks the conservative approach to sex education, which promotes abstinence and the postponement of sexual activity for young people is promoted. This can be seen in the way in which sexual activity is spoken about in the extract below.

#### Extract 10

To make the most of your life, **delay** sexual intercourse. If you wait before you are sexually active, you will prevent problems such as unwanted teenage pregnancy, STI's and distractions from your studies.

(Rooth, et al., 2011, p. 176)

Delay is the operative word in Extract 10; it is foregrounded visually through bolding, to alert the reader of the importance of (“**delay**” sexual intercourse, Extract 10, line 1). Delaying sexual activity is upheld to (“prevent problems such as unwanted teenage pregnancy, STI's...” Extract 10, line 2 & 3). Sexual activity in LO textbooks is predominantly constructed as problematic and undesirable for learners. This implies the need for educators and managers to regulate sexual activity, for the intended purpose of protecting female learners and instilling a sense of responsibility in them (Shefer, et al., 2015). Shefer et al., (2015) suggest that the prominent cautionary and negative view of sexuality reinforces normative gender roles and unequal power relations, embedded in heterosex.

The reinforcement of normative gender roles and unequal power relations is achieved, by drawing on the discourse of danger and disease, which positions the young woman as the sole person who needs to take responsibility for delaying sexual activity. Teenage pregnancy, STIs including HIV and AIDS are some of the risks that the reader is cautioned about in the extract above. Danger is invoked specifically in relation to unwanted teenage pregnancy and disease, with respect to

non-normative relationships that expose teenaged young people to health risks such as STIs and HIV/AIDS (Macleod, 2009).

Sexual activity is constructed as something which limits your opportunities and creates problems at school by causing “distractions from your studies” (Extract 10, line). Considering that there is no talk of other options (such as using birth control to prevent pregnancy or STIs). Safe and enjoyable sexual activity for young people is thus not constructed as an option in the above extract, or in the textbook as a whole. Other possible subject positions are missing in Extract 10 such as that of the desiring subject position that still wants to be safe from the negative consequences of sexual intercourse.

In the extract above, the emphasis on delay and abstinence to “prevent problems” (Extract 10, line 2) positions the female learner as autonomous, it implies that she is able to take up control over her own sexual life. The extract assumes that young women have the power to negotiate their own sexual safety. The emphasis on abstinence further reinforces the heterosex discourse, positioning women as gatekeepers, who are responsible for the regulation of male sexuality (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993).

In the following extract the association of abstinence with having “values” is shown very subtly. It is taken-for-granted that having “good values” is worthwhile. Without being explicit, the reader understands the insinuation that having values is equated with not being sexually promiscuous.

#### Extract 11

Values are worth more than gold or money; they help to guide you through life. Your best investment in yourself is to have good values.

(Rooth et al., 2011, p.179)

Saying ‘No’ to sexual activity is subtly associated with values as seen in Extract 11 above. These values are desirable and presented as the ideal for individual and collective wellbeing. They include among other things abstinence, self-control, taking responsibility for ones actions and the right to say no. Issues such as culture,



context, gender and location which are implicated in what we take to be the “correct” way of being are not discussed. What these values are is not explored in the text. Values are by no means universal and yet they are presented in the text as such. LO is in itself not a value-free learning area, values are infused in the choice of content especially in sexuality education.

This is a reductionist approach, in that it minimises and does not take into account the myriad other influences on an individual’s values, such as familial and the influence of the community on the learner’s value system and overt behaviour (Prinsloo, 2007). The learner who does not say ‘No’ is positioned as lacking in a value system.

Not all extracts imply that abstinence is a moral choice. Often abstinence is repeatedly and explicitly invoked and associated with favourable outcomes for the young person, who is able to uphold and commit to it. This is seen in Extract 12.

Extract 12

Resource: Facts about sexuality

### **Abstinence**

1. Abstinence means choosing not to have sexual intercourse. It means not doing anything that allows the male’s sperm in or near the opening of the female’s vagina or anus.
7. Oral and anal sex can spread HIV and any number of STIs...Oral and anal sex are still sex; you are not abstaining if you have oral or anal sex.

(Rooth et al., 2011 p.190)

In the extract above the writer defines abstinence in gendered terms. Specific reference is made to the ‘male sperm’ and the ‘female vagina or anus’. In this articulation, sexual intercourse is understood in terms of the male/female binary as always involving penetration of the female by the male. When abstinence is defined in this way, under the heading: Facts about sexuality, this definition becomes problematic. There is no provision for alternative forms of sexual intercourse for those learners, who do not subscribe to male/female understanding of sexuality. The heterosexual norm is reinforced and the textbooks do not address sexual diversity,

which would include lesbian, gay, transsexual. This articulation is another example of heteronormative sexual practices being afforded privileged status; within sexuality education content in LO textbooks.

