“We’ve got a lack of family values”: an examination of how teachers formulate and justify their SRE approach

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"*We've got a lack of family values*": An examination of how teachers formulate and justify their SRE approach

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Abstract

Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in England has been the focus of critical scrutiny on several occasions, but there has been little focus on how teachers formulate their provision, especially given their crucial role in determining the scope of what is taught in the classroom. While current policy suggests that this provision should be inclusive of sexual diversity, it simultaneously gives educators the scope to determine the form this takes. This is an important issue given the substantial impact that teachers' views and discourses have on what is taught within the classroom. Using a discourse analytical framework, this study sought to examine how teachers of SRE formulate and account for their provision, with a particular focus on how their assumptions about young people's sexual health needs underpin their actions.

Initially, teachers sought to formulate their activities in terms of an overall ethos, providing legitimacy for the key elements of their programme being aligned with government health promotion strategy, as opposed to other areas such as pleasure and diversity. This was supported by their constructions of young people (particularly young women and individuals from certain 'at risk' communities) as particularly vulnerable.

Keywords: Sex education, Discursive Psychology, Sexuality, Young People, policy

Introduction

Struggles over English secondary school Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) are widely documented in the literature (Martinez and Emmerson 2008; Measor, Tiffin, and Miller 2000), particularly those relating to the aims of SRE (Thomson 1994). These aims typically focus on the reduction of young people's early sexual activity and associated negative outcomes (Martinez and Emmerson 2008; Alldred and David, 2007) such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancy. This focus on the physical (as opposed to the mental or emotional) aspects of health may be referred to as a health promotion or health-oriented approach. In England, these approaches typically align with political agendas such as the 1999 Teenage Pregnancy Strategy to half conception rates of under 18s by 2010 (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). They stress teaching the biological aspects of sexuality as opposed to a more comprehensive focus on sexuality, relationships and sexual diversity as is encouraged by legislation (e.g. Equality Act, 2010) and SRE guidance produced by the Department for Education and Employment: DfEE (2000). Importantly, this guidance offers a non-statutory, largely public-health based framework with which to deliver SRE alongside the National Science Curriculum.

The narrowly focused role of SRE in addressing public health concerns is underpinned by the broader socio-political context in England. SRE continues to have an ambiguous status. Despite a review in 2014 recommending changes to the year 2000 guidance, little has changed (Sundaram and Sauntson, 2015). In the absence of legislation, English schools are thus currently only required to deliver information regarding avoidance of STIs and unwanted pregnancy, as specified in the science curriculum. Delivery of additional content, from the SRE guidance for example, remains at the discretion of individual teachers in line with school policy (DfEE 2000). Thus gives schools a considerable amount of freedom to determine the content and nature of SRE and often results in substandard and varied provision (Ofsted, 2013). In this context, the discourses utilised by teachers within the classroom are of equal importance to more formal elements such as policy and guidance.

As outlined elsewhere, this freedom of choice can result in delivery of abstinence approaches underpinned by a moral rhetoric. This type of provision ultimately serves the interests of conservative interest groups rather than young people themselves (Abbott, Ellis, and Abbott 2015). More importantly, while the teachers delivering the content may be influential in the formation of young people's future identities (Mayo 2013), research has shown that they face a number of barriers in the delivery of SRE (Atkinson 2002).

Although rarely utilised to examine SRE within schools, discursive psychology (Edwards 2005; Potter 1998 Potter and Mulkay, 1985; Potter and Wetherell, 1987, 1995) offers a useful way of detecting the more subtle and/or implicit impacts achieved through the use of language. For example, recent research has highlighted how SRE often constructs sex as risky and dangerous, especially for young women (Sundaram & Sauntson, 2015). In addition, teachers often prescribe gender-specific treatments of sexual morality that assign young women greater responsibilities for sexual activities than young men (Tincknell, Loon, and Chambers 2004). Research using discursive analyses to highlight the way meanings held by teachers around SRE

shape practice, also highlights the way in which teachers implicitly reinforce heteronormativity within the classroom, even when making strong claims that their provision is inclusive (Abbott, Ellis, and Abbott 2015). Other research highlights the way in which teachers' discourse reinforces hetero/homo binaries and promotes a fixity of sexual identity, as opposed to acknowledging variability in sexual identities and practices (Dempsey, Hillier, and Harrison 2001; Diamond and Butterworth 2008; Preston, 2015).

