
THE INVISIBLE SUBJECT

Implications of recontextualising sexual knowledge into pedagogic communication on working class learners in South Africa

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This article examines how South Africa's current Life Orientation curriculum, in particular as it relates to sex and sexuality, risks failing the working class. The paper draws on current Department of Education official documents, interviews with Life Orientation teachers and a series of studies on youth, sex and sexual violence. A «rights-based individual» is clearly anticipated by the intended curriculum, which focuses on self-esteem, self-protection and empowerment. By requiring these life skills, which the curriculum has deemed essential to pupils' understanding and handling of responsible sexual lives, the curriculum has, the paper shows, recontextualised sex and sexuality into a discourse far removed from working class pupils' everyday experiences in their local pedagogic context.

Keywords: sexual health education, life orientation curriculum, sexual coercion and violence, South Africa, Bernstein, recontextualising, pedagogic device, vertical discourse, local pedagogic context, invisible subject

Introduction

In light of recent high profile crimes against women, rape has become one of the ultimate enigmas of modern day South Africa. Rape's status as a topic that is both highly politicised and incredibly sensitive makes attempts to harmonize a national discourse to address it an enormous challenge. The country has one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world, even labelled the international «rape capital» by Interpol according to media reports (SABC,

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2012). Historians, sociologists, criminal justice experts and feminist scholars, among many others, have all hotly debated the how and why of this social ill. Patriarchal norms and values are often pointed to as the driving factors for the violence, along with the remnants of the historical oppression of apartheid and a lack of significant law enforcement and criminal justice response (Morrell, 1998a, 1998b; Morrell & Swart, 2005; Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell, & Dunkle et al., 2009; Gender Links, 2012a). The Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Indicators Project, undertaken in four of South Africa's largest provinces from 2010 to 2012, gauged prevalence through household surveys, a step beyond more traditional means of measuring violence against women: administrative data from the criminal justice system (Gender Links, 2012b). The project found that across the four provinces 50% of women had been victims of gender-based violence and, in Gauteng province, where the largest city Johannesburg is located, 31% of men admitted to having raped a woman in their lifetime (*ibidem*). Similarly, a 2009 policy brief by the Medical Research Council reported that one in four of men in a sample of 1,738 from the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provinces admitted to having raped a girl or woman. The early onset of the crime is articulated by the fact that a significant majority (70%) of those respondents were under 30 years old and nearly half (46.5%) said that when they had first raped a girl or woman they had been between the ages of 15 and 19 years old (Jewkes et al., 2009). Today, the legacy of historic injustice in South Africa has led to the dominance of a hegemonic, often violent, masculinity, which, combined with an interrelated set of socio-economic factors, put the population at a high-risk of HIV infection (Marks & Andersson, 1990; Marks, 2002). At the same time, contemporary economic realities and the role played by transactional sex place women and the girls at increased risk of sexual subjugation (Hunter, 2002, 2007). Social anthropology also provides context for the current status of gendered violence. Work by Delius and Glaser provides a useful historical overview of sexual socialisation in the country, vital to understanding the current intersection of sexuality and violence (Delius & Glaser, 2002). It is important to note that a cross section of men were included in these studies, evidence that perpetration of sexual violence is not at all unique to any one population group. However, an interrelated set of challenges unique to low income communities (long commutes to school and work coupled with limited access to transportation, less police presence and street lighting for example) mean it is South Africa's young women from historically disadvantaged, township-dwelling populations who continue to suffer the worst of the violence.

This paper's interest in the topic of sexual violence in low-income, working class areas relates to the sexual health education the adolescents there are receiving. I wanted to know: does the current curriculum provide young South Africans with tools and skills to address these social challenges – in couples and communities –, and moreover does it empower young

women who are the victims most affected? My primary interest was to employ the conceptual potential of Bernstein's pedagogic device for better understanding the implications of certain forms of curriculum around sex and sexuality on working class learners. Looking through the lens of Bernstein's pedagogic device and concepts of knowledge structures, I examined the National Curriculum Statement's Life Orientation curriculum as it relates to sex and sexuality – in particular, where it covers the topics of violence and sexual coercion. At the curriculum level we are able to consider what Bernstein called the field of recontextualisation – simply put, the space where aspects of sex in the real world are converted into what about sex is covered in the classroom. My discussion is premised on an analysis of the existing Department of Education curriculum as well as a set of interviews with Life Orientation teachers from three Cape Town secondary schools. It is further informed by research grounded in the more empirical, local pedagogic context of low-income communities, carried out through a series of studies on youth and sexual violence by the primary South African scholars in the field.