The mention of oral and anal sex which can occur in the context of same-sex relationships can be viewed as a tentative way of acknowledging alternative ways of being sexual. It moves away from localising abstinence and sexual intercourse in heteronormative terms with the male's penis/female vagina binary. However, alternative ways of being sexual are not explicitly discussed in the textbooks.

### **Discourse of Danger and Disease:**

#### **Avoidance through decision-making, assertiveness, resistance and negotiation**

Decision-making is foregrounded as central in the discourse of danger and disease. It is presented as a tool for avoiding both danger and disease, by making good lifestyle choices, which lead to positive outcomes for the young person's future as shown in Extract 13 below.

Extract 13

#### **Good choice, good effects**

stay in school and complete FET

delay sexual intercourse

become a parent when mature enough for the responsibility

#### **Bad choice, bad effects**

leave school in middle of Grade 10

have sexual intercourse

become a parent while at school and too young for the responsibility

Because of poor decision-making skills, some teenagers may have sex, even if they don't want to. They may have sex because they think it will:

- Prove that they are a man or a woman

(Rooth et al., 2011 p.183)

In the Extract 13 above, the binary of good/bad when it comes to decision-making is presented in a tabular form. Decision-making is constructed as an event, not as a process, an either/or kind of event. It is depicted to imply options are only good/bad. There is no provision or consideration for the midline, the position where the decider is not so certain about the decision-making process. It assumes that when a decision is made, the young person will be able to carry the decision through with ease, and that they will not change their minds. The challenges associated with the process of decision-making, such as being unsure and desiring both responsibility and pleasure are not included.

Good choices are listed here as: remaining in school, delaying sexual intercourse. Contextual factors that affect decision-making, such as poor socio-economic conditions and unequal gendered relations of power are not taken into consideration. Such articulations assume that the learner is an agentic subject, possessing all the power to make informed decisions, based on knowledge and information provided. Choice is thus depicted as independent of contextual factors.

Below the table of good choices/bad choice presented In Extract 13 above, the writer presents a list of some of the reasons young men and women may have sex, because of poor decision-making abilities. The possible cognitive processes that may lead to the choice to have sex even (“if they don’t want to” Extract 13, line 1-2) are attributed to the need to (“prove that they are a man or woman”). The masculinity/femininity, male/female binary is reinforced in Extract 13.

In addition to making good decisions female learners are encouraged to be assertive. This is shown clearly in the extracts below:

The textbooks invest immensely on providing, the female learner in particular, with refusal strategies to avoid sexual activity and rape. Such, position her as agentic, powerful and able to impact an opposing discourse to the restrains of gendered power relations. She has all the responsibility and equipped with all the skills, she risks being blamed for being ignorant and for not implementing the guidelines provided for her.

Her own needs and desires that could pose a challenge to her resistance are not acknowledged in the extract. The implied positioning of her as agentic and powerful is contradictory to the other prominent position of her, as a passive-victim who is

incapable of exercising sexual agency (Shefer, et al., 2015). This contradiction is shown in Extract 14 below.

#### Extract 14



#### **When you say 'No'**

- When you say 'No', your voice must be firm. You cannot say 'No' in a whisper or with a giggle.
- It is best not to say 'No' with a smile on your face. Give a clear message that your 'No' means 'no', not 'perhaps', 'maybe' or possibly 'yes'.
- Always make sure your body expresses a 'No' as well as your words. Put your hand in a stop sign.
- Stand tall and look straight at the person.

#### **Negotiations**

You will negotiate with a partner to delay sex until you have completed your schooling. If your partner agrees, it is called a negotiated settlement; you both agree on a course of action.

(Rooth et al, 2011, p.187)

In the Extract 14, the female learner is provided with the skills to refuse sex in a particular way. She has all the responsibility for resisting sexual activity. Substantial reference is made to her body language in the listed ways of refusing, mentioned in the extract. The writer articulates successful resistance as heavily dependent on believability. To attain believability, the resistor has to be firm and active. 'No' must

always be said in such a way that the body and the words are in agreement. (“Always make sure your body expresses a ‘No’ as well as your words”, Extract 14, bullet point 3). Her own obscurity and the complexities with saying ‘No’, which are based on her own desires for sexual enjoyment, are not accounted for in the extract.

