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Attitudes and Experiences of Teachers and Students Towards Life Orientation

A Case Study of a State-funded School in Eldorado Park, South Johannesburg

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Development Studies

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree *Masters of Arts in the Faculty of Humanities (Development Studies)* at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Abstract

In this research I explore the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation. A case study method was employed based on a co-educational state school in Eldorado Park, South Johannesburg. The study sample was Grade 11 students and their Life Orientation teachers and the research was undertaken using semi-structured interviews of both the students and the teachers as well as classroom observations. The data were analysed using a Thematic Content Analysis. The research found that interactions in Life Orientation classes are influenced by the students' gender, race and sexual experience which all contributed to a particular set of power relations. Despite this, many of the students found Life Orientation beneficial and the limitations of the classroom interactions could be circumvented if the students entered what Goffman terms the 'backstage' of the lesson and spoke to the teacher individually. The success of the backstage interactions depended on the willingness of the students to enter the backstage and the openness of the teacher to deal with their issues. The research found that Life Orientation can be a successful platform for the counselling of young adults, but not in the formal, established structures of the classroom. However, it also found that the teachers did not receive enough support to effectively deal with all the students' issues. Furthermore, it found that Life Orientation was not able to instigate wider social change.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Life Orientation is a subject that is taught in all South African schools. It has the potential to positively influence young people and help them to make well-informed choices about how to act in their lives. However, "observations [suggest] that Life Orientation has not been optimally implemented in schools" (Rooth 2005: iii). In light of this, this research looks at the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation in a state school in Eldorado Park, South Johannesburg.

1.1: Research Question and Sub-Questions

In order to address this research topic, I looked at four sub-questions:

- How does the pedagogy influence the effectiveness of the Life Orientation lessons?
- How do gender dynamics within the Life Orientation classroom affect conversations around sex education and sexual relations?
- How does the teacher's personality affect her interaction with the learners in what Goffman defines as the front and back stage?
- What are the aims and objectives of Life Orientation and is it an appropriate platform with which to teach young adults about life skills?

1.2: Evolution of Topic

Initially, I wanted to study how HIV/AIDS programmes are implemented in South African schools. Upon investigation, it emerged that there is an established curriculum for teaching HIV/AIDS in schools and this falls under the subject of Life Orientation, a compulsory subject for all South African students. The curriculum outline for Life Orientation extends

further than HIV/AIDS to include broader sex and relationships education. This was to be the focus for my research. However, after researching into existing studies about Life Orientation and its effectiveness, I found that most of the prevailing literature focuses solely on sex education in Life Orientation when, in fact, this makes up only a portion of the overall curriculum. Therefore, I extended my research to cover the whole of the Life Orientation curriculum.

1.3: Background Information

In order explain the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation; it is necessary to first explain the context in which Life Orientation as a subject arose and what its general aims are. Life Orientation was introduced into the South African curriculum in 1997, as part of 'Curriculum 2005'. It was introduced as part of the 'Outcomes-Based Education' implemented in post-apartheid South Africa. The policy recommendations were informed by principals derived from the 'White Paper on Education and Training (1995)'. This education reform aimed "to provide equity in terms of educational provision and to promote a more balanced view of the South African society" (Botha 2002, 361) by promoting "a prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violent, discrimination and prejudice" (Dept. of Education 2002, 5). Outcomes-based education was designed to "improve the quality of education in South Africa (i.e. to guarantee success for all; to develop ownership by means of decentralized curriculum development; to empower learners in a learner-centred ethos; and to make schools more accountable and responsible in trying to ensure success and effectiveness)" (Botha 2002, 362). Life Orientation, as part of this new curriculum, was designed to replace the 'guidance' subjects of religious and physical education. Life Orientation "applies a holistic

approach…concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor, and physical growth and development of learners, and the way in which these dimensions are interrelated and expressed in life" (Dept. of Education 2003: 9). Its aim was to educate a new generation of South Africans and provide them with the skills and knowledge to negotiate their new, democratic country. As a result, it not only intended to give learners skills to "respond appropriately to life's responsibilities and opportunities" but also "expose[s] learners to their constitutional rights and responsibilities". Furthermore, it aims to redress the inequalities seen in the past and teach learners that they all have an equal right to a good quality of education. Therefore, Life Orientation also intends to give learners the "knowledge, skills and values to make informed decisions about subject choices, careers, additional and higher education opportunities and the world of work" (Dept. of Education 2011: 9).

Life Orientation is compulsory for all grades, from ages six to eighteen and is one of the four fundamental subjects required for the awarding of the National Senior Certificate (Dept. of Education 2011: 8). The other compulsory subjects are two official South African languages and Mathematical Literacy or Mathematics. Learners must also take a minimum of three additional subjects, as approved by the Department of Education (Dept. of Basic Education 2005, 7). The National Curriculum Statement 2003 states that Life Orientation "encourages the development of balanced and confident learners who will contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life for all" (Dept. of Education 2003: 20). Furthermore, it states that Life Orientation "equips learners to solve problems, to make informed decisions and choices, and to take appropriate actions to enable them to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly-changing society" (Dept. of Education 2003: 20). The 2011 curriculum statement builds on this and states that Life

Orientation "not only focuses on knowledge, but also emphasises the importance of the application of skills and values in real-life situations" (Dept. of Education 2011: 8). The effectiveness of this realised application will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. The curriculum is spilt into six areas: development of the self in society; social and environmental responsibility; democracy and human rights; careers and career choices; study skills and physical education (Dept. of Basic Education 2011: 8). These six areas are specifically formulated to "allow learners to think about and to find a place for themselves in an ever-changing society" (Christiaans 2006: 41). The weighting of each of the topics according to the hours spent on each area is detailed in the table in *Appendix 1*. In addition, *Appendix 2* details a breakdown of the content in each of the topic areas.

The curriculum changes according to the school year that the learners are in and aims to build upon their level of understanding in each of the four curriculum areas. The learners that were observed and interviewed for this research were in Grade Eleven, the penultimate year before their high school education finishes. Therefore, the content of the curriculum reflects this stage in their school lives. For example, if one refers to *Appendix 2*, one will see that section four relates to "careers and career choices". The curriculum has stated that education in Life Orientation about careers should help the learners to understand the "requirements for admission to higher education institutions" as well as "options for financial assistance for further studies" (Dept. of Basic Education 2011: 10). This is taught in Grade Eleven because the learners are expected to think about their future career choices at this stage. If they wish to pursue their education and enter the tertiary level, they must apply to the colleges and universities of their choice with the grades they received at Grade Eleven. In addition, they need to be aware of the financial burden that a tertiary education brings and the options that are available to them to help with this. In addition, the Grade Eleven Life Orientation

curriculum recognises, to a certain extent that the learners may be engaging in sexual relationships as a part of Area 1, "development of the self in society" is focussed on "gender roles and their effects on health and well-being". This suggests that the learners are influenced by the gendered expectations placed on them by society. This is prevalent in all aspects of their lives, especially in sexual relationships. However, this seemingly progressive and all-encompassing curriculum does not always play out as such in the classroom. Prinsloo (2007:158) found that the depth and quality of the teaching differed depending on several factors such as the levels of poverty in the surrounding area and the cultural and racial make-up of the students. This issue will be discussed further in the following sections.

The Life Orientation curriculum not only aims to give age-relevant content but also to make it context specific. The 2011 curriculum statement said that it "aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts while being sensitive to global imperatives" (Dept. of Basic Education 2011: 4). This also means that Life Orientation teachers have the flexibility to expand the curriculum content in areas that they believe are most relevant to the socio-economic context that the students are living in.

The school where I based my case study is in Eldorado Park, a coloured township in South Johannesburg. I chose this site because of its troubled history as the area was established as a result of apartheid separation laws. The economic hardships of the apartheid era can still be seen in Eldorado Park today and they bring with them a unique set of social issues. Life Orientation has the potential to affect change in the students' lives and redress these social and economic problems. The findings and discussion section will situate Life Orientation teaching within this context and will relate the content of the lessons to the challenges that the students face on a daily basis.

1.4: Research Methods

The data for my research were collected through semi-structured interviews with the Grade Eleven students and their Life Orientation teacher. In addition, I interviewed other Life Orientation teachers at the school and observed the Life Orientation classes in practice. This enabled me to triangulate the evidence and see if the responses in the interviews correlated with what was observed in the lessons.

1.5: Research Report Outline

Research into the attitudes of both students and teachers towards Life Orientation will involve addressing several empirical and theoretical questions. My literature review will introduce these questions, surrounding the appropriateness of the school environment when teaching life skills, gender and power relations within the classroom, including the 'missing discourse of desire' and the context of Life Orientation within the wider literature concerning the importance of education as development. Next, my methodology section will explain how I collected my data and why I chose a qualitative case study approach, as well as the ethical considerations that will need to be taken into account. My findings will then be presented with an in-depth discussion of the themes that arose during the data collection. Lastly, I will conclude my thesis and will present potential areas for further research and investigation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

This literature review will focus on four key areas of consideration related to the study of Life Orientation. Firstly, I will discuss the current studies related to the teaching of Life Orientation and other sexual education programmes. Writers such as Helleve et al (2011) and Zisser and Francis (2006) have suggested that the lessons are often influenced heavily by gender relations within the classroom and that these are amplified when learners discuss sex. This begs the question as to whether the classroom context is a suitable environment to teach young adults about sex and life skills. The second section will focus on this and Michelle Fine's (1988 and 2006) work on the missing 'discourse of desire' in school-based sex education. Next, I will discuss Amartya Sen's [1999] (2001) notion of developmental progress, suggesting that one should consider education in a wider developmental process and introduce the notion of 'development as freedom' rather than 'development as economic growth'. The last section will introduce Goffman's theory of the Dramaturgical Metaphor. The Life Orientation classroom observations that I undertook as part of my research showed that, as Goffman suggested in his work, the learners and teacher had particular 'roles' and 'performances' that were played out on the 'frontstage' of the classroom lesson. The interaction between the teacher and her students within the frontstage was observed in the lessons but this also entered the 'backstage', an area after the lesson that is not normally reserved for teacher/student interactions, and took on an informal counselling nature where the teacher advised the learners. This final section will explain Goffman's theory of the front and back stages.