By using a Bernsteinian lens to take a closer look at the way knowledge of sex and sexuality is translated into pedagogic communication, my documentary analysis was able to question how content is presented; what kind imagined subject or learner is created by that process and to whose detriment. The teacher interviews provided a consideration of the implications that recontextualisation is having at the level of the school. I will argue that in the translation of knowledge into pedagogic communication there is a risk of alienating the relevant, everyday experiences of working class youth. The focus South Africa's current Life Orientation curriculum places on a subject I will call the rights-based individual, towards the creation of a vertical discourse, largely ignores the pressures of being a member of a community and makes presumptions about an affirming second pedagogic site that for many South African pupils does not reflect their everyday lives.

Methodology

Aside from the theoretical work of Bernstein, outlined in the next section: conceptual framework, the data sources for this paper were South African Department of Education curriculum documents and teacher interviews. Applying a mixed methods approach, I combined a documentary analysis of the curriculum – particularly where knowledge or skills related to dealing with sexual violence or coercion – with a series of semi-structured interviews with Life Orientation teachers.

The primary guiding documents from the Department of Education were the 2003 National Curriculum Statement on Life Orientation for grades 10 through 12 and the 2008

National Curriculum Statement on Life Orientation Learning Programme Guidelines for grades 10 through 12. I also consulted the Life Orientation statements for grades R (reception year) to 9 to gain an understanding of what information and life skills pupils had been expected to acquire before reaching the tenth grade level (approximately age 15).

The National Curriculum Statement defines Life Orientation as:

the development of self-in-society. It promotes self-motivation and teaches learners how to apply goal-setting, problem-solving and decision-making strategies. These serve to facilitate individual growth as part of an effort to create a democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life. Learners are guided to develop their full potential and are provided with opportunities to make informed choices regarding personal and environmental health, future careers and study opportunities. (Department of Education, 2002: 6)

Life Orientation as its own subject area emerged to meet the life skills needs of the curriculum, covering a wide spectrum of topics and generic social competencies. South Africa's 1991 curriculum is the first document to reflect the new subject area of Life Skills, composed of Religious Education (formally Scripture), Guidance, Economic Education and Physical Education. Sexuality, encompassed more generally under Health Education, was not singled out but some elements of health and family life were incorporated under the Guidance banner. In 1993 the Department of Education and Culture formally introduced «Health and Family Life Education» into the primary curriculum which touched on introductory elements of sexuality as well as abuse, drug use and healthy eating (Harilal, 1993). In 1995 South Africa ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which calls for access to sex education, which became requisite in government schools in South Africa from January 2006 (Van Rooyen, 1997; Naidoo, 2006). Post-apartheid, and with curriculum reform efforts that led to the introduction of the outcomes-based education influenced Curriculum 2005, saw sex education placed under the umbrella of Life Skills/Orientation, along with a number of other topics such as civic, environmental and religion education (Rooth, 2005; Department of Education, 2003). Reacting to high rates of teenage pregnancy and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in 2002, then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, mandated the teaching of sexuality nationwide (Naidoo, 2006). Delivering a public address on meeting the challenges of sexual harassment and violence in schools, Asmal said:

Since my ministry declared HIV/AIDS a priority three years ago, we have mandated as part of curriculum 2005, a programme of life skills and HIV/AIDS in all of our schools. We need to make more rapid progress in this area, continuing to refine curriculum content, producing the learner support materials, training our teachers, establishing this as a professional component of our teacher education programmes. We cannot afford to be slack about this. The lives of children may depend on the education we can give them in this area. (February 19, 2002)

To complement and inform my primary documentary analysis, I also carried out three background interviews with Life Orientation teachers whom I will refer to throughout this paper as teacher 1, 2 and 3. Teacher 1 is male and teaches Life Orientation in a working class school. Teacher 2 is female and teaches Life Orientation in a middle class school. Teacher 3 is male and teaches Life Orientation in a middle class neighbourhood, in a school whose pupils are largely working class. These interviews by no means indicate a large-scale empirical study but have proved useful in understanding the context in which Life Orientation teachers are interacting with sexual health education, in Bernstein's field of reproduction and the implications the curriculum has on their ability to address issues of sexual violence and coercion in the classroom.

Through a combination of conceptual coding of the interview transcripts and thematic analysis of the curriculum documents, I was able to use elements of Bernstein's pedagogic device to analyse the elements of recontextualising that take place in regards to content around sexuality. References to the individual in particular power and control over the «self» (esteem, control, protection) were coded and categorized to allow the recognition of the subject being created by the field of recontextualising and the intended curriculum. Interviews with teachers provided insight into the site of reproduction and the realised curriculum and were coded for references to the individual and self, as well as intersection of the sexuality components of the curriculum with self-protection insofar as sexual violence and coercion. I could then look specifically at those content areas' potential implications for working class pupils and posit the effect this particular recontextualising may have on their learning and real-life applications of that learning.