The male learner’s responsibility is absent or missing in the refusal skills mentioned above. A pictorial depiction shows the female learner as the one who refuses while the male is confused about the message. The heterosex norm about males as “hunters”, such as the ‘male sexual drive’ discourse by Hollway (1995), silences alternative ways of being male. This discourse posits that men have an insatiable appetite for sex. He is exempted from all responsibility for pestering the girl, and putting her in the position where she has to carry all responsibility for resisting his sexual advances.

This appetite is uncontrollable, thus the woman is positioned as having power to resist, even within the dominant unequal relations of power in heterosexual relationships. The high levels of coercion that exist in relationships are not acknowledged. They are simplified and depicted in a linear form with the girl expected to assert herself.

Negotiation is alluded to in passing in the textbooks, with no emphasis or teaching on how to implement it in the daily interaction in intimate or dating relationships. The unequal power relations that hinder negotiation in relationships are not accounted for in the Extract. Instead of teaching couples realistic negotiation skills for consent to sexual activity, which also includes the complexity of the process, a bulk of the content is on giving the reader examples of how the female needs to resist and such; draw heavily on the heterosex discourse.

There is no teaching on how boys would be expected to say no and how they should not be harassing girls for sex. Young women are taught that they are the ones responsible for protecting themselves and their partners, but this discourse of responsibility concurs with a contradictory framing of women as passive sexual subjects. In this way, the textbooks fail to capture and appreciate the intricacy and range of subject positions.

On the one hand, young women are positioned as the ones who need to exercise agency and need to police, regulate and constrain both their own sexuality and that

of their male partners, lest they, the young women, suffer the consequences of young sexuality. At the same time, the dominant heterosexual framing of female sexuality depicts women as sexually passive, helpless, and powerless in relation to sexual decision making. Such lessons are troubled with contradictions between young women’s agency and vulnerability (Shefer et al., 2015).

Extract 15

Figure 1: Say NO to SEX



(Doubell et al., 2011, p.111)

The extract above is a pictorial depiction in a form of a billboard chart “**Saying NO to SEX, Virgin POWER, Virgin PRIDE! AVOID HIV/AIDS**”. The picture in this extract is taken directly from the internet and it is a direct replica of the one in the textbook. The pictorial is presented as ideal and evokes the individual need to comply. While virginity generically refers to both males and females, the pictorial uses a picture of a girl which assumes an indirect association with only females. Virginity associated with pride makes no provision for those female learners who have no choice about their virginity regarding when to withhold it or give it away. Even though the contextual factors such as rape and incest and embedded power relations are discussed, bold statement such as the one presented in the pictorial about “Virgin Power, Virgin Pride”, makes no accommodation for the ones who do not have a

choice. This may result in them being seen as lacking in self pride for not withholding their virginity.

A strong message regarding refusing is carried out throughout the textbooks. A huge bulk of the content of the textbooks speaks to resistance as a tool for female learners, who are positioned as unequivocally firm and active resisters.

In the extracts which follow, the Discourse of Danger and Disease is invoked again, with specific reference to what young women should do to avoid danger. In the textbooks warnings are issued to female learners to protect themselves from dangerous situations that can lead to rape.

#### Extract 16

There are many dangerous situations that you can try to avoid, as these could lead to sexual intercourse, rape and abuse. Do not:

- walk around late at night,
- be at a place where drugs and alcohol flow freely ,
- be in areas that are not safe
- get a lift home with a stranger
- go out by yourself
- be alone with a partner who does not respect you

(Rooth et al., 2011, p.178)

In Extract 16 above the writer provides a list of dangerous situation that the young woman is cautioned to try and avoid. The warning articulated in the extract is that young women need to ensure their safety, so that they “Do not get raped”, the text is moving away from the “Do not rape” warning which usually refers to the man. It is observed that throughout the sampled content of the textbook, that the “Do not rape” message is replaced by the “Do not get raped” message. This is achieved by the focus on equipping women with advise on how to avoid finding themselves in situations that can lead to (“...rape and abuse” Extract 16, line 2). When articulated in this way, the man is indirectly exempted from taking responsibility for abuse and rape. The young woman is given resources to protect herself and with that, comes responsibility to ensure that she does not get raped.