The meanings and prioritises teachers ascribed to SRE remain a contributory factor in determining the nature of in-school provision, preventing it from becoming more inclusive of young people's varying sexual health needs and sexual diversity. While the scope of provision is influenced by teachers discourse informed by policy and public health imperatives, it is also influenced by teachers' own personal beliefs (Buston and Hart, 2001) and understandings about what is appropriate in the classroom and what they feel comfortable delivering (Walker & Milton, 2006; Kehily 2002; Warwick and Aggleton 2004). In spite of having the freedom to determine many aspects of provision, teachers often leave topics such as pleasure and desire untouched (Allen and Carmody, 2012; Ingham, 2006; Cameron-Lewis and Allen, 2013).

Whole-school approaches, in which topics such as sexual health are addressed across curriculum areas and as part of both the formal and informal curriculum, are increasingly advocated for in England, but need to be supported by supportive policy, good quality teaching materials and detailed understandings of the impact of teachers' attitudes (Thomas & Aggleton, 2015). Whilst existing research has focused on how guidance and policy can affect the content and practice of SRE (Corteen, 2007; Sundaram and Sauntson, 2015; Spencer, Maxwell and Aggleton, 2008), as well as teachers' attitudes towards SRE (Westwood and Mullan, 2007) the way in which teachers conceptualise their SRE practice discursively has been underexplored. Research into this offers crucial insights into the meanings SRE may hold for these key stakeholders, and the influence they have in shaping provision in schools.

As a contribution to such a goal, the present study aims to expand on previous research highlighting how teachers' discourse, and the assumptions underpinning it, influences the nature and scope of SRE (Abbott, Ellis, and Abbott 2015). As opposed to a sole focus on heteronormativity, the present study examines how a variety of assumptions and discourses underpin teachers' justifications of sexual health provision in the context of non-statutory guidance. This focus at the level of the individual teacher complements previous research that examines the impact of the SRE guidance (or more specifically, the lack thereof, due to its non-statutory nature) at the pupil level (Sundaram & Sauntson, 2015).

Method

The analysis presented in this paper derives from a larger study exploring how young people's sexuality is constructed in SRE. The study took place in 9 secondary schools from a potential 82 initially contacted using convenience sampling in South Yorkshire, England. The rate of conceptions for under 18s within this area (31.2 per 1000 women) is higher than that of the country (24.3 per 1000) according to recent data

(Office for National Statistics, 2013). All the schools were co-educational state schools, with the exception of one independent single sex school. All the schools serve a diverse ethnic and socio-economic population. Schools were sampled from a single district given that such localities often work within the same policy context (local government arrangements) and resource framework (funding, SRE advisors).

The data presented in this paper derive from one-to-one, semi structured interviews. Interview methodology was selected based its interactive nature (Potter and Mulkay, 1985; Potter and Wetherell, 1987, 1995). The directive nature of the semi-structured interview allows for an active research style, whereby the researcher (KA) may interject and challenges the interviewee in order to elicit justification for the views expressed (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). This method is also flexible, allowing for an understanding of the action oriented nature of accounts (see Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Interviews thus allow a focus on the ideological and rhetorical nature of teachers' talk, specifically the discursive practices and interpretive resources used by teachers as they produce their accounts in response to the researcher's questions. Interviews were conducted on school premises and lasted between 40 and 90 minutes in length. The excerpts below derive from the accounts offered by 8 teachers and were selected for how they highlight the analytic claims, showing specifically how teachers across the sample set about formulating and accounting for their provision.

Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed using Jeffersonian conventions. An interview schedule broadly specified the topics to be discussed. Examples of the topic areas included approach to and content of SRE, in addition to policy and evaluations of their provision.