To gain an understanding of working class pupils' lived experiences, a space Bernstein calls the local pedagogic context, I also included secondary data from studies conducted by Wood, Jewkes, Lambert, and Maforah (Wood, Maforah, & Jewkes, 1996; Wood & Jewkes, 2000; Wood, Lambert, & Jewkes, 2008), in particular one for the Medical Research Council on youth sexuality and the role of violence, as it included clear narratives directly from adolescent girls, along with a set of recommendations to the Department of Education (Wood et al., 1996) on ways forward. I chose to include and draw on these studies as secondary data because they successfully illuminate adolescent perceptions around sexual violence or coercion, grounding my small-scale curriculum study on a broader, more robust understanding of these issues amongst South African youth. Although some of their research was carried out during the 1990s, there is much anecdotal evidence (media reports, other studies and surveys) that the issues they raise are still very much facing young people today. In fact, Wood and Jewkes further work, indicates a growing rate of violence and coercion in adolescent sexual relationships (2000). Their interviews with young people have proved useful in understanding

the context in which working class students are experiencing sex and sexuality as well as sexual violence and coercion.

Contextual framework: reconSEXtualising Bernstein

To analyse the implications of the Life Orientation curriculum on working class learners' access to and understanding of information on sexuality, I drew on a number of Bernsteinian concepts, including, most importantly, the pedagogic device, recontextualising, vertical discourse, the invisible subject and the local pedagogic context. To understand the impact of Bernstein's concepts on sex and sexuality education, it is first important to understand education, in general, as a cultural relay. Schooling plays a key role in a society, of shaping today's young people into tomorrow's citizens. School thus sets out to imbue pupils with a given society's moral code. South Africa's National Curriculum Statement, the basis for all of its subsequent curriculum documents, acknowledges the role of the school in relaying morals:

Values and morality give meaning to our individual and social relationships. They are the common currencies that help make life more meaningful than might otherwise have been. An education system does not exist to simply serve a market, important as that may be for economic growth and material prosperity. Its primary purpose must be to enrich the individual and, by extension, the broader society. (Department of Education, 2003: 2)

Before Bernstein introduced his idea of the pedagogic device, the focus of educationalists was on what was relayed, instead of the relay (Singh, 2002). His device draws attention to the issues of power and control that eventually determine what is relayed, focussing on the relay itself.

Bernstein generated the concept of the pedagogic device in answer to the question «are there any general principles underlying the transformation of knowledge into pedagogic communication?» (Bernstein, 1996: 25). His answer was yes, and he outlined those rules as the distributive, recontextualising and evaluative: the pedagogic device. The three rules exist hierarchically. The recontextualising rule, on which I will focus here, is derived from the distributive rules and regulates «the formation of specific pedagogic discourse» (*ibidem*: 28). Bernstein's fields of the pedagogic device are the «social spaces of conflict and competition» wherein his rules of the pedagogic device play out (Singh, 2002: 573). The recontextualising field is the space «in which the forms of content and the means of their transmission are determined», where the «what» and «how» of curricula are formed (Williams, 1999: 113).

«Meaning potential», what Bernstein called the breadth of a discourse that is available to be pedagogised, in this instance applies to all knowledge about human sexuality, and the

gender relations implied therein (Bernstein, 1996: 27). «The pedagogic device continuously regulates the ideal universe of potential pedagogic meanings in such a way as to restrict or enhance their realisations» (*ibidem*). The (relatively stable) rules of the pedagogic device dictate which parts of that knowledge are translated into pedagogic discourse, in this case the sex and sexuality portions of the Life Orientation curriculum.

Sex education requires the transmission of the incredibly personal, often stigmatized issue of sexuality into a school-appropriate pedagogic discourse. This pedagogic discourse «embeds rules which create skills of one kind or another and rules regulating their relationship to each other, and rules which create social order»: instructional and regulative rules (Bernstein, 1996: 32). The pedagogic discourse of sex education contains both instructional and regulative elements, in that it concerns itself with both equipping students with skills to successfully manage their personal sexual lives and maintaining social order by avoiding unwanted pregnancy, sexual assault and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The idea of the pedagogic discourse as the product of an instructional discourse embedded in a regulative discourse is evident in relation to sex education. There is no distinction between the transmission of skills and the transmission of values; the former are embedded in the latter, into one discourse. «Pedagogic discourse is constructed by a recontextualising principle which selectively appropriates, relocates and refocuses other discourses to constitute its own order» (Bernstein, 1990: 184).