There is the presumption that rape only happens with unknown strangers and that, the female learner will be protected once she acquires skills necessary to ensure safety as stated above. The myth of “stranger danger” situates rape as occurring outside the known, as an act committed by a particular group namely, ‘the stranger’. The young woman is positioned as one who has the power and responsibility to make rational choices about her lifestyle, places to hang out at and choices about having a respectful partner. Her experiences are seriously curtailed as contextual factors that make it difficult for her to take up the assumed position are not considered.

#### Extract 17

##### **Be aware and assertive**

There is no guarantee that you will never be the victim of a sexual assault. You should always be aware of yourself and your surroundings to prepare yourself for any possibility of attack. Imagine ways that an attack could happen and practise what you would do. Practice will help you to act quickly if are ever in a real-life emergency situation.

(Attwell et al., 2011 p. 114)

In Extract 17 above, the “Do not get raped” message is taken further as the writer provides the reader with practical skills to use in the unforeseen case of the (“possibility of attack”, Extract 17 line 3). It is impressed from the extract heading that the reader needs to “Be ware and assertive”. Awareness of self and surrounding is presented as preparation for possible attack. Assertiveness is presented as a way to “Imagine ways that an attack could happen...” line 3 above). There is enormous responsibility bestowed on the individual young woman to protect herself from attack.

Even though the writer asserts that there is no guarantee that one will never be sexually assaulted, he presents assertiveness as a preventive tool. Reference is made to (“...what you should do. Practice will help you to act quickly if you are ever in a real-life emergency situation”).The responsibility for staying safe and avoiding rape is shifted to the young woman by implying that if she practises with ways of combating sexual assault, she will be better prepared to protect herself in a real-life



emergency situation. Contextual factors that could result in her failing to protect herself regardless of having practised ways of protecting herself, are not accounted for in Extract 17 above.

The textbooks do allude to date rape as a form of sexual abuse that is common in intimate relationships, where partners assume sexual right by virtue of being in a relationship. This is seen in the extract below.

#### Extract 18

If you have been going out with a person for a long time, your partner still does not have the right to have sex with you without your permission. If you say “No”, no matter at what stage, it still means no and going further is rape.

(Rooth et al., 2011, p.178)

In Extract 18 above, an opposing discourse of rape as present in intimate relationships is depicted. Coercion and forced sex serves as an assertion of male dominance and control over the sexual domain of the relationship. It also serves to remind the female of the prevailing power relations (Jewkes et al., 2001). Thus saying ‘No’ does not always mean being safe, as the possibility of the partner continuing even though there has been a refusal exists. The writer also draws on the rights discourse in informing the reader, that she has the right to refuse sex even in the context of a long-term intimate relationship. (“...your partner still does not have the right to have sex with you without your permission” Extract 18, line 1-2).

It is difficult to imagine that a teenaged young woman, who does not know about the positive aspects of sexuality or her entitlement to a sexual voice, will be able to advocate very effectively for herself sexually. Thus emphasis on rights can be misleading, when it is taken at face value. Out of context, rights may be viewed as a guarantee because they are inherently associated with protection from the law. Taking those rights up on the other hand is a contextually complex exercise in light of coercion, male dominance and control in intimate relationships. The writer further makes reference to “permission”; this reference assumes that there is negotiation, where the partner asks if they can have sex and the young woman can then permit or not permit to the act of sex. The unequal power relations that are dominant in

intimate relationships make negotiation difficult, as the man usually assumes control over the sexual domain of the relationship (Shefer, et al., 2008).

The salience of the male sex drive discourse (Hollway, 1995) indirectly legitimises sexual violence within the context of intimate long-term relationships, and it serves to reinforce the male dominance in heterosexual relationships. The warnings about being safe and protecting oneself, give the absent but implied message that it is the responsibility of the informed young woman, to manage and control the male sex drive and avoid putting herself at risk of rape. She is positioned as a responsible, agentic, powerful subject who is able to protect herself and able to control her intimate partner. Explicitly stating “no matter at what stage, it means ‘no’ and going further is rape” shows that this is an issue that is not always clear, and it is often debated when rape is alleged. This is an attempt to position the young woman as having protection from the law as seen in extract 19 below.

#### Extract 19

If you are ever forced to have sex, report it and speak to a person you trust. Any persons who commit sexual abuse or rape must take responsibility for their actions. They will go to jail for a very long time.

(Rooth et al., 2011 p.178)

The extract above shows how the textbooks also present inaccurate information, which can make the learners suspicious and critical of the material presented. It is public knowledge in the country’s judiciary system that sexual violence offenders are often not charged as cases are thrown out of court, owing to inconclusive evidence. If they do go to jail their sentences are not always lengthy. The popular 2006 case of the then deputy president Jacob Zuma is an example of this. Judge Willem van der Merwe ruled that Zuma and his accuser had consensual sex, but condemned his unacceptable behaviour of having unprotected sex with a woman who is not his regular partner (Mail & Guardian, 2006).