2.2: Current Literature on Life Orientation

There is a considerable amount of literature related to Life Orientation and its curriculum content. Much of the literature is concerned with the dynamics between the teacher and the students. The personality of the Life Orientation teacher is seen as very important in relation to the success of the lessons (Helleve et al 2011). Helleve et al's (2011, 19) study, which was conducted in Cape Town and Polokwane and interviewed Grade Eight and Nine Life Orientation teachers, showed that the teachers they interviewed had to be open and approachable both during and after their lessons, and willing to take on several roles at once. For example, one teacher "described himself as 'a person from whom they [the students] run away'" and it was suggested that this compromised his role as a Life Orientation teacher as the students did not see him as approachable. Furthermore, the study found that, in addition to being seen as approachable, many of the teachers also felt as if they had to take on a variety of roles in their position of a Life Orientation teacher. It was suggested many of them adopted a counselling role in order to fully address the problems that their students were facing. "They told stories about conversations with students and parents for the purpose of solving problematic situations for the students" (Helleve et al 2011: 21). Furthermore, the teachers complained that they did not have a sufficient amount of time to deal with all the students' issues that confronted them and suggested that social workers were needed to assist the teachers in this counselling capacity.

In addition to the personalities and the roles of the teacher affecting the success of Life Orientation lessons, studies conducted in various schools across South Africa and Southern Africa have revealed that the power dynamics between teacher and student also play an important role in Life Orientation (Pattman and Chege, 2003; Buston and Wight, 2004 Ahmed et al, 2009; Helleve et al, 2011). Pattman and Chege (2003) drew on research related

to students' attitudes to HIV education undertaken in several Eastern and Southern African countries. They found that many of the young adults interviewed wanted to be shown respect and treated as adults but, due to the power the teachers had over them and the lessons, this was not achieved. The researchers found that "the experience of being treated by (friendly and non-judgemental) adults as experts about themselves and others is uncommon for children and young people in many African settings" (104). This led to a lack of openness between the teachers and students and resulted in the students "being secretive towards adults about their sexual feelings" (104). This was combined with a sense of embarrassment from the teachers when they had to talk about sex. It was suggested that the teachers adopted a "moralistic and didactic approach to assert their authority and protect themselves" (105). This may have protected the teachers from the embarrassment of having to talk in-depth about sex but it prevented any effective conversation and left the students wanting more from the lesson. This was also found in Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mũkoma and Klepp's study (2011: 18) as teachers feared the cross-generational conversations about sex that were experienced in Life Orientation. They did not feel comfortable when students used slang and spoke openly about their sexual experiences. The teachers felt that they had to retain a level of power and discipline in the situation, otherwise they would lose control of the lesson.

Ahmed, Flisher, Mathews, Mũkoma and Jansen (2009) found that the gender and race of the teacher also affected how effectively Life Orientation could be taught. They found that "male educators expressed more discomfort in openly teaching sex education than female educators, who were more willing and able to engage in intimate discussions with learners on sexual health issues" (51). Furthermore, "race was considered to be a sensitive issue, particularly in schools where educators were of a different race group to that of the majority". These are all attributes which cannot be ignored when one studies Life Orientation.

The dynamics between the students must also be taken into consideration as well as the dynamics between the teacher and the students. The curriculum of Life Orientation is designed to reflect the issues that young people face in South Africa today and help them to deal with this ever-changing society (Dept of Education 2011: v). As such, Life Orientation is intended to be inclusive and accessible to all students. This is not always the case, however, as there are gender and power dynamics seen in South African society which are reflected in the classroom, to the detriment of the students (Ngwena, 2003; Pattman and Chege, 2003; Walker et al, 2004; Zisser and Francis, 2006; Reddy, 2004 and 2005; Allen, 2005; Pattman, 2006; Francis, 2010). Francis (2010) saw that 'hegemonic masculinity' plays a key role in the Life Orientation classroom and affects what is taught and how it is taught. He states that that, in mixed gender classes, the boys often dominate the conversations when discussing life issues. He says that this reflects wider societal issues and "by focusing on boys rather than girls, they are contributing to a culture where boys are expected to take the initiative and to subordinate girls" (316). This idea is further demonstrated by Pattman and Chege (2003) who found in their study that class dynamics during Life Orientation are gender polarised and "girls resisted boys' potential constructions of them as 'used goods' as the boys tried to re-assert themselves" (107). Their study suggests that the females found it much hard to fully engage in discussions during Life Orientation. However, they also warned against the vilification of male students as their research found that the male students were also under pressure to conform to cultural norms and "were much more misogynistic and more likely to talk about girls in derogatory and impersonal ways when being interviewed rather than when writing diaries" (Pattman and Chege, 109). This suggests that the boys "were, it seemed, assuming two contradictory identities" (Pattman and Chege, 106).

Moreover, Pattman and Chege (2003: 106) found that the girls in their study were expected to perform certain gender roles and could not be seen as being 'too knowledgeable' about sex in the mixed gender interviews. They state that in discussions about sex, "no attempt was made to engage the girls" and the researchers "had to put questions specifically to the girls to draw them into the conversation" (107).

Studies (Pattman and Chege, 2003; Allen, 2005; Francis, 2010 and Mayo, 2011) into Life Orientation and sex education have linked the hegemonic masculinity and the strong sense of gendered roles in the classroom to Michelle Fine's 'missing discourse of desire' (1988 and 2006). Mayo (2011) states that, across the world, sex education has failed to address the positive aspects of sexual relations and the possibility that young women can and should enjoy their sexual experiences. He states that school policies and curriculums that do not include a discourse of desire "have negative consequences for all students, but particularly for young women and sexual minorities" (408). This can be seen in a specifically South African context also and Francis (2010: 314) notes that "in order to effectively meet the needs of youth, the content of sexual health programmes needs to span the whole spectrum of discourses, from disease to desire". He argues that this is not the current reality for South African Life Orientation lessons as the students are bombarded with messages about HIV and STIs, which is contrasted with their private conversations with other peers, when they focus on the erotic side to sex, rather than the risk side (2010: 317).

The gaps in the Life Orientation curriculum and teaching extend further than the missing discourse of desire for young women. It also fails to effectively address any sexual behaviour, such as homosexuality, which could be seen to question the dominant views related to gender roles in South Africa. Ngwena (2003: 195-6) states,

> Some of the guidance on sexuality education that has been given to teachers by the Department of Education is contradictory and in some cases overly judgmental. On the one hand, the Department appears to recognise diversity in sexual mores. On the other hand, it attempts to be prescriptive in respect of certain values. For example, while professing adherence to the Bill of Rights of the Constitution and recognition of homosexuality as a different and acceptable form of sexuality, the Department of Education says that the issue of sexuality education is often sensitive and controversial and should be handled by a teacher with special qualities, who, inter alia, has a 'healthy heterosexual orientation'.

The issues of curriculum content raise the question of whether Life Orientation can ever be effectively taught in a classroom setting (Allen, 2005; Francis, 2011) and other outlets such as the media have been proposed as an alternative to the standard classroom teaching. Zisser and Francis' (2006) study focuses on LoveLife, a health advice program in South Africa that utilised the media to teach young adults about safe sex and making advisable lifestyle choices. This campaign recognised "that only through open communication in confronting misconceptions of gender roles, challenging power differentials, teaching healthy habits, and instilling life skills will South Africans begin to demonstrate behavioural modifications necessary to successfully stem this [HIV/AIDS] epidemic" (190). LoveLife used billboard advertisements to spread this 'open communication'. The campaign has been criticised as begin "stylish but often cryptic" and having "abstract and seemingly nonsensical images and text" (190). However, it does offer an alternative to the somewhat troublesome environment of a Life Orientation lesson and Zisser and Francis found that when young adults did engage in open dialogue around the images seen in the LoveLife campaign, they found the experience "positive and beneficial" (194).

The current literature around Life Orientation focuses mainly on the sex education that the students receive within the subject. However, Life Orientation has aims and curriculum

content that reaches far beyond this. Theron and Dalzell (2006: 404) briefly acknowledge this as they note that the students in their study recognised the need to have "thinking and decision-making skills" which "were strongly linked to financial expertise" and can "be linked to survival". They stated that "survival is of paramount importance to individuals, and in a country where jobs are scarce and fiscal resources limited, career choice and financial competence are pivotal to survival" (404). However, they did not go into any further detail regarding whether Life Orientation was effective in offering these other 'life skills' to the students.

My research will attempt to fill this gap by addressing more of the Life Orientation curriculum and not just the sex education aspect of it. I will focus more broadly, on the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation. The case study will focus mainly on the sexual education aspects of Life Orientation, as the literature suggests that this is what dominates the classes. In addition, they reflect the gender and power dynamics in the classroom setting. However, it is very important to focus on the broader aims of Life Orientation and, as such, I will look at the whole curriculum, including the careers advice that the students receive.

The next subsection will focus in more depth on Fine's discourse of desire in sex education and how this is arguably missing from the Life Orientation curriculum and lessons.