Recontextualising rules govern this relocation and refocusing as knowledge moves from its original site of production into pedagogic contexts. In sex and sexuality education's case, that site is diverse, from scientists working with HIV/AIDS to evolutionary psychologists studying relationships and monogamy. Bernstein uses the example of physics to explain the role of recontextualising agents, «The authors of the textbooks in physics are rarely physicists who are practising in the field of production of physics; they are working in the field of recontextualising» (Bernstein, 1996: 34). Likewise Life Orientation sees sexuality appropriated by recontextualising agents who are neither adolescents themselves, nor often afflicted by the issues of HIV, sexual violence and coercion or unwanted pregnancy with which their curriculum is meant to help youth contend. After it has been recontextualised real-life sexual knowledge, much like in Bernstein's physics example, looks very different than it does in the field(s) of production, and is in some cases almost unrecognizable (*ibidem*). If Life Orientation is designed to help adolescents manage their sexual lives responsibly, recontextualisation to such a degree can prove problematic. There is a risk of sexuality curriculum becoming too context independent, with too little bearing on student's lives. In particular, working class students, who may lack an understanding of the more context independent, elaborated, school code, can become alienated. Although part of school's task is to familiarize

all students with the elaborated, context independent code, many studies have shown that working class students are at a disadvantage. When considering the importance, to society at large, and to individual students of responsibly managed sexual lives, it is evident, that – at least at this juncture in South Africa’s curricular and educational development – it is imperative for sexual education to meet all students at their level. If they do not understand or process the material at school, they are unlikely to apply it in the real-life situations the curriculum intends them to.

Another area of complexity is added when we consider that sexuality education does not have a clear field of production, but rather, draws information from various areas of medicine, psychology and social life. «The move from the original site of discursive production to reproduction in pedagogic discourse requires selection and ordering of the content according to some set of principles» (Williams, 1999: 111). Bernstein called this ordering «discourses», wherein a horizontal discourse is made up of everyday knowledge and a vertical discourse made up of school knowledge (Bernstein, 1990). It is generally accepted then, that a school curriculum is a vertical discourse that has to be structured in a sequential way, where students can build knowledge on a foundation of what they have already learned. This is evidenced by terms used in South African curricula documents such as «foundation phase», and the way the scope is broken down by grade level. Here we see knowledge divided into categories, where particular information is deemed appropriate to a given grade level, and usually a corresponding age group.

Recontextualising rules are those for «delocating a discourse, for relocating it, for refocusing it» (Bernstein, 1996: 47). We see this process take place in relation to the Life Orientation curriculum: knowledge about sexuality is delocated from the everyday, relocated toward a vertical discourse and refocused broadly around someone the conceptual coding of my documentary analysis illuminated: the rights-based individual. The resulting curriculum looks very different from the knowledge in its original form. So was the case with Bernstein’s example of woodworking class, as compared to the real world career of carpentry, which he used to illustrate the distinction between a real world context and a classroom (*ibidem*). So, what does it look like when issues of sexuality are selectively recontextualised into a pedagogic discourse of sex education? I will elaborate, in relation to Life Orientation’s sex education discourse, in the following section.

Sexual knowledge into pedagogic communication: a vertical discourse?

Controversial topics are subject to particular «scrutiny, regulation and recontextualisation» (Williams, 1999). Topics that are most context dependent are a greater reflection of people’s

day-to-day lives. Subject areas such as the arts and Life Orientation were the most contested curricula among South Africa's recontextualising agents developing South Africa's recently adapted Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Hoadley, 2011), set to replace the National Curriculum Statement. Life Orientation holds a unique place in the curriculum. It lacks the strong isolation from other subjects that the hard sciences and to some degree languages, have from one another. Rather than helping to generate specific educational identities, the purpose, as is clear from its name is to prepare students for all aspects of living a good life (as opposed to preparing them to be experts in a given field). South Africa's Life Orientation covers a number of topics, such as citizenship, environmentalism, religious and cultural studies as well as sex and sexuality on which I focus here. In the National Curriculum Statement for Life Orientation, part of the scope of the course(s) for grades 10 to 12 is to «address changes during puberty and adolescence, responsible sexual behaviour, risky adolescent behaviour and attitudes regarding a range of issues including substance abuse, road use, dietary behaviour and personal safety» (Department of Education, 2003: 10). Even in this brief description, the varied directions the Life Orientation course(s) takes becomes evident. The recontextualising agents have left room for interpretation and differentiation depending on a school's specific context. This passage is one of the few direct references to sex and sexuality found in the curriculum documents. The bulk of Life Orientation's language deals abstractly with the generic social competencies or «life skills» that the recontextualising agents determined adolescents require in managing their lives. The pedagogues and policy makers at work in the field of recontextualisation faced two major challenges. The first was to code and translate knowledge about sex into a discourse appropriate for discussion in schools. The second was to consider the level of diversity in South Africa and attempt to create content that meets as many different needs as possible.