Participants

A total of eight teachers (three men and five women) were interviewed (Table 1). All were White and of English nationality. All were full time Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) co-ordinators and their experience of teaching SRE varied between 2 and 15 years. While some teachers had received no formal training in SRE, others held nationally recognised qualifications in SRE or an external role related to PSHE. The names provided in this paper are pseudonyms.

[Insert table 1 here]

Analytic Framework

A discourse analytical approach was applied to the data informed by discursive psychology (Potter and Edwards, 2001). Within this broadly constructionist framework, the focus is placed on examining talk and texts as social practices based on a view of language as action-oriented, specific to its occasion and performative in nature (Edwards, 2006). The way in which talk is organised, in addition to the way in which accounts, descriptions and the attitudes that people use in talk to constitute their worlds, are conceptualised as resources people draw on in talk to perform actions (Potter, 1998). How people organise their talk reveals its function, such as justifying a particular argument or managing certain interests (Edwards & Potter,

1992), or making rhetorical demands of the moment (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992).

Whilst overlap between the different discourse traditions (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001) is acknowledged, discursive psychology differs from conversation analysis (which focuses on interaction in order to identify its organisation), and critical discourse analysis (where the focus is on the relationship between language and other social processes) through its focus on how individuals ascribe meaning and prioritise certain imperatives over others, through an examination of underlying assumptions and formulations. Its use here complements findings from a previous study that used critical discourse analysis together with corpus linguistics to analyse date from focus groups with young women and year 2000 SRE guidance document respectively (Sundaram & Stauntson, 2015). The focus here was on how teachers formulate and prioritise and justify their provision in the light of the competing ideologies. To the authors' knowledge, this study is unique in its examination of exactly how teachers conceptualise and justify their provision in this way.

Findings

Formulating provision as part of an overall 'ethos' and in terms of 'core tenets' of SRE

In response to questions about the content and approach of their programmes, teachers sought to conceptualise their provision in terms of an overarching philosophy, or as part of a wider 'ethos'. Doing so appeared to be a strategy utilised to account for their provision as having some form of established underpinning. Teachers also formulated and accounted for their provision in relation to broader SRE approaches (e.g. abstinence only or health promotion) and as one of a number of discrete and complementary topics. These descriptions functioned as a means through which they could locate their activities within the wider (national) context, and present their SRE as comprehensive in nature.

The following excerpt illustrate the way in which one teacher accounted for her provision as a number of distinct topics that make up the overall SRE approach. Judy below formulates her provision as consisting of two overarching elements related to wider approaches.

206 *Judy*: so you could say yes that is the we we're not saying abstinence but in
207 the sex education we try to teach the abstinence bit
208 *Interviewer*: right
209 *Judy*: we try to make the kids <u>aware</u> of the risks of sex you know so I think
210 we're smack bang in the middle

From line 206 ("we're not saying abstinence") in which her sexual health provision is presented as incompatible with an abstinence approach, it is clear that abstinence and another (more health-oriented approach), are measures against which Judy can position her own work. More evidence for this comes from her

acknowledgement of aspects of health provision representing information around 'risk' (Line 209). Whilst Judy struggles to articulate the specific nature of her approach, she uses the two broad SRE approaches (abstinence and health-oriented) as reference points in her attempts to do so. Judy asserts that this approach cannot be classified as an abstinence approach *per se*, but fails to dismiss this completely, as she acknowledges its inclusion in her practice. Here, Judy is making a distinction between what is taught and the overall message. Her acknowledgment of both approaches functions to position her provision between each of them, as highlighted by the use of the idiomatic phrase "smack bang in the middle" (Lines 209-210). Judy is therefore deliberately not aligning herself with either approach. Instead, she is positioning (and evaluating) her provision in a more desirable place. This works to build credibility for what she does, locating it within the legitimacy of two widely advocated approaches, a position that is considered as desirable despite their incompatible nature (as safe sex messages are thought to undermine abstinence messages). This particular position can be seen as a strategy for dealing with SRE talk that, as it centres around establishing values around SRE, is both ideological and dilemmatic (Billig 1988).