2.3: Fine's 'Discourse of Desire'

Life Orientation has to deal with a minefield of emotions and interactions. A key aim of the subject is to "equip learners to interact optimally on a personal, psychological, cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural and socio-economic level" (Dept. of Education 2001: 9). However, Michelle Fine (1988) suggests that this is not always realised in a

classroom environment and that many sexual education programs are missing what she terms a 'discourse of desire'. Fine states that young people are interested in sex and want to find out more about it but that this is restricted when they enter the formal setting of the classroom. She suggests that "while evidence of sexuality is everywhere within public high schools - in the halls, classrooms, bathrooms, lunchrooms and the library - official sexuality education occurs sparsely: in social studies, biology, sex education or inside the nurse's office" (Fine 1988: 31). Furthermore, Fine found that the conversations about sex that did occur in the classroom were dominated by boys and followed a specific discourse linked to hegemonic masculinity. She states, "in classroom observation, girls who were heterosexually active rarely spoke, for fear of being ostracised. Those who were heterosexual virgins had the same worry" (Fine 1988: 37). The opportunity for women to express their sexuality and their sexual desires in class is limited further as Fine presents sex education lessons as having a discourse of 'sexuality as victimization'.

> Female adolescent sexuality is represented as a moment of victimization in which the danger of heterosexuality for adolescent women (and, more recently, of homosexuality for adolescent men) are prominent. While sex may not be depicted as inherently violent, young women (and today, men) learn of their vulnerability to potential male predators. To avoid being victimized, females learn to defend themselves against disease, pregnancy, and 'being used' (Fine 1988: 31-32).

Young women are taught that sex is dangerous, undesirable and unpleasurable and, consequently, are "left to their own (and other's) devices in a sea of pleasures and dangers" (Fine and McClelland 2006: 298). This, as Fine suggests, leads to a 'missing discourse of desire' as the young women are not given a space in which to express their own sexuality and their own wants and desires. Sex becomes taboo for these women and no mention is made of female pleasures or orgasms. Furthermore, the young women who have had sexual

experiences are ostracised and made to feel unworthy. These roles in relation to sex are reaffirmed by both genders in the class, as well as the wider community. Women's expectations of desire is heavily influenced by the cultural and moral values of those around them and Fine (1988: 35) states, "the adolescent female rarely reflects simply on sexuality. Her sense of sexuality is informed by peers, culture, religion, violence, history, passion, authority, rebellion, body, past and future, and gender and racial relations of power".

The lack of a sufficient discourse of desire, identified by Fine, becomes even more pertinent when one considers the wider, societal implications. If one turns to the issue of teenage pregnancy, which sex education should help to prevent, Fine states that,

> growing evidence suggests that women who lack a sense of social or sexual entitlement, who hold traditional notions of what it means to be female – self-sacrificing and relatively passive - and who undervalue themselves, a disproportionately likely to find themselves with an unwanted pregnancy and to maintain it through to motherhood (Fine 1988: 48).

Her research was undertaken in America but these sentiments can be applied to almost any context where sexual education is not sufficiently addressing the sexual and relationship needs of students.

Fine, with her co-author McClelland, developed the 'discourse of desire' theory further in their publication (2006). Here, they argue that the 'discourse of desire' still needs to be developed in a classroom setting, but that it should be taken further to include what she terms 'thick desire'. This can be linked to the wider aims of the Life Orientation as 'thick desire' includes a "broad range of desires for meaningful intellectual, political, and social engagement, the possibility of financial independence, sexual and reproductive freedom, protection from racialized and sexualised violence, and a way to imagine living in the future tense" (Fine and McClelland 2006: 300). This is a far more ambitious concept, which enables

young people to not only look at their sexual desires with an open mind, but also to look at the wider desires in their lives. It relates to the Life Orientation curriculum, which states that the subject "includes opportunities to engage in the development and practice of a variety of life skills to solve problems, to make informed decisions and choices and to take appropriate actions to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly changing society" (Dept. of Education 2011: 8). Fine and McClelland's concept of 'thick desire' has the potential to be very useful when assessing teachers' and students' attitudes towards Life Orientation. However, their work only touches on how this may be achieved by suggesting that "adolescents need good schools, health-care, and freedom from violence (structural, institutional, family, and intimate) in order to develop healthy sexual subjectivities" (Fine and McClelland 2006: 326). Furthermore, their work also warns against disregarding the importance of the school as a valuable institution for instigating this change, stating, "we are more sure than ever that we cannot abandon schools – the place where all children and youth are required to attend, and attend together; the place where intellectual, political and personal possibilities are inspired; where democracy, inquiry and human right are supposed to be fundamental" (Fine and McClelland 2006: 327). This reaffirms the importance of the school and of Life Orientation as a subject. The next section will address the notion that education can be used as part of a larger set of tools to instigate developmental change and will explain Sen's theory of 'Development as Freedom'.

2.4: Education as Development – Sen's 'Development as Freedom'

Further to the dynamics played out in the context of the classroom, one must consider the wider context that Life Orientation classes are found. Life Orientation in South Africa was established "to engage [students] in the development and practice of a variety of life skills to solve problems [and] to make informed decisions and choices" (Dept. of Education 2011: 8).

Furthermore Ahmed et al. (2009: 49) state, the Life Orientation curriculum aims to "equip learners with skills in order to live meaningful lives in a transforming society". This thinking can be located within the literature by Sen, regarding 'development as freedom'. His Nobel Prize winning writing changed the way many development practitioners saw their field and questioned the practices of the World Bank. Sen argued that the traditional way of seeing development, purely in economic terms, is too narrow a focus and does not allow for a comprehensive form of development. Instead, Sen argued for practitioners to see development as a more dynamic concept, which should include the development of one's freedoms, which he divides into five types: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. Sen includes access to a decent education as part of the 'social opportunities' and claims that all five types of 'human freedoms' are fundamental for a country's development.

When one sees development in this way, Sen argues that it allows for the rise of democracy and the expansion of social opportunities such as education and healthcare to be seen as an end in themselves, rather than merely a means to increase economic development. Sen suggests that the expansion of the citizens' freedoms should be viewed "both as the primary end and as the principal means of development" (Sen [1999] 2001: xii). Furthermore, the freedoms that he talks about complement each other.

> For example, there is strong evidence that economic and political freedoms help to reinforce one another, rather than being hostile to one another (as they are sometimes taken to be). Similarly, social opportunities of education and health care, which may require public action, complement individual opportunities of economic and political participation and also help to foster our own initiatives in overcoming our respective deprivations (Sen [1999] 2001: xii).

If one turns to the notion of 'education as development', one can see the Sen's argument is integral as his theory states that one should see education as an important developmental and emancipatory tool; an enabler that can promote economic growth. This can occur in a variety of ways including increasing literacy rates in the country in question and building a skilled work force. This benefits individuals, as they are able to offer more in the labour market and thus expect better wages. It also benefits the country as a whole because a workforce with relevant skills and education can, in the right circumstances, increase economic productivity. Sen used the widely cited example of the 'East Asian Tigers', namely Japan, to explain how an educated workforce can contribute to economic development on a country-wide scale. He stated that in Meiji Japan (1868-1912), the government invested in education before the country was developed. Sen ([1999] 2001: 41) notes, '[the East Asian] economies went comparatively early for massive expansion of education, and later, also of health care, and this they did, in many cases, *before* they broke the restraints of general poverty'. This was previously not thought to be possible and it was believed that only developed countries had the ability to invest in a decent education for their population. However, Japan succeeded, and the high levels of education and literacy rates then enabled the country to develop quickly, when the other elements were in place.

The case of Meiji Japan shows that education is integral in promoting economic growth but Sen's argument comes into its own when he argues that, over and above promoting economic growth, education should also be regarded an 'ends' in itself rather than a 'means to an end'.

> Consider an example. If education makes a person more efficient in commodity production, then this is clearly an enhancement of human capital. This can add to the value of production in the economy and to the income of the person who has been educated. But even with the same level of income, a person may benefit form education - in reading, communicating, arguing, in being

> able to choose in a more informed way, in being taken by seriously by others and so on. The benefits of education, thus, exceed its role as human capital in commodity production (Sen [1999] 2001: 293).

If one sees education as a 'freedom' necessary for development and as an enabler in itself, the importance of education becomes ever more evident. Sen stated that this developmental potential of education became integral in the case of women's education. He based his ideas on the premise that educating women, educates a whole family and, indeed, a whole nation. He used the example of how education can decrease fertility rates in a country, which many argue is an inhibitor of economic growth in many developing countries. Sen ([1999] 2001: 9) quoted Condorcet, the French rationalist's idea that "the progress of reason" would decrease fertility rates. One way that this can be achieved is through direct sex and fertility education in schools, which increases the knowledge of contraception and the benefits of having a small family. This can be seen in the Life Orientation curriculum, as the students learn about different forms of contraception and 'safe sex'. However, education also plays a bigger role than this simple direct teaching about ways in which to decreasing fertility. Education also enables agency through skill development and confidence building and helps to break the cycle of 'persistent childbearing and child rearing routinely imposed on many Asian and African women' (Sen [1999] 2001: 198). Women can learn that condoms prevent pregnancy but they can also learn that they have the power and the right to enforce the actual use of condoms. They can learn that they do not have to endure unwanted pregnancies and unwanted sex because, if they are educated and employed, they do not have to rely on the men that make them pregnant. This message then has the potential to be filtered down to their sons and daughters and in turn teaches them that men and women can be equal. Education also has the potential to change the accepted morals and values within a society. As Sen states, the values

that a society holds also have a great influence over the freedoms that are made available for its citizens.

> Shared norms can influence social features such as gender equity, the nature of childcare, family size and fertility patterns, the treatments of the environment and many other arrangement and outcomes. Prevailing values and social mores also affect the presence or absence of corruption, and the role of trust in economics or social or political relationships. The exercise of freedom is mediated by values, but the values in turn are influenced by public discussion and social interaction (Sen [1999] 2001: 9).