[Life Orientation] has a lot to cover. We're talking about the constitution, we're talking about career choices, putting together resumes, how to conduct yourself at a job interview. There's a lot that can side track the sexuality stuff. And every group of students is different in how they react to the material. Some years they are very open, very keen to discuss. But other times it can be a challenging experience... for all of us. (Teacher 3, 2011)

In many ways the issues covered in Life Orientation relate directly to the everyday, context-dependent, world of knowledge. Bernstein called this knowledge mundane, arising «directly out of bodily encounters with the world, with other people, with reality» and dependent on «experiential particulars» (Muller & Taylor, 1995: 263). Obviously, trying to communicate all the required content through discussions of pupils' experiences would be neither viable nor appropriate. Instead the material needs to be lifted off of the context and become context independent or esoteric. Bernstein discusses this in terms of transmitted meanings,

The form that these meanings take must be a form with an indirect relation between meanings and a specific material base. And the reason for this is very clear: if meanings have a direct relation to a material base, these meanings are wholly consumed by the context... They lack the power of relation outside a context because they are totally consumed by the context. (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999: 30)

Obviously then, sex education cannot be grounded entirely in the context. Classes could be titillating and distracting, not to mention highly controversial among parents and school board members. Thus, in the field of recontextualisation, there was an attempt to universalize certain aspects of the sexual experience as esoteric or context-independent knowledge. What resulted was the construct of a learner I have labelled the «rights-based individual». There is no direct reference to a rights-based individual in the National Curriculum Statement but one is inferred by a thematic coding of the life skills the envisioned pupil is expected to acquire, in particular as they relate to the «self».

We see this construction of the self and its growing importance to the imagined learner's identity throughout the Life Orientation curriculum's particular knowledge structure. Bernstein (1996) identified subjects such as Life Orientation as horizontal knowledge structures in that they are constructed in a series of specialized languages, organized by segment, wherein what counts as achievement is adoption of a particular pedagogic position or gaze. Yet, the manner in which the Life Orientation is designed indicates a developing vertical discourse wherein learners build knowledge in earlier grades that will develop more clearly into life skills in later grades. Muller's «verticality quotient» speaks to the portion of a more horizontal knowledge structure (like Life Orientation) than can be made vertical (Muller, 2004). A certain degree of verticality is key to a learners' success, in any subject, including Life Orientation as pupils need what came before to make sense of what comes next. For example, introducing the concept of hygiene in foundation phase places emphasis on the importance of self-care and self-protection that learners are expected to be able to use later in relation to making healthy choices about safe sex. The curriculum is set up then in an attempted, if fragmented, vertical discourse, wherein new skills are built on a foundation of existing knowledge. In earlier grades, R through 9, pupils gain an understanding of the body. Topics such as personal hygiene, changes during puberty and the workings of the reproductive system are covered. The understanding of the body as belonging to oneself, and of personal control and determination over that body is developed. Coding of the content covered at the secondary level indicated a Life Orientation curriculum which focuses intensively on broad, content-independent concepts of: the self (control, protection, esteem); the right to say no; care for the body and the manner in which these issues' intersect with gender and power. The curriculum statement outlines its goal: to equip all pupils with certain «life skills» such as self-awareness, self-esteem and decision-making with the intent that students apply those skills to real-life situa-

tions (Department of Education, 2003: 12). Life skills are defined as «personal and social skills required by young people to function confidently and competently with themselves, with other people, and the wider community; a range of skills that can enhance the quality of life and prevent dysfunctional behaviour» (*ibidem*: 68).

So, I have established that Life Orientation is a relay of morals: of instructional embedded within the regulative, relaying knowledge through a vertically-leaning discourse. Who is that knowledge intended for? LO's subject, a particular kind of pupil, is whom I will turn to in the next section.

The rights-based individual: an invisible subject?

A problem is created wherein the process of recontextualising sexual knowledge into pedagogic communication «is very likely to produce imaginary subjects... who are considerably removed» from the (sexual) experiences of the working class (Williams, 1999: 115). Teacher 3 reported being surprised by the seeming redundancy of questions,

We'll cover a topic one day, like self-respect and self-control, the right to have control over our own bodies, etc. and the next day the girls will come and ask «what do we do about boyfriends who won't wear condoms?» It's a struggle to connect all of this stuff to what they are going through day to day. (Teacher 3, 2011)

This subject, the rights-based individual, a person capable of making self-protective decisions, is central to the Life Orientation curriculum. My thematic coding of references to the right to, and control, of the personal body in the younger grades, and the more philosophical «self» in the older grades saw a continuous construction of this individual throughout the curriculum. This subject, in relation to the working class, is an ideal: an imaginary one. This subject appears largely based on the middle-class experience – one where self-determination is possible. Focusing on the rights-based individual fails to consider neither the role of violence and coercion in sexual relationships, nor the important role of the economy in creating relationships based on the exchange of cash and goods: transactional sex. Williams criticism of recontextualising is particularly relevant here, in that it

does not mean to simply «summarize» or «restate» or even to «treat reductively». Rather the process of reproducing [real world experience and knowledge] into a description of valued pedagogic practice reshapes them in relation to dominant and dominating principles of social interactions, principles which are common to only one fraction of the population. (Williams, 1999: 116)