This concern with presenting a balanced and comprehensive picture of provision was also emphasised across Judy's account where she implies that it resides around the fundamental and opposing elements of safety and love.

154: *Judy*: umm we do bang on about safety definitely but I would say there's a
155: particular er I've just written love, sex and marriage

Although Judy describes her SRE philosophy, like two other teachers (Carl and Heather), this is not the only aspect of her provision she wishes to promote as it is often followed by talk emphasising the significance also afforded to sexual health. This formulation (in addition to the focus on love), ensures that the safety is also heard as a significant focus. By placing emphasis on both elements, Judy offers a picture of her provision that is desirable as it covers all the 'core tenets' of SRE. Attempts to formulate provision in a balanced manner were also evident in Carl and Bob's descriptions of their SRE. Similarly to Judy, they described this as consisting of a number of distinct topics that make up the overall SRE approach.

Formulating Provision as Part of the Wider Sexual Health Initiatives

In addition to presenting their provision as part of an established approach, teachers also accounted for their practice in terms of a larger health strategy related to local teenage pregnancy and STI rates. As such, they consider SRE to be part of a wider government driven endeavour to reduce the negative outcomes of young people's sexual activity. As portrayed in the following account, this works to build an important justification for their SRE approach through its focus on improving young people's sexual health - although sexual health is rather narrowly conceived in relation to STIs and unwanted pregnancy.

155 *Steven*: erm its a lot of the focus that we have particularly at this school is
156 about teenage pregnancy because we do have teen a *high* teenage
157 pregnancy rate which seems to be continually getting higher or staying at
158 the same peak erm but but I think it's difficult actually for a very very
159 different reason and I think that's to do with people's confidence in being
160 able to deal with the situations that that can sometimes bring up

By portraying their provision as part of a wider strategy, these accounts highlight a responsibility to tailor it accordingly. Sexual health statistics are used to justify a focus on "teenage pregnancy" (Line 155-156). Steven suggests that this may not be the same everywhere (stipulating "particularly at this school": Line 155), setting the focus up as something specific to his school and its local context.

By aligning provision in relation to this wider context, we can see that this teacher conceives his SRE as having a significant role in pregnancy prevention. The following account from Carl reflects another instance in which the wider sexual health context is used to account for choice of approach.

174 *Interviewer*: why erm why APAUSE how come you've chosen APAUSE?
175 *Carl*: we didn't choose them they chose us
176 *Interviewer*: right
177 *Carl*: erm (*name of town given*) at one point was a teenage capital teenage
178 pregnancy capital of the country according to the *Daily Mail*
179 *Interviewer*: (*laughs*)
180 *Carl*: two page spread and as a result of that there was a bit of a moral panic
181 about the place about teenage pregnancies and so on so therefore funding
182 was made available to reduce teenage pregnancy and those at authority
183 level made the decision that we'd go with this APAUSE project
184 *Interviewe*r: umm
185 *Carl:* we were chosen because we were really ↑fortunate to have two girls
186 who were excluded from (*name of school given*) school who were pregnant
187 at the time

In his response to a question regarding his choice of the APAUSE (Added Power And Understanding in Sex Education) programme[1] as part of his provision, Carl highlights the distinction between the school choosing the material and the school being chosen for it (Line 175). This reformulation (and rebuttal of the interviewer's inference) suggests that this distinction is important for Carl, namely for the more favourable implication of being 'chosen', which is potentially more significant for the way it imbues credibility. This is evident at Line 185 where Carl conceives of being 'chosen' as a positive (and promotional) position, based on his reference to their selection as having been based on "fortunate" incidents. Although these incidents (two young women getting pregnant and expelled from their

[1] APAUSE is an external pre-packaged SRE programme developed for teachers to use in secondary schools

schools) are not typically considered as 'fortunate', they are constructed favourably here for the resultant funding allocated to their respective schools.