This may seem like an overly optimistic way of looking at the potential of education but the demographic pattern amongst most countries is that, as they become more economically productive and 'develop' in the traditional sense of the word, fertility rates decrease until they result in a diminishing country population. "There is now quite extensive statistical evidence, based on… [cross-section studies] that link women's education including literacy and the lowering of fertility across different countries in the world" (Sen [1999] 2001: 217). This is, however, on the integral supposition that "a reduction in birth rates have often followed the enhancement of women's status and power" (198).

Badat (2009: 4) develops Sen's ideas and places them in a South Africa specific context. He states that "there is a strong predisposition to approach education and investments in educational institutions from the perspective largely of the promotion of economic growth". This, however, misses the wider developmental potential of education as it "also has profound value for the promotion of health and well-being, the assertion and pursuit of social and human rights and active democratic participation". Badat calls this more inclusive concept 'thick development' and states that, without this, "it will be nigh-impossible to eliminate the historical and structural economic and social legacies of apartheid, transform

economic and social relations, erode and redress inequalities in patterns of wealth and ownership".

South Africa will need to encompass the potential of social and democratic freedoms if development, as defined by Sen, is to be at all successful. This needs education to play a pivotal role in raising the general standard of literacy and numeracy across the country and develop individuals' skills. This will enable the population to be part of a productive workforce and to develop themselves as individuals. Furthermore, education needs to address the social and gender issues currently experienced both in the classroom and in the society as a whole, and teach women that they have the power and freedom to be individual social and economic actors as well as contributing an important role to their families' and the country's development as a whole.

2.5: Goffman's Dramaturgical Metaphor – 'Roles', 'Performances' and 'Stages'

Goffman's symbolic internationalist theory of the dramaturgical metaphor was explored in his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, first published in 1959. He suggested that our social interactions are like a play, which is performed with certain rules and regulations. He used the metaphors of a 'stage' 'roles' and 'performances' which he stated can explain all our social interactions. These 'roles' and 'performances' are heavily influenced by the typical behaviour that would normally happen in that scenario. However, Goffman also suggests that they are times when the 'scene' does not play out in its typical way. People lose face, forget the 'role' that they are meant to be playing and the 'scene' breaks down to reveal its insecurities and imperfections. I will explain Goffman's initial theory before arguing that Goffman's strict definitions and his view of a rigid 'front' and 'back stage' may need to be reconsidered when one looks at Life Orientation lessons.

Goffman states that everyone plays a certain 'role' in every social interaction that one is involved in. Their 'role' is determined by expected behaviour according to the personal and professional characteristics of that person. For instance, the role that an army officer plays when speaking to his men will be different to the role that he plays when he is at home and playing with his children. This role-play helps to constitute one's personal 'frontstage', which is the overall impression that one presents to others when interacting with them in any specific situation. Goffman states that one's personal front can include "insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like" (Goffman [1959] 1999: 34). These all affect how people see and judge someone. Some of these characteristics are changeable such as facial expression and bodily gestures but others, such as race and gender are largely fixed and influence every social interaction that one has. This personal front then impacts on one's 'performance' which is defined by Goffman as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffman [1959] 1999: 26).

If one turns to the classroom, the performance of the teacher consists of all the interactions that she engages in over the course of a particular lesson. Each class will see their teacher at least once a week and so, very quickly, an expected performance emerges where they understand the social interactions and expect them to happen. Goffman states that this helps to develop a 'part' for both the teacher and her learners and enables them to establish a social relationship. I will argue that the social relationship that is established between the two 'teams', the teacher and the student, is unique in Life Orientation and different to a standard classroom teacher/student relationship. This will be discussed further in the following sections.

Goffman's theory also states that there are two different social spaces, which are emergent in all social interactions. These, similar to a stage play, are the 'frontstage' and the 'backstage'. The frontstage is where the set social interaction plays out. It is where the 'player' is able to portray exactly what he wants to portray and plays his role to the full. One could say that the player puts on a 'mask' when playing this role. "In a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves – the role we are striving to live up to- this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality" (Park in Goffman [1959] 1999: 30). In the case of a teacher/student interaction, the frontstage is the setting of the classroom. Both the teacher and the students know what social interactions are expected when they enter the classroom. It is expected that the teacher will stand at the front of the classroom and lead the lesson, instructing the learners about what they must do and how they must do it. This formal environment ends abruptly, with the ringing of a bell that signifies the end of the lesson. The rigidity of the frontstage is broken down as the students talk amongst themselves, make phone calls and begin to eat their lunch. The setting that was once the frontstage, is now the backstage and the 'actors' can relax and be themselves once again.

Arguably, in a conventional lesson scenario, the backstages of the teacher and students do not mix and they have little interaction with one another once the lesson is over. For example, the 'scene' of the staffroom is a clear indication of this as the staffroom is a space, in almost all schools, where students are not allowed to enter. It is a backstage for the teachers where they can take off their mask momentarily and become a friend or colleague. However, in Life Orientation, the front stage and back stage are less divided than normal. As such, Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor is most relevant in relation to explaining interactions in Life

Orientation lessons when he describes the abnormal social interactions. This will be elaborated upon in the Findings and Discussion section.

2.6: Conclusion

In order to answer my research question of 'what are the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation', I used the literature presented here. The existing studies related to Life Orientation and sex education help me to situate the work within the current theory. Furthermore, they enable me to see where there are gaps in the knowledge surrounding Life Orientation and how my sub-questions can address these. In my research, I address the relationships between the teacher and students and between the students themselves. This relates to the existing studies around Life Orientation and raises issues of gender and power dynamics within the classroom. Furthermore, Goffman's [1959] (1990) frontstage/backstage theory helps to explain why the Life Orientation teacher and the students act in a certain way in the 'front stage' of the lesson and how their interactions impact the success of the lesson. In addition, my research addresses how these relations can affect the level of participation within the classroom and the existing studies show that the interactions and power relations between the students can stifle free and open conversation when they are situated in a sex education environment. This is further explored by Fine's (1988) 'discourse of desire' as she states that the content and context of sex education lessons limits the potential for a 'discourse of desire' and prevents the young women in the lesson to fully express their sexual wants and desires. Fine's theory ties in to my final research question, which asks whether Life Orientation is an appropriate platform with which to teach young adults about life skills. Fine suggests that such a platform is limiting as it reinforces the hegemonic masculinity seen elsewhere in society. She suggests that sex education has to be more open if it is to be successful at instigating social change. Sen's [1999] (2001)

‘development as freedom’ theory can further explain the wider importance of Life Orientation. He shows how education in general can achieve wider socio-economic aims and enable countries such as South Africa to ‘develop’, in all senses of the word. My research asks whether Life Orientation is currently achieving these broader goals. The next chapter will outline and justify the methodology that was employed in the research process.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1: Introduction

In this chapter, I justify why I chose a qualitative form of data collection and detail the case study method. Then, I will describe my research site and how I gained access to this site. Next, I will detail how I chose my study sample and explain the sampling bias that was present. I then explain in more detail my research methods and my data analysis, which were conducted through Thematic Content Analysis. The last section will detail the ethical considerations that had to be taken into account when conducting my research and the challenges and limitations that arose during the research process.

3.2: Qualitative Research Methods

In order to answer the question of 'what are the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation lessons' it was necessary to conduct qualitative research as "some areas naturally lend themselves more to qualitative types of research, for instance, research that attempts to uncover the nature of persons' experiences" (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 19). The potential depth of this research question would not have been fully realised if quantitative techniques such as surveys and closed questionnaires were used. In order to conduct my research, I undertook participant observation within the classroom setting and semi-structured interviews with the Life Orientation teachers and students. Furthermore, I compared the data collected during the research with the Department of Education Life Orientation curriculum as well as the as government approved Life Orientation textbook that was used in the Grade Eleven classes. My research used a 'theory building', rather than a 'theory testing' approach, as I considered "how the observation *fits into a pattern or a story"* (de Vaus 2011: 6).

3.3: Case Study Method

I employed a case study approach for my research as this was the most relevant method to answer my 'why' and 'how' questions. Yin (2009: 10) states that

> In general, 'what' questions may either be exploratory (in which case, any of the methods could be used) or about prevalence (in which surveys or the analysis of archival records would be favoured). ' How' and 'why' questions are likely to favour the use of case studies, experiments, or histories. The 'case study' can be identified as an empirical inquiry that – investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when – the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

This was suitable for my research as I wanted to explore the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation. However, this related to the socio-economic context that the school was situated and the type of school that the teachers and students were at. The case study enables one to recognise the importance of the context and find links between this and the experience of the research participants.

Furthermore, Yin notes that the case study method should be employed when one wishes to examine contemporary events that cannot be manipulated. The case study method allows one to include "direct observation of the events being studies and interviews of the persons involved in the events" (11).

The research was based on a 'grounded theory' approach, as developed by Glaser and Strauss. Grounded theory is defined as,

> One that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represent. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather,

> one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to the area is allowed to emerge (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 23).

I aimed to develop my ideas and theories whilst conducting the research. I was prepared to change my ideas as the research progressed and new themes came to light. I ensured that my approach was based on a web of interactions between theory and evidence, which were constantly negotiated and renegotiated.

3.4: Description of Research Site

The research was based in a state-sponsored secondary school in the Coloured township of Eldorado Park, in South Johannesburg. A detailed description of both Eldorado Park and the school itself can be found on pages 38-42. The secondary school shall not be named in the research report for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality. I believe that this school was an appropriate site for my research as state-sponsored high schools have, arguably, less access to the quality of teachers and resources than can be found in private high schools. For example, the student teacher ratio is a lot higher in state funded schools and this can have an impact on the quality of education received.

3.5: Permissions Granted

I was granted written permission from the principal of the school *(Appendix 18)* as well as the Gauteng Department of Education *(Appendix 19)* in order to conduct my research. Furthermore, I was granted ethics clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand *(Appendix 20).*

3.6: Gate-Keepers and Access

The research was undertaken in the Life Orientation lessons of the Grade Eleven students. I gained access to the school in Eldorado Park through a colleague at the university who used

to teach at the school. She accompanied me on my first visit to the school and introduced me to the school's principal and a few of her old colleagues. I then continued my communication with the school through the principal via email and cell phone contact.