Interestingly, Bernstein stressed the importance of lifting material off of its context, for the very reason that it needed to be somewhat common to everyone or it risked being subsumed entirely by a particular everyday context (Bernstein, 1996). And yet, research has shown that due to a lack of familiarity with the elaborated code and vertical discourses of the school, working-class pupils are at a disadvantage. In lifting sexuality and sexual relationships off of their direct context, Life Orientation runs the risk of focusing on an invisible subject that either does not face the challenges of working-class pupils or does not face their challenges in addressing them. For example, a Medical Research Council study, based on data on violence in relationships, indicated the need for curricula that empower girls to challenge both male control of sexual knowledge and female access to it, by enabling adolescents «to create and be aware of alternative constructions of love and sexual practice» (Wood, Maforah, & Jewkes, 1996: 10).

The Life Orientation curriculum lists the following learning outcomes for the grade 12 level: teenage pregnancy and the prevention thereof, sexual abuse, rape; values such as respect for self and others, self-control, loyalty in a relationship, right to privacy, right to protect oneself, right to say «No», taking responsibility for own actions; skills such as self-awareness, critical thinking, decision making, problem solving, assertiveness, negotiation, communication, refusal, goal setting, information gathering; where to find help; investigate other views and insights of the life cycle and related traditional practices; describing the concepts «power» and «power relations» and their effect on relationships between and among genders; concepts – power, power relations, masculinity, femininity and gender; differences between a man and a woman (e.g. reproduction and roles in the community – that is, a man and a woman are different but equally important); stereotypical views of gender roles and responsibilities; influence of gender inequality on relationships and general well-being (e.g. sexual abuse, sexually transmitted infections including HIV and AIDS) (Department of Education, 2003: 34).

But the curriculum makes assumptions that the lived experiences of the girls in the Medical Research Council study contradict, for example, concepts of negotiation and communication. The invisible subject is presumed to have the ability to communicate and negotiate with her/his sexual partner(s). Yet, the young women interviewed for the study consistently reported their inability to do so. In fact, the study's original scope concentrated on contraceptive use, bodily knowledge and pregnancy, «however, the emergence of violence by male sexual partners as a central issue in informants' narrative» (Wood, Maforah, & Jewkes, 1996: 2) led the researchers to explore violence in sexual relationships instead. They learned that «conditions and timing of sex were entirely defined by male partners through the use of violence and through the circulation of certain constructions of love, intercourse and entitlement to which the women were expected to submit (*ibidem*: 9). Their narratives appear indicative of the both the level of sexual coercion taking place in adolescent relationships as well as the degree to which it is expected

and accepted by girls. The 2008 National Youth Victimization Survey found that only one in ten (11.3%) female respondents reported her sexual assault to the police, and 9.5% had notified the authorities at her school (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

Another aspect of recontextualisation at work in Life Orientation's treatment of sex and sexuality is the need to institute sequencing and pacing. A curriculum needs to be ordered in a way that allows pupils to build on existing knowledge, as discussed in relation to the vertical discourse; there is a desired rate of acquisition of skills and competencies which generally correlates with age. In connection to sexuality, this then controls (or attempts to control) what adolescents know about sex and when. The recontextualising agents, by outlining particular material for particular grade levels, decide what about sex is age-appropriate but problems arise when these pressures and problems affect different individuals, and often different communities, at different ages. For example, crowded township life often involves a lack of privacy and separation between children and adult life, which can lead to early exposure to sexuality (Delius & Glaser, 2002). Sequencing and pacing also determine how much time and concentration is spent on a given topic. On the issue of relationships and violence teacher 2 explained,

My students often see themselves as aside from some of these issues, and they're really not. Violence affects everyone in a society. And these issues of gender inequality, have a great impact on kids, girls especially, from all backgrounds. But do we spend as much time on it as I would in a township setting? No. I would say no, we don't. (Teacher 2, 2011)

So while the curriculum does require a discussion of gendered violence: «Describe the concepts «power» and «power relations» and their effect on relationships between and among genders» (Department of Education, 2003: 14), it offers little guidance as to how to broach this in different communities. Teacher 3 says he spends most of his time trying to reach the boys,

but in admitting that the boys have more control in these situations... There's issues of gender inequality at play there... which we are meant to discuss with the students. But we're not meant to single anyone out, and yet when you know the boys are really the problem... it's hectic. (Teacher 1, 2011)

Teacher 1's comments explain the justification of the vertical discourse. Grounding the material too closely in the context would not only interfere with sequencing and pacing, and fail to build on existing knowledge but would «single out» certain pupils, based on their everyday experiences.