As part of this excerpt, Carl also refers to the local pregnancy rates, implicating the area as one of the worst in the country (Lines 177-178). Following this with "according to the Daily Mail"[1], works to shift the footing (Goffman 1979) of this statement so that authorship becomes attributed to a newspaper report. This accomplishes what (Wetherell 2001) terms 'attributional distance'. While this technique is often utilised by speakers in attempts to manage potentially controversial talk, it features here to induce some level of scepticism about this particular article. This is underscored first by reference to the amount of space afforded to the article ("two page spread", Line 180), and second by reference to reaction ("moral panic", Line 180). This also works to establish the school and its surrounding area as particularly noteworthy (as portrayed in the media), given the implication it is a high-risk area for teenage pregnancy. It also functions to establish the school as in need of 'special' funding and therefore in a 'privileged' position by virtue of that funding. Furthermore, by invoking the category "authority", Carl seeks to further align his provision with those who grant legitimisation to SRE's aims, which in turn, grants additional credibility to this school's SRE provision.

Building Justification

The above accounts highlight the ways in which teachers set about formulating their individual SRE approaches. In building justification for these, teachers frequently and consistently constructed young people in ways that upheld and validated their SRE approach. This involved making assertions about pupils and their SRE needs, positioned within the local contexts. By constructing young people in ways that warrant a particular SRE focus, teachers were able to justify approaches that could be characterised as health promotion.

Constructing young people as vulnerable

Across all teachers' accounts, young people were constructed as vulnerable both in general and as a result of their sexual behaviour. This most commonly featured in talk around young women, who were considered particularly vulnerable based on their levels of sexual knowledge and experience (Steven, Carl and Heather). This is evident in Heather's talk below, where we can she is voicing concerns over the knowledge of students at each end of the spectrum; those that are too "informed' (Line 307) and those that are too "sheltered" (Line 308).

Heather: you know in year eleven I think there's lots of girls that probably are not as well informed as you'd like to think they are and I think some are you know very well informed they could tell us a few things but I think there are some who are still very sheltered and don't ac- you know you've still got quite a wide cross section of experience and you always have to take that into account of course in all year

The implication here is that 'sexualised' pupils considered too informed have gained this knowledge outside of SRE while 'uniformed' pupils that are too sheltered have not supplemented their SRE with information from outside of it. This does not necessarily relate to sexual experience, however, instead appearing to implicate the information gained from their peers. In highlighting these two extremes of pupils' knowledge, Heather positions both types of pupils as vulnerable within both their current and future sexual experiences.

Particular emphasis on young women's vulnerability appeared throughout teachers' descriptions of their provision. While we can see that these constructions worked to warrant additional provision for young women, such as work around self-esteem and assertiveness, these accounts also created a sexual health imperative, and thus an SRE imperative, especially *for* young women:

238 *Bridget*: we have in past done some erm like rolling programmes erm raising
239 self esteem that have include have included some sexual health and stuff and
240 that were targeted erm delivered at girls but could be delivered at boys as
241 well you know that were either vulnerable because they were very sexually
242 active or vulnerable because they were very naive and that was erm a five
243 week programme where we looked at what self esteem was erm how they
244 felt about erm you know compliments and giving compliments and then
245 how they felt about saying no and we would sort of give em some tips on
246 saying no you know being a bit assertive

Similarly to the previous excerpts, Bridget positions pupils as vulnerable based on their sexual activity (Line 240), their limited knowledge and their lack of judgement (Lines 241-242). The extent to which Bridget presents their vulnerability is emphasised with the extreme term "*very*", establishing these young women as extraordinary cases and reinforcing claims of vulnerability. Young women that are *"very sexually active"* and *"very naïve"* become stronger claims. While Bridget stipulates that the services could also be used for young men, her descriptions of the programmes are more relevant and thus designed to "*target*" women specifically. They are therefore largely based on her views of young women's sexual vulnerability. This discourse of danger and victimisation is reflective of the pressures placed on young women and the emphasis placed on female sexuality in society. We can see this where Bridget outlines her work around assertiveness skill training (Line 245).