3.7: Sampling and Sampling Bias

I visited the school a few times a week between 22nd August and 27th September 2012. My sampling method was purposive sampling. I chose this method because I had a sample group of seven Grade Eleven classes with approximately forty students registered in each class. I had to organise my visits to the school around the times that I could get transport and the times of their Life Orientation lessons. This meant that I saw more of certain classes than others and had to choose students from the classes that I could access on the particular days that I was able to visit the school. Within the classes themselves, I wanted to represent the diversity of the students, as the classes were generally made up of equal amounts of male and female students, as well as Coloured and African students. Initially, the Head of Department for Life Orientation chose the students that I interviewed but I quickly realised that this was not representative of the diversity of students as he was only choosing the diligent students who enjoyed the subject and were willing to 'sing its praises'. Therefore, on subsequent visits, I chose the students myself and, although some were initially reluctant to be interviewed, all of them agreed and soon settled into the interview process.

3.8: Research Methods

In order to fully understand the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation, I employed several research methods as this enabled me to triangulate my results which, as Yin (2009: 18) states is a key characteristic of the case study method. I undertook observations in the Life Orientation classes as well as conducting semi-structured interviews. The participant observations enabled me to better understand the class dynamics

and see interactions that were not always acknowledged or seen as important in the interviews.

During the class observations, I sat at the front of the classroom, next to the blackboard and the teacher's desk so I could see all the students and the teacher. The students were aware of my presence and I explained who I was and the purpose of my visit to the classes. However, I did not actively participate in the lessons. I observed seven Life Orientation classes with five different form groups, the brief details of which can be seen in *Appendix 9*.

The classroom observations were undertaken during the same period as the semi-structured interviews. I conducted interviews with twenty-one students from across the seven form groups in Grade Eleven, as well as their Life Orientation teacher, another Life Orientation teacher who taught Grades Eight and Ten, and the Head of Department. The interviews made up an integral part of the data collection because, to use Durkheim's words ([1922] 1992: 89) "a class is in fact a miniature society and must not be conducted as though it were merely a conglomeration of individuals independent from each other. Children in class think, feel and act differently from when they are apart". The interviews added valuable depth to the research and introduced a personal, one-on-one element. All of the interviews were open-ended and used a semi-structure interview schedule. This allowed the interviewees to have more control over the content as they were able to elaborate on the issues and topics that they believed were the most important.

Based on my research questions, I constructed an interview schedule for the learners, which I used to conduct all the interviews with the students. The interviews lasted between six and a half and thirty minutes. One interview lasted for less than two minutes but this was taken as a refusal due to the limited amount of data captured during that time. I ensured that all the

interview questions were answered in each of the interviews but the durations differed greatly as some students were more willing to elaborate on their answers than others. Some of the interviewees did not speak English as their first language and so either felt embarrassed to conduct the interviews in English or felt that their grasp of the language was not sufficient for them to properly express themselves. Furthermore, some of the students seemed disinterested with the whole interview process and, as Weiss (1995: 141) states "the respondent may just feel that there is no potential profit in participating in the interview and therefore no point in cooperating with it". In these cases, I tried to reword the questions or move on to potentially more interesting questions but, in many case, this did not aid the success of the interviews.

Once the student interviews were completed, I undertook the teacher interviews. I initially wrote an interview schedule for the semi-structured interviews but I allowed changes to be made to this according to my preliminary findings from the student interviews and the classroom observations. It was made evident that certain aspects of my research questions should be investigated further and the interview schedule was edited accordingly before any of the teacher interviews were carried out.

3.9: Data Analysis: Thematic Content Analysis

My observation field notes were written-up on the same day that the observations took place and key similarities and findings were highlighted. As Weiss (1995: 3) states, qualitative interviews cannot be easily categorised and their analysis relies on interpretation, summary and integration. As such, I deemed that the most appropriate way to analyse the interviews was to use a Thematic Content Analysis approach. This form of analysis enabled myself, as the researcher to "group and distil from the texts a list of common themes in order to give expression to the communality of voices across participants" (Anderson 2007, 1). This was achieved through a logical framework of analysis, influenced by Prof. Van Zyl's (Lecture

Attended 11/10/12) approach. Firstly, I undertook 'vertical analysis' by transcribing all the interviews and working through them, selecting key quotes and points. I summarised each transcription with a few bullet points and quotes. Then, I took the analysed transcripts and highlighted quotes and points that were similar. This enabled me to see what themes were emerging from the data. These themes were then used as points of elaboration and they helped me to construct the paragraphs in the findings and discussion section of my research.

3.10: Ethical Considerations

During my research, I was aware of certain ethical considerations that had to be upheld. I interviewed students from Grades Eleven, which included students who were sixteen and seventeen. They did not fit into the 'vulnerable' category, as described in the University of the Witwatersrand ethics clearance form and, consequently, the students were old enough to sign their own consent forms. However, I still gave them parent consent forms and information sheets *(Appendix 12 and 16)* so their guardians knew that they were undertaking interviews and that they could pull out of the research at any time. I included my contact details in these information sheets so either the students or their guardians could contact me.

The Life Orientation curriculum involves the teaching of social and sexual education, which includes topics such as sexual relationships, gender issues within relationships, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. During the interviews, the students were encouraged to discuss these topics in relation to the Life Orientation lessons, which meant that I had to be sensitive to the topics and ensure that confidentiality was maintained throughout the research and write-up process. None of the students spoke about issues that required follow-up or support but I had the contact details of 'Lifeline' a twenty-four hour counselling hotline, if such issues arose and they needed someone professional to consult.

Furthermore, when I interviewed the Life Orientation teachers, I had to use a slightly different approach. The teachers were older than I am and so required a different approach. The Head of Department was reluctant to speak to me and I had to be quite forceful, asking him on several occasions for an interview until he agreed. The teachers maintained a level of professional distance, which gave their interviews a more formal tone. I ensured that, again, their confidentiality remained and that they did not have to answer any questions that could have compromised their position as a teacher in the school.

In all the interviews and focus groups that are conducted, I issued information sheets about the research *(Appendix 12 and 14)* as well as consent forms explaining the different forms of data collection and how the data will be used *(Appendix 13 and 15).* I ensured anonymity by changing the names of the interviewees in all of the analysis and write-up of the research. Confidentiality was ensured as I kept the data secure at all times and only my supervisor and I had access to them. All transcripts, recording and electronic data pertaining to the interviews, participant observation, and subsequent write-up will be kept secure for five years after the research is complete.

3.11: Reflections on Fieldwork: Challenges and Limitations

During the research process, I experienced several challenges and limitations. Firstly, it took a long time for my research outline to be approved by the Gauteng Department of Education, which meant that my ethics clearance and the commencement of my research were delayed. When I was able to start my research, I had to limit my sample size for my participants. I had initially wanted to research students in both Grades Eleven and Twelve. However, I was informed by the Principal that the Grade Twelve students were only in class for a further two weeks before their study leave started. Thus, I would not have been able to collect a sufficient amount of data from the Grade Twelves for the research to be valid.

The next challenge arose when I interviewed the students. I had initially planned to interview them in the classroom. However, the teachers had their own, individual classrooms and the occupied them during break times and used to space to mark and plan work, which meant that the classrooms were never free. As such, I interviewed the students outside, in a quiet space on the school grounds. Furthermore, due to time constraints, I had to interview two students in each Life Orientation lesson. It took several minutes to organise the students and find an interview place at the school. To save time and ensure that I only had to disturb each lesson once, I took two students and interviewed them one after the other. They all agreed to the other student being present during the interviews but it compromised the confidentiality of the interviews. Weiss (1995: 144) sates that "having others present in an interview setting always affects what can be asked and what will be reported". This was made evident a few times, as the second interviewees seemed to be influenced by the responses of the first.

There were also unavoidable aspects of my own character, which influenced the interview process and the observations. I am a white British female and I saw only one other white person, a student, in the school. This meant that both the teachers and students were not used to seeing white people in the area. However, Weiss (1995: 137) states that differences in background and race need not be a negative aspect of the interview. His own experience has shown that "some of my most instructive interviews have been good just because I was an outsider who needed instruction". Indeed, many of the respondents regarded my race and nationality as a positive aspect as they saw me as a foreign researcher who had specifically chosen their school for my research. This allowed me a certain level of authority, which would not have otherwise been present. However, it also worked to my detriment as some of the interviewees seemed reluctant to talk openly to me in the interviews, especially when issues of drugs and sex arose. I explained before each interview who I was and what I was

doing at the school but even so, some of the learners presumed that I was from the Department of Education and did not want to talk about topics that could get them in trouble. Furthermore, it was difficult for me to have detailed interviews with the learners whose home language was not English. Some of the Afrikaans speakers had trouble expressing themselves in English and others did not find it comfortable to have such a long conversation in English. However, for the majority of students at the school, their language of instruction is English and so I did not deem it necessary to employ a translator for the interviews.