This is just but one example to challenge the inaccuracy of the information provided in the textbook. A possible challenging of such information can be expected as learners can see the information as false and misinforming. The desired goal of informing and equipping them with the necessary skills is for them to navigate

through the challenges of modern day South Africa as agentic autonomous individuals.

Missing in this discourse is other forms of rape, those that occur closer to home, perpetrated by people who are known to the person. This includes intimate partner violation discussed above. Another form of sexual abuse referred to in the textbooks is economic sex, where young girls have sexual relationships with adults for money and goods. This is described in Extract 20 below.

#### Extract 20

Young girls who live in poverty are sometimes abused by older men, called sugar daddies, who prey on teenage girls. They give the girls money and many things, but also STIs, HIV and babies! Once you are ill or pregnant, they leave you alone. Think carefully about your options and rather apply for a grant or ask for help if you are in a serious poverty situation.

(Rooth, et al., 2011 p.180)

In Extract 20 above, the sugar daddy phenomena is brought forth to warn young girls about the consequences of having sex for money (transactional sex). It is emphasized that the full package comes with STIs, HIV and babies and abandonment. These consequences are catastrophized. Poverty is singled out as the only reason why young girls find themselves in relationships with older men. The unequal power relations and other contextual factors such as coercion and physical abuse that are embedded in intergenerational sexual relationships are not exposed, neither are they challenged.

In this articulation the young girl is positioned as materialistic, naïve and easily influenced. The young girl is also urged to (“Think carefully about your options”, Extract 20, line 4). Thinking carefully assumes that she is also rational and agentic; it positions her as responsible for her actions. Positioning her as responsible individualises, decontextualizes, and minimises the problem. The complexity of intergenerational relationships are not considered or accounted for in the Extract.

There is the option to apply for a grant which is put forward as a way out of poverty. The realistic nature of social grants is not considered. This information is suspicious and risks being rejected by the reader. It is a known fact in the country that the accessing a social grant and the ability of that grant to eradicate “a serious poverty situation” are questionable.

In stark contrast to the extracts which draw on the discourse of danger and disease, are discourses which allude to pleasure associated with sexual activity. This is alluded to in passing in parts of the textbook, that speak of sexual agency and rights as depicted in Extract 21 below.

#### Extract 21

You have the right to enjoy sex when you feel ready for it. Sex should be a natural, beautiful experience...Many people seem to admire boys who are sexually active. But if a girl behaves in the same way, she is considered a slut and not treated with respect.

(Attwell, Clitheroe, Dilley, Falken, Lundall & Meihe, 2011, p.114)

In the extract above, the writer starts off by acknowledge and informing the reader that they have ‘the right to enjoy sex’ in keeping with the rights discourse in adolescent sexuality, and that it (“should be a natural, beautiful experience”). Here the reader is offered another way of viewing sexual activity as a positive experience. In this depiction sexual activity is romanticized as a beautiful experience. The contextual factors embedded in intimate relationships such as the gendered power relations, that can make sex less beautiful are not mentioned and deconstructed in the Extract.

Even in light of the depiction of sex as a “beautiful experience”, it is difficult for the teenaged young woman to take the right and ownership of her own sexual health. Other possible subject positions are missing in the Extract 21, such as that of the desiring subject position. The desiring agentic subject wants to be safe from the negative consequences of sexual intercourse. However, it is difficult for her to take up this right, against the back drop of the overemphasised dominant discourse of sex as dangerous with dire long-lasting consequences discussed in Extract 8-10 above.

In teenaged female sexuality, it is difficult to separate rights and desire. When desire is acknowledged it leads to ownership and it yields the acknowledgement of a sense of sexual entitlement. Entitlement and ownership have the benefit of providing the foundation for sexual agency (Tolman, 2005). It is only with a strong sense of sexual agency that teenaged young women, can be able to assert and protect their sexual interests.

The reader is further alerted on the gendered stereotypes about boys and girls with regards to sexual activity. Such articulations expose the double standards between the male and female young person when it comes to sexual activity. These double standards encourage young men's promiscuity, but censured young women for having multiple partners (Shefer, et al., 2008). Even the term promiscuity is rarely ever used in reference to males, but rather it is used to shame and stigmatise women who have multiple sexual partners.