Constructing young people as vulnerable within their localised communities: family and community as poor role models

Teachers' claims about young people's vulnerability were also attributed to pupils' more personal and localised contexts. While such claims worked to present provision as tailored to their individual needs, they were often based on assumptions regarding the types of issues that affect young people and were presented as affecting the majority. As such, they provided the rationale for much of the provision, serving to uphold elements deemed to be of particular importance and in keeping

with their overall SRE approach. This was evident where Rachel (responding to a question about what she considered the most important elements within her provision) made a number of exaggerated inferences about young people and their parents in a way that reinforced the strong sexual health focus found within her provision. In particular, she is seen to be passing judgements on young people's aspirations based on claims regarding local context.

105 *Rachel*: erm I've got two things really it's the relationship side because
106 we've got erm quite a large ethnic minority erm our kids stru:ggle with
107 things like erm arranged marriages and things like that
108 *Interviewer*: [right]
109 *Rachel*: erm and parents pushing them into marriages that they don't want
110 to be in in erm my main point is putting across that actually in this country
111 that is illegal and there is help out there if these kids need it cos they run
112 away and all sorts
113 *Interviewe*r: gosh
114 *Rachel*: erm and its getting them to realise as well we have a lot of families
115 where there's quite a lot of domestic abuse and it's trying to get particularly
116 the girls to realise that you know there is help out there (.) 'cos they don't
117 they don't know where to turn

In this excerpt there are numerous occasions where Rachel makes claims about the local context, particularly pupils' local communities and parents. She identifies two important aspects of her provision, "the relationship side" (Line 105) and the "protection" aspect (line not shown here). She justifies the importance of the relationship side by referencing the community that the school serves, particularly the ethnic minority pupils (Lines 106-107). Her use of the subordinating conjunction "because" (Line 105) provides direct evidence for this; Rachel is directly attributing the "relationship" aspect of provision to this demographic characteristic. Specifically, Rachel presents arranged marriages as a significant issue (Lines 106-107), with her use of the phrase "things like", suggesting further concerns. Rachel further implicates her pupils as having problematic circumstances using an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) to underscore risk, with many of her pupils facing abuse at home (Line 114-115). Specifically, use of the phrase "a lot", not only presents domestic abuse as an issue applicable to many of the pupils within the local area, but also by presenting these issues as a common problem, Rachel is building strong justification for the aspects of provision that deal with young people's 'relationships'. Bob mobilised similar arguments to justify his very different approach: namely, that of abstinence. Like Rachel, he makes a number of claims regarding corresponding wider communities in order to justify his approach.

90: *Bob*: I mean it's been a there are issues on teenage pregnancies there are
91: issues around drugs of course er which again has an issue on I suppose it has
92: a knock on effect on sex ed AIDS as well but last I heard it was second
93: in I think it was (states position) in the country for AIDS
94: *Interviewer*: do those statistics influence you in anyway do you feel any
95: pressure to put certain things in the programme in response to these

96: external factors
97: *Bob*: I know some schools would I know and I suppose our number one view
98: on all our sex ed is abstinence rather than trying to er bolt the door after the
99: horses bolted sort of thing

These examples highlight the rhetorical nature of the accounts given by teachers and their discursive function. As we can see, teachers build justification for particular aspects of their provision in a way that validates their place as central to their programmes. Their arguments therefore reflect public health issues that create the greatest need for the provision on a wider scale, rather than issues affecting the majority of pupils. This was evident as Rachel continued her account, constructing young people in a way that fitted the rhetorical demands of the moment.