3.12: Conclusion

I have presented the reasons for choosing a qualitative form of research, specifically a case study. I have also shown why interviews and observations were used in the research process and how the data collected were analysed. Furthermore, I have explained how the site and sample were chosen and how I gained access to them. Lastly I explained the ethical considerations that had to be taken into account when conducted the research and the challenges and limitations that arose during the research. The next chapter will present my findings from the research and locate this within the wider discussion of the attitudes and experiences towards Life Orientation.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1: Introduction

This chapter presents my research findings and locates it within the literature of both Michelle Fine and Erving Goffman. I will begin by contextualising Life Orientation within my research site Eldorado Park and relate the subject to the difficulties that the local community face. Next, I will use evidence from my observations to present the situation within the school itself and build a picture of an 'average' Life Orientation lesson. The third section will introduce Erving Goffman's [1959] (1990) theory of the dramaturgical metaphor to begin to explain the classroom interactions between both teacher and student as well as between students. I will explain his theory of the 'front stage' and how the interactions within this space are affected by the gender relations between the students. I will use Fine's (1988 and 2006) theory of a discourse of desire to further explain this. The next section will then describe the 'back stage' in Life Orientation and explain how this space can be understood as unique and more fluid and changeable than first suggested by Goffman. The last section will look at the wider context as it questions whether Life Orientation can really be used as a tool for social change within Eldorado Park as well as within South Africa as a whole. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the research findings.

4.2: The Socio-Economic Context of Eldorado Park

When considering the attitudes and experiences of Life Orientation, it is necessary to locate the subject within the context of the geographical area in which the students live. Space has placed a very important part in the history of racial segregation in South Africa and it continues to be influence how people see the city and themselves, and to the extent that they can effect change within their own lives. Becker and Leildé (2006: 163) state,

> Thinking of oneself as… a Johannesburg resident carries very different meanings for middle class and poor residents. These meanings that range from pride in neighbourhood and self-esteem in career achievement to frustration about exclusion and anger about stigmatisation, which appear to be at odds with the lofty post-apartheid ideals of 'one city for all'.

This geographical segregation began during apartheid with the 'Group Areas Act', which was implemented in 1950. This act required people to live in certain geographical areas, according to the racial category that was given to them by the apartheid government. The law aimed to keep the South African cities as a 'White only' area and the Pass Laws ensured that any other race of people could not stay in the central areas once the working day was over.

Subsequently, Eldorado Park was established in the South-West of Johannesburg, near to the much larger African township of Soweto. Eldorado Park was formed as a Coloured area and, although the Group Areas Act was abolished in 1991, the effects of it can still be seen in Johannesburg today. As Van de Merwe and Davids (2006: 27) state, 'the South African city is still highly segregated and still in the process of recovering from the effects of socio-culturally and economically imposed apartheid structures'. However, the removal of these geographical restrictions has enabled a certain amount of change. Although the area of Eldorado Park is still dominated by a Coloured population, the school where the research was undertaken has a student body that consists of a large proportion of Black Africans. This is due to the informal settlement that has been established on the land next to Eldorado Park. According to the 2011 South African Census data, in wards 17 and 18, which Eldorado Park comprises, 84.9% (56,988) of people who live in formal residential dwellings class themselves as Coloured and 12.6% (8,472) class themselves as Black African *(Appendix 5).* Furthermore, just 11.7% (960) of people in informal residential dwellings class themselves as Coloured and 84% (6,910) class themselves as Black African. This show that the majority of

Black Africans that live in the area, reside in informal residential dwellings. As such, the informal settlement has also changed the first languages that are spoken in the area. Census data shows that 57% of people in formal residential dwellings speak Afrikaans as their first language and 34.9% speak English *(Appendix 6).* However, in the informal residential dwellings, Sesotho is the most widely spoken language with 30.7% of people speaking it as their first language. In the informal settlement, only 14.7% speak Afrikaans as their first language and 2.9% of people speak English as their first language. The informal settlement will have contributed to the socio-economic issues seen in the area as, according to Van de Merwe and Davids, informal settlements typically have a unique set of social issues, such as a high rate of HIV/AIDS, unemployment and poor education levels (Van de Merwe and Davids in Becker and Leildé 2006: 28). These are combined with the low education and employment levels that are also seen in the formal settlements of Eldorado Park. Census data (2011b) shows that 27.7% of people in informal residential dwellings are employed and 72.3% of people in informal residential dwellings are either unemployed, seeking work or not economically active *(Appendix 7).* This is marginally better than the formal residential areas where 26.6% of people are employed and 73.3% of people are either unemployed, seeking work or not economically active. Income levels, which are defined by Statistics South Africa (2011a: 6) as 'all sources of income e.g. social grants, UIF, remittances, rentals, investments, sales or products, services, etc' are also low in the area as 49.3% of people in formal residential dwellings earn no income at all and 67.2% of people have an income of less than R1600 ($180) a month *(Appendix 8)*. These figures are worse for the informal settlement where 56% of people earn no income at all and 83.24% of people have an income of less than R1600 a month. This is higher than the figure for South Africa as a whole where 72.49% of people have an income of less than R1600 a month.

The students that were interviewed as part of my research were all in Grade Eleven and this already represents an achievement in their community, as, in Eldorado Park, 43% of people aged over nineteen in formal residential dwellings and 64.5% of people aged over nineteen in the informal dwellings did not reach Grade Eleven standard of education. This also means that the majority of the residents in the area have not matriculated from high school. Furthermore, the Life Orientation teachers identified drug use and a high rate of teenage pregnancy as specific problems that the area faced *(Appendix 11: TF1).* As such, it would have been useful to know the average age of first child in Eldorado Park. This is one of the questions that was asked on the 2011 South African Census, however, these data at the time of writing, were not available to the public and therefore could not be presented in this section.

The following sections will assess the extent to which the Life Orientation teachers are able to deal with this unique socio-economic context, and will question whether Life Orientation has the ability to affect real change in the lives of these young South Africans.

4.3: The Classroom Setting

The learners at the school where the research was conducted live in both the township of Eldorado Park as well as the surrounding areas, including an informal settlement on the other side of the highway to Eldorado Park. The school is co-educational and was originally built as a Coloured-only school but, since the end of apartheid, it has seen an influx of African students.

The students at Eldorado Park are a mix of Coloured and African and speak English, Afrikaans and several African languages. These two racial categories are also represented in the Life Orientation teachers; however, the teacher that teaches all the Grade Eleven Life

Orientation classes, which were the classes that were involved in my research, is an African woman in her mid-thirties. In both the interviews and the participant observation, very few learners saw her race as an important aspect in relation to how they perceived her. However, many saw her age and gender as an important aspect when considering their experiences of Life Orientation. It was suggested that her relative proximity to the learners in terms of her age and the fact that she was female helped to create an intimacy and frankness in the lessons which was seen as beneficial to their learning and overall experience. This will be explored further in the following section.

In addition to the personal characteristics of the teacher, the pedagogy of the Life Orientation lessons also affected the students' experience. 'Pedagogy' can be defined as "any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another" (Mortimore 1999: 4). This definition allows for the recognition of the learners' role, as well as the teacher's. In the Life Orientation lessons observed, however, this pedagogy was often not fully realised.

The setting where the Life Orientation lessons took place was the same classroom for each lesson as the teachers have their own individual classrooms and the learners move with each lesson change. The classroom is a simply built room, on the first floor of one of the blocks in the school. Upon entering the classroom, one notices that the chairs and desks are lined up in rough rows. The learners, however, sit perpendicular to the blackboard, not facing it. There are display boards on the walls with a couple of informative posters on them but mostly the boards are covered in graffiti. At the beginning of each Life Orientation lesson, the teacher writes up notes on the board *(Picture 1)*, which are copied directly from the textbook. The students then copy down these notes. The teacher wrote the notes on the board, as there were only approximately twenty Life Orientation textbooks for classes that often exceeded forty

learners. Each week, the notes change as the lesson moves onto a different subject area within Life Orientation.

The classroom setting evoked the same thoughts as in Baxen's work, who stated in her research of Life Orientation teaching that "past histories of segregation and neglect continued to etch their mark on the physical environment, psyche and everyday lived experiences of these communities – patterns that were acutely visible in the selected schools" (Baxen in Dunne 2008:174).

Picture 1: Some of the teacher's notes written up during a Life Orientation lesson



Source: Picture taken 1st September 2012, Eldorado Park

Picture 2: One of the Grade Eleven Life Orientation Classes



Source: Picture taken 4th September 2012, Eldorado Park

The start of the lesson is indicated by a bell and the learners slowly come in. It typically took them around five minutes before the start of each lesson to settle down and listen to the teacher. She then explained the objective of the lesson and talked through the notes that were on the board. The learners were then expected to write down the notes in their books but many did not do this and continued to chat to each other. In each lesson, it was the same learners that did their work and the same ones that distracted each other. It was predominately female learners who copied the notes down.

After the note taking, the teacher then encouraged the students to discuss the subject matter. In general, this started with a whole class discussion where the teacher addressed a topic or a question to all the learners and waited for their responses. These discussions lacked direction and quickly descended into small groups talking amongst themselves or talking loudly over each other. Overall, they listened to the teacher when she spoke, but did not listen to each other. This was expected behaviour from the students and the teacher noted, during on e particularly disruptive lesson, "I've given this class to God. There's nothing more that I can do".

In the lessons observed, the learners distracted each other a lot, which became particularly prevalent when the conversations turned to the issues of sex and sexual relations. Some of the learners did not seem comfortable when talking about sex and either kept quiet or made jokes about the subject. However, there were also students who enjoyed turning the conversation to this topic, as it was seen as more interesting than some of the other subjects in Life Orientation. In most of my observations, the class was supposed to be learning about the topic area of 'Social and Environmental Issues' but the students would often try to change the subject around to sex.

The learners preferred it when the lesson was discussion based and was focussed on something that they could relate to. For example, a learner entered one of the lessons late after coming back from the health clinic. He stated that he could not see the doctor as someone had broken into the clinic in the night. The teacher then linked this back to the lesson objectives, stating that this was an example of social injustice. In another instance, the teacher recalled an incident that she had witnessed. She told them about a woman she had met in a maternity ward and how this woman's mother wanted to take her child away from

her. The teacher explained that the pregnant women did not act upon her right, as a mother, to keep her child.

The lessons tended to finish abruptly as a second bell indicated that the lesson was over. The students then exited quickly, often when the teacher was still talking. They did not wait for her to finish or to conclude the lesson.