It is desirable for young females to take pride in the self, as worthy and valued and to avoid association with negative connotation to females, when they assume the position of an agentic sexual subject. The dominant view of women is that they are asexual, passive recipients of male desires, their own sexual desires and depictions of positive female sexuality are lacking (Shefer, et al., 2015). Without disallowing the right to sexual activity, the best practice of delaying sexual activity to avoid such positioning, is implied in the extract.

#### Extract 22

It is natural for teens in a dating relationship to think about a sexual relationship. Wanting to have sex, not wanting to have sex, and being confused and scared about it are all normal. Having sex in the right relationship can make you feel good about yourself but in many situations it can make you feel worthless and ashamed.

(Attwell et al., 2011, p.106)

In the extract above, ambiguity and uncertainty about sexual activity in adolescence is normalised ("It is natural for teens in a dating relationship to think about a sexual relationships" Extract 22, line 1). Here the writer alerts the reader that considering a sexual relationship is normal part of dating in adolescence, and that teenaged young

people are not always certain about whether to engage or not (“wanting to have sex, not wanting to have sex” Extract 22, line 2). In the same token, having sex is depicted as resulting in negative self-concept (“in many situations” Extract 22, line 4). The teenaged young person is positioned as able to discern between (“the right relationship” line 3 above) and the unfavourable relationships encompassed in (line 4), which lead to feelings of worthlessness and shame.

The extract above perfectly captures the contradictory positioning of the female learner. It shows the liberal approach to teaching sexuality education, which constructs sexual activity as pleasurable, and the conservative approach to teaching sexuality education, which constructs sexual activity as shameful.

## **Conclusion**

In this analysis chapter, I have shown how the content of Life Orientation textbooks draws on two main discourses, namely: the Discourse of heterosex and the Discourse of danger and disease when constructing gendered relationships. The former discourse relies heavily on the biological sex binary and hierarchical gender relations, which position the female learner as dependent, vulnerable and passive. The Discourse of danger and disease, which is aimed specifically at talking about sex, promotes abstinence or the delay of sexual activity to prevent disease, and decisiveness, assertiveness and negotiation skills to avoid danger. This positions the female learner as independent, active and capable of exercising resistance. In the concluding chapter, the overarching argument will be presented, together with the implications of these ways of positioning the female learner. Possible recommendations for future research will be proposed, in order to address the inadequacies of the Life Orientation Curricula in South Africa.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter serves to consolidate the work done in the study, and to provide a summary of the findings and analysis discussed in the preceding chapter. It subsequently provides an integrated summary of the discourses and subject positions discussed above, and their implication on the learners who are taught LO. The contributions made by the study are discussed and recommendations for policy, implementation and future research are made.

The conceptual map of Life Orientation is discussed in the introduction and it paved way for the current study. A disjuncture is noted between the content of the LO curricula, and the aims of LO as highlighted in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2011). CAPS highlights the content of LO for Grades 10-12 as that, which deals with gender roles and responsibilities, gender differences, power and power relations, masculinity, femininity, and hegemonic gender influences on relationships among other things (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

#### **Overarching Argument**

The analysis in the previous chapter has shown how the heterosex discourse and the discourse of danger and disease are reinforced in LO content. This reinforcement has implications on how the female learner is positioned.

The discourse of heterosex is informed by mainstream psychological theories of sex and gender. The extracts discussed under the heterosex discourse spoke to the issue of the biological basis for binary sex, which informs the maintenance of gender norms as “normal” and “natural”. This discourse does not view sex and gender as socially constructed. Gender norms are entrenched through heteronormativity, defined as “the belief that people fall into distinct and complementary genders with natural roles in life” (Warner, 1991). The extracts show how Life Orientation textbooks construct gendered relationships which reinforce, legitimize and privilege heterosexuality. With the presupposition that people are heterosexual and that

gender and sex are natural and therefore fixed binaries, traditional gender roles are taken as fundamental within society. It further assumes that heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation and that others are deviant or pathological (Kehily, 2002), and that those that diverge from the norm do not warrant discussion.

As gendered identity and relationships are viewed as fixed and biologically determined, it is not seen as socially constructed, thus reinforcing the heterosex discourse. Very little is said on issues of gender diversity and acknowledgement of complexities of being gendered in LO content on sexuality, gender and gendered relationships. The heterosex discourse is reproduced and reinforced in the way LO curriculum addresses sexuality education. This is achieved by reinforcing the male/female binary. Other forms of sexuality are invisible in LO content, except for slight mention in passing (Francis, 2012). This is a contradiction of the very ideals of inclusive and equal education in the LO policy statement. This silence further impedes gender equality, fuelling intolerance because of the dominant status of heterosexuality (Morell, 2003).