105 *Rachel:* yeah definitely we have to try and get that message across I mean a
106 lot of the children in this school have got parents that don't work and don't
107 have any aspirations erm and have children at a very young age and because
108 our kids don't see any different they think that's all there is for them you
109 know that how their life is meant to be
110 *Interviewe*r: umm mmm
111 *Rachel*: that they're meant to go out and have sex because it's a lot of its
112 attention as well there's not much attention from parents so it's attention
113 off somebody) you know I- that they actually got attention you know
114 they're having sex
115 *Interviewer*: yeah
116 *Rachel*: to
117 *Interviewer*: you were saying about the parents they don't have very many
118 aspirations
119 *Rachel*: yeah they're following the parent's footpath and it's trying to make
120 them *realise* that there is a life out there other than having a child at fifteen
121 sixteen
122 *Interviewer*: umm
123 *Rachel*: I mean we often have children that think if I get pregnant then I'm
124 gonna get more money from Government you know so I'm gonna get
125 pregnant 'cos I'll get me rent paid for and 'cos that's what the parent's are
126 like

Here, Rachel makes a series of claims about both the pupils and their parents in a way that further reinforces the focus placed on sexual health in her provision. Specifically, she draws a number of exaggerated inferences about their sexual decision-making. In doing this, Rachel articulates discriminatory statements that (through her use of discursive devices) are presented as accurate accounts. She presents a negative picture of local parents through inferences about their low aspirations and poor decision making (Lines 107 & 124). She also uses extreme case formulations to emphasise these same qualities as common amongst her pupils, and uses a three-part list (Jefferson 1990) to reinforce her claims: "don't work and don't

have any aspirations erm and have children at a very young age". The use of three-part lists is a resource employed in everyday interactions for a number of functions, one of which is to substantiate arguments (Potter 1996; Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008). Here, this persuasive rhetorical device appears to increase the severity of the issues pupils face. Additionally, the inferences about parents' dispositions substantiates Rachel's framing of the pupils' sexual behaviours and aspirations, by attributing them directly to the parents (Lines 119-121). Within this talk, Rachel also makes a number of assertions regarding pupils' motivations for sex and having children, again implicating their parents. Young women's sexual behaviour is attributed to their need for attention, which they fail to receive from their parents ("so it's attention off somebody" Line 112-113). By asserting that pupils are merely following in their parent's footsteps, these young people are also alleged to only have aspirations of pregnancy, again based on their parents' circumstances and a desire to secure financial security from the government (Lines 123-125).

As previously specified, Rachel's use of discursive devices throughout this passage presents these claims as being based on fact rather than personal opinion or, more problematically, prejudice. Nowhere in this passage does Rachel appear to orient to the fact that she is expressing what may be construed as strong opinions. Her talk does not include any features that typically characterise strong opinion giving, such as the use of disclaimers, concessions, hedging or stake inoculation (Billig 1991; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992). What does feature in Rachel's talk, however, almost immediately after this passage, is the admission that she had her own children at a relatively young age and found this difficult. By adopting the subject position of a 'mother', she can make such assertions effectively without the need for the aforementioned features.

Where teachers did express strong claims about young people and their parents, it almost invariably involved a shift in their subject position. This particular device allowed them to make stronger claims as part of their justification, despite arguably being at odds with the neutral position of an SRE teacher. We can see this clearly in Judy's discourse below.

451 *Judy*: yeah we've got a lack of family values
452 *Interviewer*: right
453 *Judy*: so I'm big on that I'm a single parent well I was a single parent I
454 brought my children up so I know what these kids are to expect
455 *Interviewer*: yeah
456 *Judy*: I'm quite Oh My I did my degree after my children and everything and
457 I know what it's like it's a tough life and I don't want that for them so I've
458 got a real drive
459 *Interviewe*r: umm mmm
460 *Judy*: to er lecture them almost and I do lecture them
461 *Interviewer*: yeah
462 *Judy*: er "well you don't want to be doin this" and "you don't want to be
463 doing that because "how are you gonna feed your baby" "if you have a baby"
464 "what about being livin' in a top floor flat"
465 *Interviewer*: yeah

466 *Judy*: with a baby and your husband smacks yer or you're not married your
467 boyfriend smack's you you've got no money what you gunna do
485 *Judy*: they're a lot of single parents around here a lot

In this excerpt Judy refers to the local community as lacking in family values a number of times. Although this use of the term 'family values' is rather vague, its meaning becomes clear where, after stating she is "*big on"* family values, she declares that she was a single parent (Lines 453-454). This firstly implies that one-parent families lack family values and secondly, serves to attribute this lack of values to the single parents in the area, which is further evidenced in another segment of talk (Line 485). Implicit in this talk is a negative evaluation of single motherhood. Notably, the change in subject position allows Rachel to make this evaluation and qualifies her to make a number of stronger claims regarding the life of single parents. Judy's concern is also heard as more authentic given that it appears to focus on the pupils' best interests (Line 457).