One can see that the lessons follow a set routine of note-taking and then attempted discussion. This follows a traditional way of rote teaching but this it has been shown that

> When teachers concentrate solely on rote learning, teaching and assessing focus solely on remembering elements or fragments of knowledge, often in isolation from any context. When teachers focus on meaningful learning, however, remembering knowledge is integrated within the larger task of constructing new knowledge or solving new problems (Mayer 2002: 228).

The Life Orientation curriculum contains stimulating content and this has the potential to be taught in an innovative way. Although the Life Orientation curriculum is nationally planned and composed by the Department of Education, the teachers have freedom over what they prioritise in the lessons and why. For example, one teacher stated, "we have certain chapters to cover within a term. You can cover it any way you want to but we choose to do it as the curriculum guides us so that… you know, do the same work with all the grade 10s" (LM2). The Head of Department for Life Orientation confirmed this and stated that freedom within the curriculum allows for a variety of students' opinions to be taken into account. This flexibility and potential innovation within Life Orientation, however, did not emerge in the lessons observed and the limited resources available to the teacher was often not used in the most productive way.

The textbook used in the lessons in Eldorado Park is one example of how Life Orientation has far more potential than was observed. The textbook *Focus on Life Orientation* (Rooth, Stielau, Plantagie and Maponyane [2001] 2006:92-95) has several pages that address 'Social and Environmental Issues', the topic that I observed most at the school. It displays pictures of multiracial South African students defining terms such as 'social justice' and 'environmental sustainability'. The textbook then turns to a scenario of 'Dudu' who lives in a fictional informal settlement called 'Freedom Village'. It describes her daily living conditions and then invites the learners to 'work in a group' and answer questions about Dudu's situation. These include discussing the social issues that she is facing, asking the learners how they think Dudu feels about her situation and asking them what actions could be taken to help Dudu. See *Appendix 10* for this example of this Life Orientation textbook exercise. Activities such as this have been specially designed by teaching professionals to help the Life Orientation teachers address specific issues in their area as well as in South Africa generally. They have been specifically chosen to reflect the aims of the curriculum and approach teaching in a dynamic and relevant manner. However, in my observations, the teacher only used these exercises once in her lesson and she gave up quickly as the learners seemed disinterested and were not paying full attention. The potential and the reality of teaching the Life Orientation lessons were two very different things.

4.4: Classroom Interactions – 'Sex talk' in the Frontstage and the Missing 'Discourse of Desire'

As shown in the previous section, the structure of the Life Orientation lessons in the school were fragmented and ill disciplined. They had a general pattern of note taking followed by discussion but this was not adhered to by all the students and some were not engaged in any part of this structure. The individual classroom interactions were varied and differed according to the gender and power relations that played out in the classroom. Furthermore,

the race, gender, and level of sexual experience of the learners also affected how they spoke and acted in front of each other.

To further explain these classroom interactions, I will use Goffman's theory of symbolic interactionism, which states that, in all social interactions, people take on, what he defines as particular 'roles' and 'performances'. I will argue that this can clearly be seen in the Life Orientation lessons and I will use the example of 'sex talk' to show this. Sex talk can be defined as any interaction between the students or the teacher and students that referred to sexual activity. This ranged from a formal question directed at the teacher, to a male learner 'bragging' about his sexual exploits over the weekend, both of which were seen in the classroom observations. I will explain how these 'roles' and 'performances' are influenced by the gender relations present in the classroom and that the power dynamics within these relations may be detrimental to the success of Life Orientation as a whole as they prevent what Fine (1988) termed as a 'discourse of desire' from being realised in the classroom context. Next, I will explain how these interactions, which in a classroom context are normally limited to the front stage, are allowed to enter into a backstage. This is a time after the lesson where the learners are able to talk to the Life Orientation teacher on an individual basis. I will argue that because of this unique back stage, the role of the teacher is not as rigid as in other spaces, as they begin to take on more of a counselling role. Furthermore, I will argue that this contributes to the front and back stages becoming more fluid than Goffman's theory suggested for a classroom situation.

Life Orientation was described by both the students and the teachers as being a unique subject where the teacher had the opportunity to find a lot out about the students and interact with them on a deeper and more informal level, not usually permitted in other lesson contexts. This depth was made possible because of the content that the students were

engaging in. The Life Orientation curriculum is designed to include topics that relate directly to the students' personal lives. Although their teacher stated that the students are supposed to keep discussions abstract and general, they often use their own situations as examples and the class discussions often relate to their own experiences. This results in a unique interaction between the teacher and the students. For instance, if one uses the example of 'sex talk' one can see that the personal lives of both the learners and the teacher is revealed, as they cannot help but refer to their own experiences. Erving Goffman's theory of the dramaturgical metaphor helps to explain the interactions that take place between the teacher and her students. Goffman's theory states that, in the words of Shakespeare, 'all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players'. This means that, in every social interaction that one engages in, one is expected to play a certain role to deal with both the situation and with the interaction of others. These roles are normally rigid in a school context and there are clear boundaries related to what is and is not acceptable in the classroom. However, Life Orientation breaks this mould to a degree and the interactions in the front stage are influenced by and dependent on a different set of rules and characteristics of the 'players'. Gender relations play a far more important role in the interactions seen in Life Orientation than they normally would in a classroom setting, and this could be seen especially when the learners spoke about sex and their own sex lives. The Life Orientation curriculum does have a section that focuses on sex and relationships but, according to time allocation, this is not intended to be a major part of the curriculum. The area that sex education falls under is 'development of the self in society' and this area is designed to account for 17% or eleven out of the sixty-six Life Orientation contact hours that the Grade Elevens have during the academic year (Dept. of Education 2011: 9). Furthermore, this area of study contains other material and does not solely focus on sexual education. However, students spoke extensively about sex and, in the classroom, would frequently turn the conversation around to the subject. These classroom

interactions, however, were not as free and open as one may first assume as the sexually active males in the class dominated the conversations, and the female and non-sexually active male students were largely ignored. One sexually active boy said, "maybe when it's about time to speak about sex, some of them they never had sex you understand, so they have to back off and listen to what we say" (LM16). The 'sex talk' reaffirmed the 'hyper masculine' gender roles seen in the Life Orientation lessons and in South African society as a whole. One male interviewee stated that, "as a boy, we would always love to enjoy uh, sexual topics. So we can need to know what we are, what are the effects of it, how do we get it" (LM6). In addition to the experienced male students talking a lot about their sex lives, it was suggested that the Coloured girls also liked to engage in sex talk. It was suggested by some of the student interview participants and the Life Orientation teachers that the African girls did not like to talk about sex as it was frowned upon in their community. One Life Orientation teacher said in his interview that, "African parents are not allowed to talk [about] such issues with their children" (TM3). Furthermore, it was expressed that the female students should not appear to be too knowledgeable when it came to sex, as this was seen as detrimental to a girl's reputation. One respondent noted in an interview,

> You kind of feel that everybody's looking at you and you feel that everybody already knows that you are sexual active (*sic.)* … They will give you labels, I cannot say them. Can I say them? [Laughter] Like you're a bitch and everything. You're a girl, you shouldn't say that (LF3).

The girls viewed themselves as tacking a back seat in sexual conversations and preferred to listen to the boys. Many of them viewed the boys as knowing more about sex and some of the female interviewees stated that this extended to their relationships with both their classmates and with men outside of their school life. One girl stated, "you believe everything that your boyfriend tells you" (LF15). This reflects Fine's (1988: 35) work and her suggestion that a

‘discourse of desire’ is missing in sexual education, especially for young women who are discouraged from talking about their sexual experiences.

The issue of a missing discourse of desire becomes even more pertinent when one considers the high teenage pregnancy rate that the Life Orientation teacher noted as a pertinent problem in the school. Fine (1988, 48) states that

> Growing evidence suggests that women who lack a sense of social or sexual entitlement, who hold traditional notions of what it means to be female – self-sacrificing and relatively passive - and who undervalue themselves, are disproportionately likely to find themselves with an unwanted pregnancy and to maintain it through to motherhood.

Although her research was carried out in America, a similar situation can be seen in Eldorado Park. The young women that I observed were used to being surrounding by a sexual discourse but were rarely directly involved in it themselves. Many stated that they would rather listen to the boys as they ‘knew better’ when it came to sexual relations. One interviewee stated, “with boys we also learn experiences, when they talk, we listen to what they talk, because a man has more experience than a woman. So we listen to them.” (LF7).

The ‘sex talk’ in the Life Orientation lessons was further problematic as many of the interviewees commented that it was one of the things that distracted them the most in Life Orientation. One girl noted,

> Sometimes the sex thing you know. When you’re a tomboy, sometimes eish, it’s really you know, when they talk about sex and everything it’s irritating sometimes. Ja, maybe when they’re talking about girls and then they’re gonna say what did I do to that girl, you see sometimes something like that, it’s disrupt[ing], it’s really irritating (LF13).

She suggested that the boys in the class would often undermine girls that they had sex with, by talking openly about their sexual exploits in front of the whole class. Another respondent also notes that his friends would talk openly about their sex lives, "especially uhm, even mentioning ladies' names and stuff, which they have done with and slept with" (LM11).

The 'sex talk' also became a defining feature in other lessons and, consequently, the 'stage' of Life Orientation was seemingly extended beyond the accepted boundaries, where such discussions were not relevant or welcome. One boy noted, "with the maths class, the Sir asked… if you multiply length times breadth, you'll get the answer, now she's [a fellow student] like now explaining about if you put this and that you'll get sex (laughter)." (LM10).