The heterosex discourse positions the female young person as a passive-victim of male power and male sexual drive, while the male is positioned as inherently dominant and active in terms of sexuality. These positions reinforce the heterosexual hegemony (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2004; Shefer, 1999). Female learners in particular are positioned as passive sexual subjects, while they are further positioned as gatekeepers of the male sexual drive. The gatekeeping positions them as autonomous and capable of taking up an active role in the regulation of male sexuality, through firm refusal strategies. A contradiction exists in these diverged positionings, and it alludes to the variability of what it means to be a sexually active and responsible teenager.

The second dominant discourse is the Discourse of Danger and Disease, which originates from a conservative approach to teaching sexuality education. The Discourse of danger and disease which is aimed specifically at talk about sex, promotes abstinence or the delay of sexual activity to prevent disease and decisiveness, assertiveness and negotiation skills to avoid danger. Sexual activity is discouraged for young people and considered to be appropriate only within marriage. Sexual activity is described as an activity which is fraught with many dangers and dangerous associations, namely: sexually-transmitted diseases (including HIV),



unwanted pregnancies, and the threat of sexual violence or rape. The focus of this approach to teaching sexuality education is thus on the avoidance of danger and disease, as opposed to the varied and pleasurable experiences, which can be a part of sexual activity.

With reference to sexual activity, the analysis has shown that the writer draws on the discourse of danger and disease to position the female learner as responsible for her own protection and safety. The emphasis is on abstinence, delaying sexual activity, responsible decision-making, assertiveness and resistance.

By warning the reader about dangers, the implication is that the female will be protected once she acquires skills necessary for safety. By positioning her as agentic she is held responsible for making rational choices about where to go and which situations to avoid in social settings. When positioned as such she risks being blamed for defiance and non-compliance in implementing the guidelines provided (Macleod et al., 2015).

### **Implications of this positioning of the female learner**

The overarching argument shows that, gendered relationships are constructed in Life Orientation textbooks by two dominant and interrelated discourses. These two discourses position the female learner in contradictory ways. In the discourse of heterosex, the dominant subject positioning is that of the female learner as a passive-victims incapable of exercising sexual agency, while men are positioned as inherently more powerful members of the intimate relationships, or dangerous sexual predators. In the discourse of danger and disease she is also positioned as a potential victim but the focus is on equipping her with skills. By acquiring the skills she is positioned as an active-resistor, in refusing sexual activity and as being in control of decision making on issues of safety in relationships. While the problem of sexual violence is acknowledged, the potential for changing this is located within the individual young woman.

This contradiction in positioning reflects the ambiguity, which female learners may experience in constructing themselves within the available discursive spaces in LO. Knowing that they have rights to protection from violence and harm, does not mean that they are supported by their context in order to take up those rights. By referring

to the issue of rights the young woman is positioned as a rights-bearing subject, but the responsibility for taking up those rights is left up to her as an individual, even in contexts and spaces where strict hierarchical power relations are in place. The textbooks draw on the reductionist approach of individualising violence against women. The structural and patriarchal ideology reinforces male hegemony silencing alternative discourses (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2004).

This study has shown that young women are positioned in ways which are contradictory, decontextualized and individualised in the textbooks. They are not positioned as simultaneously individual and social subjects. The individualisation gives rise to responsabilisation, where young women are positioned as responsible for maintaining heterosexual gendered hierarchy and challenging unfair gendered relations. This then, causes a contradiction because the woman is positioned as passive, yet she is expected to assume the autonomous role of engaging and challenging long standing socially constructed gender roles. These contradictions resurface in different extracts throughout the analysis, exposing the intricacy, fluidity and multiplicity of the assumed natural binaries in roles between the sexes (Kehily, 2002; Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006).

Young women are positioned simultaneously as victims of sexual violence and as capable of protecting themselves from harm. This decontextualized responsabilisation enables blame to be shifted onto individual young women, instead of paying attention to the socially constructed power relations, which keep these discourses firmly in place (Macleod, Moodley & Young, 2015). The individualised approach focuses on individual victim/perpetrator characteristics such as lack of education of perpetrators or the lack of assertiveness of victims.