While this overtly proscriptive (Line 460) style of teaching is not considered appropriate within SRE, it becomes more acceptable from Judy's subject position as a 'single mother'. This membership categorisation (Sacks, 1992) is therefore being used as a form of stake inoculation (Potter 1996), to claim authority on the single parent issue and to protect Judy from being heard as prejudiced. Judy continues by making a series of over-formulated assessments of teenage motherhood (Lines 462-467), which also does important work. Positioning young people (particularly young women) as vulnerable within their communities is based on the risk of becoming a victim to certain perceived cultural norms, such as motherhood. As a perceived defining characteristic of this community, this lack of family values is therefore presented as a cause for concern and thus in need of reactive provision.

Discussion

This paper has sought to examine the way in which SRE is constructed at the level of the teacher, specifically through the way in which individual teachers formulate and justify their provision. In formulating their overall approach, teachers constructed what they considered to be fundamental aspects of their work around specific elements of provision that determined the issues addressed.

Making reference to these elements was a means by which teachers could present a comprehensive account of what they did and reconcile the issue of prioritising one element above another. While teenage pregnancy remained a central aspect of provision, these aspects of provision were justified by constructing young people in various and often crude ways that functioned to position them as being at risk. In addition to emphasising young people's vulnerability within local settings, teachers referred to the broader sexual health context (i.e. rates of pregnancy and STIs) to justify these actions. For example, where provision was predominantly health-oriented, pupils' local communities were identified as beings particularly problematic due to high rates of pregnancy, STIs and single parent families.

Importantly, this analysis provides an important context through which current SRE provision and practice can be understood at the level of the individual teacher. Specifically, it offers the foundation for understanding how teachers construct their own SRE concerns and how they understand young people's SRE needs in the context of statutory provision (in Science within the National Curriculum) and national guidance as provided by the DfEE (2000), that is somewhat contradictory in its aims. Their accounts reflect more personal or localised concerns about provision (e.g. the wider school ethos, sexual health statistics or more individual assumptions). However, as has been reported elsewhere, the issues teachers believe young people face contrast significantly with those that young people themselves report, including curiosity, experimentation and pleasure (Allen 2005, 2008; Measor, Tiffin, and Miller 2000).

Teachers' formulations of provision in this instance are almost exclusively biased towards biological and health-related facets of provision, presenting a potential barrier to delivering comprehensive provision. In the absence of statutory status, SRE guidance (and thus policy in England) only recommends what should be covered, thus enabling space for these individual and problematic responses. While guidance can provide the foundations for good quality provision, teachers' key role in its delivery affects its efficacy. All aspects of teachers' SRE practice and discourse, including the nature of the assumptions they make, contribute towards this end.

Through its identification of some of the more subtle discursive barriers that exist in teachers' accounts of their practice, this paper highlights the need for teachers to critically reflect and evaluate on their SRE provision. This may enable them to identify the limiting discourses and assumptions that, in some instances, offer damaging taken-for-granted understandings. It will also help teachers interrogate the effectiveness of their provision more adequately, by offering examples of how SRE knowledge is constructed in line with ideologies that delimit the nature and scope of what is provided.

Notes:

1. . The *Daily Mail* is the second largest selling national daily newspaper in England and is well known for its controversial and sensationalised style.

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Table 1: Teachers' school and PSHE training

Teacher	**Training**	**Length of teaching**
Carl	AST status	8 years
Steven	PSHE qualification[1]	3 years
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Sarah	Lead Professional	9 years
Heather	SRE Peer Education	6 years
Bridget	PSHE qualification[1]	15 years
Bob	None	6 years
Judy	None	2 years
Rachel	None	5 years

[1]Authority lead and nationally recognised