Unfortunately, it is those everyday experiences that form the basis of a pupil's understanding about their sexuality. I will explore the role of the peer group, family and community: the local pedagogic context, in the following section.

The power of local pedagogic practice

While recontextualising happens in relation to the school, contextualising happens first, in the home and community. Bernstein called this the primary contextualising context: the family and local community, including peer group relations (1996). He furthered, that the local pedagogic discourse used in the family and community may conflict with the official pedagogic discourse of the school. A large part of Bernstein's work focused on the disadvantage of working class pupils due to this conflict, which has been supported by empirical studies (e.g. Holland, 1981; Hoadley, 2007). In middle class homes, the local pedagogic practice is often found to be in embedded in the official pedagogic practice while the opposite is found in working class homes (Bernstein, 1990). It follows then, that working class pupils who have learned their community's way of interpreting and acting on information about sexuality are less likely to process the information provided at school in the same way as their middle class peers. Pupils need to be able to extrapolate skills of self-respect and self-protection to apply them to circumstances in their lives outside of the school. Middle class students are more likely to have had early access to this kind of «privileging text» of the school. Bernstein's earliest work from the 1960s makes a distinction here between a restricted and an elaborated code, he then furthered this thinking into integration and collection codes (*idem*, 1975) and later expanded into the distinction between horizontal and vertical discourses (Bernstein, 1999). While working class students eventually gain access to the elaborated code and vertical discourses of the school, they have rarely been exposed to them in the primary contextualising context.

In Williams study of joint book reading sessions between parents and children, he describes the presumed partnership between the home and school in a child's learning process (Williams, 1999). He discusses the role of the parent in mediating – in decoding and encoding – embedded meanings (*ibidem*). It is interesting to extrapolate this idea to sexuality, an area where, in many families, parents remain largely silent. While the recontextualising agents may presume of the home as a second pedagogic site (*ibidem*; Bernstein, 1990; Painter, 1999) the narratives of working class pupils show their homes to be characterized by parental silence and judgement around adolescent sexuality. Teacher 3 identified parents as a major hurdle in opening up honest dialogues about sexuality in the classroom. «We've learned to be prepared for parents. About them not being impressed by some of the discussions that happen in class» (Teacher 3, 2011).

Instead of parents and family, it seems that a great deal of the encoding and decoding on matters of sexuality in working class communities is done by peers and through peer pressure. Delius and Glaser chronicle the gradual decline of inter-generational sexuality education

in many South African communities, highlighting the disruptive roles of Christianization, urbanization, migration and conquest (Delius & Glaser, 2002). Their description of changes such as initiation rites becoming more ritual than instruction, the end of full age-cohort initiation and the economic power imbalance of urban family life all contextualize an «awkward inter-generational silence on issues of sexuality» (*ibidem*: 30). Unsurprisingly then, the Medical Research Council's study found that the primary source of sexual information for young people in townships was peers (Wood, Maforah, & Jewkes, 1996). This creates problems, as peers often mystify sexual acts or misinform those who have yet to experience sex. It can make early partners the only means by which to attain more accurate information, and generates a peer pressure to enter into early sexual relations. The study found that boys and older male partners were believed to be the only members of a community with any real awareness about sex, which allowed them to control younger women's understandings of sexuality. Many of the girls interviewed tried to obtain information about the sex but were told «you will see» by other girls and older male partners (*ibidem*: 3). The majority of girls reported their sexual debuts as having been acts of coercive sex, where male partners pressured or cajoled them to demonstrate their love, commitment and fidelity with sex. Others reported initial sexual experiences to be forced and described rape as a common place occurrence. According to another Medical Research Council study, focussed on the link between sexual violence and the spread of HIV,

men who disclosed having raped were significantly more likely to have engaged in a range of other risky sexual behaviours. They were more likely to have had more than 20 sexual partners, transactional sex, sex with a prostitute, heavy alcohol consumption, to have been physically violent towards a partner, raped a man, and not to have used a condom consistently in the past year. (Jewkes et al., 2009: 2)

The study listed contributing factors to South Africa's high incidence of rape, including: parent absenteeism, childhood trauma, bullying, teasing and «deeply embedded ideas about South African manhood» and concepts of masculinity based on «marked gender hierarchy and sexual entitlement of men» (*ibidem*, 2009: 2). This sense of male sexual entitlement was deeply embedded in the girls' narratives (Wood, Maforah, & Jewkes, 1996).