These conflicting positions lead to reinforcing the discourse of male hegemony as opposed to challenging and overthrowing it. Instead of addressing the perpetrators as the focus for change, a substantial amount of content is devoted to equipping the female learner with skills to protect herself. There is silence on the ways in which these conversations can variably unfold, and possibly escalate into more violence. The implicit message is that, if coercion takes place, the female is blamed for being deficient in implementing the refusal guidelines provided (Shefer et al., 2015). Notably absent is the teaching of young males to be respectful and to not harass their female counterparts. An acknowledgement of the socially constructed gendered

relations of power in heterosexual relationships is missing from these approaches. The high levels of coercion and the lack of negotiation in intimate relationships are not seriously challenged in the textbooks. The patriarchal nature of South African society, embedded in the country's political history and the resultant systemic and structural constraints which contribute to the issues of inequality, are not addressed in the textbooks.

### **Contributions of the study**

This study attempted to broaden understanding of gender and sexuality education as presented in LO textbooks for Grades 10-12, with specific reference to gendered relationships. It focused on the reproduction of dominant discourses and revealed how these discourses are reinforced, by the subject positions implied for female learners in the textbook content.

Substantial research in LO has focused on teachers who teach the subject. Highlighted problems include lack of confidence and avoidance in discussing sexual diversity, their understanding of sexuality which is predominantly addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, through focusing teaching on abstinence underpinned by moral injunctions and the binary of good/bad, wrong/right (Francis, 2011; Helleve et al., 2009, Prinsloo, 2007). It is in the *Perspective in Education* 2015 special issue, that research on the content of LO has provided the ground works for a study like the current study (Shefer, Macleod & Baxen, 2015). This issue, published during the proposal stages of the current study, has a substantial role in exposing contextual issues of gender and other issues of social inequality, embedded in the heterosex norm.

### **Implications**

LO textbooks discuss and present the areas mentioned above, in a manner that serves to reproduce rather than challenge existing dominant discourses. The heterosex discourse and the discourse of danger and disease as seen in the previous chapter are prominent in LO and they enhance the heteronormative view of sexuality and gender. Gendered power inequalities are tentatively confronted but not

overthrown. If LO is to achieve its set goals of equipping the young person to successfully navigate through life's challenges as autonomous, informed individuals as indicated in the curriculum statement; there ought to be a more inclusive, and comprehensive approach to teaching on gender, power relations and healthy sexuality. The focus should not be individualised and decontextualized. Instead the context in which the learner has to negotiate her identity must be taken into account.

The invisibility of alternative constructions of gender and sexuality in LO as shown in this study, is a direct contradiction to the aim of inclusivity in relation to the development of self in society. Life Orientation can be a platform where alternatives to the heterosex discourse are discussed and given a voice. Silence on alternative constructions of young sexuality, reinforce the existing dominant view. Confronting the silence can contribute towards breaking down the pathologisation and stigmatisation of others. Alternative gender identities and sexual orientation are not presented in LO content. Their inclusion can assist in the production of harmonious and impartial sexual and gender relations, and in the acceptance of the fluidity and intricacies of gender and sexuality. In addition, attention to sexual pleasure is missing in LO textbooks. When presented, it is alluded to in passing but not fortified.

### **Recommendations**

LO is an educational and life-skills intervention strategy with a wider platform for the inclusion of issues of gender power relationship, exposing, challenging and resisting the dominant discourses. It is not sufficient to expose and not actively challenge these stereotypes. Programmes such as LO could be useful vehicles to accelerate advocacy on female sexual agency, and the promotion of healthy sexuality, where two members engage in safe, negotiated equal partnership (Macleod, 2009).

Relevant content is crucial for LO to meet the needs of the intended target group. The challenges faced by youth in schools, requires policy makers and implementers to consider content that will assist them to navigate through these challenges confidently. Critical voices are crucial to provision of comprehensive sexuality education for the modern day teenaged young person. Thus this study, reiterates the recommendations made by Glover and Macleod (2016) for policy review and for the training of teachers in sexual and reproductive rights that underpin the constitution. This will bridge the gap between policy and implementation, which will in turn aid the

rolling out of relevant content that equals the aims of LO. It further calls on stakeholders to consider the voice of the subject of the content (the teenaged young person) if it is to be effective in its efforts to empower the 21<sup>st</sup> century young person.

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Appendix 1



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Julie Horne  
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Dear Julie

We herewith list the following most popular Life Orientation Textbooks currently purchased:

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African Book Connection are sellers of textbooks to schools and to the general public through out the Eastern Cape.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Celeste Hutchinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CELESTE HUTCHINSON

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