The distinction between sexual violence and sexual coercion is deeply blurred in many low-income South African communities. The community, or primary contextualising context, is often one strongly influenced by economic hardship. This gives rise to context-specific relations such as the practice of transactional sex (where a girl's boyfriend(s) pays for things such as her living expenses, clothes or cell phone). AIDS historian Mark Hunter frames transactional sex as common practice in South Africa, particularly among township-dwelling young women in their teens and early 20s (Hunter, 2002). This, for the purposes of the Life

Orientation curriculum, would be considered a «high-risk activity» one that is a major contributing factor to the spread of the HIV virus. All three of the teachers interviewed acknowledged the problem of transactional sex and the challenges of including it in the curriculum.

It's not beyond the scope [of Life Orientation], we can discuss it. I try and relate back to the section we do on careers, on empowering the girls to be able to take care of themselves financially, without having to depend on a boyfriend. A lot of the time when we discuss the barriers to safe sex girls will say, «well my boyfriend supports me, and he doesn't want to use condoms». (Teacher 3, 2011)

Here, what a girl learns in the primary contextualising context (survival by any means necessary) is contrary to the pedagogic recontextualising context (be a rights-based individual, protect yourself, make self-protective decisions).

Conclusion: areas for further analysis

With this paper, I essentially set out to answer two questions: does the current curriculum provide young South Africans with tools and skills to address these social challenges – in couples and communities –, and moreover does it empower young women who are the victims most affected? Largely, my answers to both were no, and thus I was left with many more questions to answer. What can be done to address the obvious knowledge/practice gap: where pupils are living what they are learning in their communities as opposed to their schools? Does the idea of the rights-based individual completely ignore the violent, coercive experiences of the working class, or could a stronger foundation in the protection of the self-put all young people on a more equal footing? Clearly, the evidence of hegemonic systems, school being just one, disadvantaging the working class are all around us. What is less clear is exactly how, in relation to sex education, the material is failing to reach working class youth insofar as changing their sexual attitudes and actions. Statistics on sexual violence, unwanted pregnancy and HIV infections have only risen since the time of the Medical Research Council's 1996 study, despite the intervention of government, numerous NGOs and adaptations of the Life Orientation curriculum. In interrogating the conceptual potential of Bernstein's pedagogic device for better understanding the implications of certain forms of curriculum around sex and sexuality on working class learners, I concluded that recontextualising agents need to better understand and strongly consider youths' primary contextualising context. In particular they should not underestimate its role in shaping adolescent understandings of sex and sexuality. This initial theoretical consideration may have applications across sex education curricula, in terms of better understanding the complexity of formulating a peda-

gogic discourse of sexuality to make it relevant to the lived experience of young people across social class and context.

The need is evident, however, for a greater focus on the recontextualising that happens at the level of the school and classroom. Here the challenge presented in this paper can be addressed, that of only certain students, generally those with an existing grounding in the required skills (communication and negotiation, self-protection, self-esteem, decision-making) being able to negotiate the requirements. Throughout my research I was compelled by the degree to which recontextualising continues there, in the field of reproduction. It is there that the differential needs of diverse student populations can be addressed as teachers can «teach orientation to meaning to everyone rather than reward the students who discover it on their own» (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2007: 14). The «right to say no», for example, creates a divide where some students may have been raised in households and communities where they have been empowered with a sense of this right from a young age, while many others have not. Knowledge about rights, resources, places and people to go to for help, can be introduced to learners in younger grades so they can develop the communication, self-protection and self-esteem skills of «saying no» in later grades. Encouragingly, I saw evidence, from the three teachers that I interviewed, that educators are doing just that. The way the National Curriculum Statement was designed, teachers of a given subject are asked to work together on a school-wide Subject Framework. From there, they design a Work Schedule where the curriculum is broken down and strategically sequenced and paced. Finally, individual teachers create Lesson Plans which detail exactly how and what will be covered (Department of Education, 2008). While the over-arching concept of the rights-based individual will continue to challenge teachers of the working class, they are at least able there, to appeal to pupils' experiences more directly, and use strategic pacing and sequencing to spend more time building a foundation of empowerment of the self which would better allow pupils to address issues such as violent, coercive or transactional sex.

Bernstein's theoretical framework left room for change to take place in the ways standard educational systems disadvantage certain populations. «He modelled how change may be instigated in the ordering and disordering principles of the pedagogising of knowledge» (Singh, 2002: 573). In some ways, South Africa's current system leaves room for teachers to correct the manner in which Life Orientation's sex and sexuality material alienates the working class. An intervention, comparable to the work done by Morais, Neves and Pires on science education (Morais, Neves, & Pires, 2004), into the ideal pedagogical conditions for teaching sex education, in the recontextualising stage of the field of reproduction, appears to me to be the most hopeful space to bring about the kind of disruption Bernstein described.

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