Although there were obvious examples where the 'sex talk' reaffirmed gender roles, the conversations and levels of openness in the Life Orientation lessons were still welcomed by most of the students. They also appreciated how open and honest the teacher was towards them and the subject. This opens up an important dynamic within Life Orientation as Baxen notes that "little if any research has asked questions about teacher positionality: how teachers are positioned, or indeed postion themselves, as mediators of knowledge about sexuality and HIV/AIDS" (Baxen in Dunne 2008:171). One male student said, "our teacher is very open, so we can go to her anytime and explain a what, what situation we're in and things" (LM20). In relation to the personality of the Life Orientation teacher, one girl noted that 'it's really easy for us to relate to her. She's open and just says things straightforward, she doesn't hide some of the things' (LF1). This intimate relationship that the students had with their teacher reaffirmed the unique nature of the Life Orientation subject. The teacher was seen as more than just an educator and one female student said, "[the Life Orientation teacher's] more like a second mother to us as learners" (LF5). This level of personal and confidential interaction was not allowed or welcomed in their other subjects and many of the students recognised this.

These frank, frontstage interactions with the teacher were allowed to continue after the lesson had ended and enter the back stage of the teacher/student relationship. The setting for this backstage was the same as the frontstage, as the interactions were still conducted in the classroom. However, they were undertaken at a time when the students would usually have to leave the classroom and either go to their next lesson or go outside for their break time. The Life Orientation teacher that was interviewed and observed said that she encouraged the students to stay behind in the classroom. She opened up the space for them to do their homework or to approach her if they had a problem that they did not want to divulge during the lesson, in the front stage setting. She said that she would often refer them to outside services or support networks, "sometimes I take them to the police station, sometimes I take them to SANCA [South African National Council on Alcoholism]" (TF1). This confidential back stage space was appreciated by the students and one interviewee stated, "she won't go speak to other… another educator, to tell that educator this is happening with this specific learner. She'll keep it to yourself between you and her" (LF5). Another Life Orientation teacher that was interviewed commented on the benefits of this fluid front/backstage interaction, stating, "I chose LO because I, I feel it makes me know my learners a bit better, than just you know academically" (TM2). The relevance of this fluidity between the front and back stages will be discussed in the next section.

4.5: The Presentation of the Front and Back Stages and the Fluid Nature of this in Life Orientation Lessons

Both the frontstage and the backstage are affected by the personal attributes of the players involved and these affect how people see and judge a particular player, which, in this case, is the Life Orientation teacher. Some of these attributes are changeable such as facial expression and bodily gestures but others, such as race and gender are fixed and influence every social interaction that one has. This personal front then impacts on one's 'performance' which is

defined by Goffman as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffman [1959] 1999: 26). One can see that the performance of the Life Orientation teacher consists of all the interactions that she engages in over the course of a particular lesson. Every class sees their Life Orientation teacher twice a week and so, very quickly, an expected performance emerges where they understand the social interactions in the front stage and expect them to happen. This helps to develop a 'part' for both the Life Orientation teacher and her learners and enables them to establish a relationship. The relationships that emerge between the two 'teams' are unique and different to a standard teacher/student relationship.

This uniqueness is partly due to the *unofficial obligation* that the Life Orientation teacher has to know what is happening in her students' lives and whether these events are affecting their schoolwork and their overall wellbeing. Prising out this information in the classroom setting can be difficult, as most of the students do not want to divulge their life issues in the frontstage of the classroom. Therefore, the Life Orientation teacher I observed used some of the techniques that Goffman describes as 'unofficial communication' to access this personal information within the front stage. This

> May be carried on by innuendo, mimicked accents, well-placed jokes, significant pauses, veiled hints, purposeful kidding, expressive overtones, and other sign practices. Rules regarding this laxity are quite strict. The communicator has the right to deny that he 'meant anything' by his action, should his recipients accuse him to his face of having conveyed something unacceptable, and the recipients have the right to act as if nothing, or only something innocuous, has been conveyed (Goffman [1959] 1999: 187).

This 'unofficial communication' was seen in one of the classroom observations. In one incident, a male student was distracting his friends in the class by showing them a drawing of

a car. He was walking around the classroom and was not listening to the teacher. The teacher then said to him, "Are you using substance abuse *(sic.)*?" suggesting that the student was intoxicated and that is why he was distracting his friends. The student then attempted to look shocked and offended and said "No Mam! I'm not using anything!" If this fleeting observation were to be taken out of context, it may seem that the teacher was stepping over the mark in accusing the student of taking drugs as she quickly laughed it off and moved on with the lesson. However, the reality of the situation was that this was a student who she knew was a drug user and so her aspersions may well have been correct. He was not the type of student who would approach the teacher after the lesson in the back stage and discuss his issues as he was influenced by the ideals of masculinity and did not feel the need or, perhaps, ability to talk individually to the teacher. As such, the teacher had to open up this level of personal enquiry in the front stage. In order to achieve this, she had to add a light-hearted laugh at the end of the interaction to cover up the true gravity of what she was saying.

The Life Orientation teacher used another of Goffman's interactional methods as she opened up the normally formal space of the classroom front stage by becoming more honest and divulging more information about her private life than would normally be present in a teacher/student relationship. For example, in several classroom observations with different tutor groups, the teacher recounted a time when she was in hospital, giving birth to her baby. She was in a ward with another women who was having problems with her mother with regards to who should take care of her baby once it was born. Goffman ([1959] 1999: 200) equated this to a sinner opening up to one's sins and uniting the team members as she

> Stands up and tells to those who are present things he would ordinarily attempt to conceal or rationalize away; [s]he sacrifices [her] secrets and [her] self-protective distance from others, and this sacrifice tends to induce a backstage solidarity among all present.

This technique seemed be very successful for the Life Orientation teacher as, during the classroom observations, the times when the students were at their most attentive, were the times when the teacher was recounting a personal anecdote.

The Life Orientation teacher I observed successfully managed to renegotiate the terms of the front stage. Goffman ([1959] 1999: 37) states,

> When an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it. Whether his acquisition of the role was primarily motivated by a desire to perform the given task or by a desire to maintain the corresponding front, the actor will find that he must do both.

However, my research revealed that the Life Orientation teacher was able to move above and beyond the rigid 'teacher' role that normally occurs. She was able to take on a role of a counsellor, as well as a teacher, and the social interactions between the teacher and students became more relaxed and personal. Many, although not all, of the students commented on the benefit of being able to approach the teacher after the lesson and continue the lesson in their own personal way, which was made possible because of an unspoken promise of confidentiality. These were students with important issues and problems in their lives and often had no-one else to rely on apart from the Life Orientation teacher for support. The teachers still had to maintain a level of professionalism and one interviewee stated that "in LO you, you, you come a bit close to them, (pause) you allow them to see another side of you as well. You know, uhm. So I wouldn't be too strict when it comes to uhm keeping that distance, I think just a professional distance…" (TM2). However, the Life Orientation teachers' role was able to develop and they were able to find out far more about the students' personal lives than would be normally acceptable in a student/teacher interaction. One Life Orientation teacher noted, "some of the learners come to you if they've got problems, they

talk to you. They want to talk and address their problem. They want to see your empathy, they want you to empathise with them. Can you see? They want you to be there for them" (TF1). The Life Orientation teacher suggested that the time and space after the lesson is opened up for them when they are facing a problem that would not be appropriate to talk about in front of the whole class. She said,

> You can, like uh know how do they live their lifestyle by just making like uh, if you are uh discussing in class and what, and then after that you can call one of them or maybe sometimes… he's now doing things that are… we can't tolerate, even the parents can't tolerate. You see them in class. So I just call him or her aside and talk to him alone, and say yes I understand, we were talking about this and then, and then you'll find them there. And shame they are open if you are open to them and you are friendly (TF1).

The learners also commented on the fluidity of the frontstage and backstage. For example, one of the young women that was interviewed recounted a situation where she became pregnant and didn't know who to talk to. She said that she does not have a mother so she went to her Life Orientation teacher for advice.

> She told me everything about it and I went to her, I asked questions and she was… she just helped me a lot man… I was in a situation, I was pregnant. But then I… I didn't know where to go, where to turn to cause I don't have a mother and I went to the teacher. But that was last year. And I went to her and she gave me advice, good advice, ja (LF19).

This shows that some of the learners were willing to open up to their Life Orientation teachers in a way that is far more intimate and revealing than a normal teacher/pupil relationship. There were several occasions where the interviewees mentioned that they had no one else to talk to about the problems they face.

The socio-economic context of Eldorado Park contributes to the lack of confidees present in the students' lives as there is a high proportion of single-parent families and child-headed households. One interviewee mentioned that he lived with only his brother, who was just a couple of years older than him, as both his mother and father both lived outside of Johannesburg. In this situation, where there are two young adults living in a city by themselves, having the support of a qualified Life Orientation teacher can be an important helping hand.

The fact that the learners perceived their teacher as being suitably qualified to provide them with advice and education about relationship issues was also seen as important. One girl mentioned that she would turn to her Life Orientation teacher rather than her own mother because there was a greater level of emotional distance between the two parties. She stated that her Life Orientation teacher would see the situation from an objective, non-biased standpoint and would ensure that the conversation remained confidential. The interviewee said,

> If I don't feel like comfortable in speaking with my mother, I will come to the teacher. 'Cause I believe she, she's more equipped than my mother. She can give me like, you know, the medical and the psychological about it, whereas my mother just think it's her daughter and this is happening to her, and try you know and protect me through it. And like if I tell her something she'll keep it in confidence and then it's like, she'll, it's like she'll look at it with a third, a third person. Not like as in okay this is my daughter, like whereas your mother will look at it in that way (LF15).

In this context, where the back stage opens up for the students, 'manner' becomes very important. Goffman defines manner as "those stimuli which function at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation" (Goffman

[1959] 1999: 35). This means that the Life Orientation teacher must present an approachable, yet assertive manner in order to achieve a rapport with the students to allow them to trust her. This was noted in one of the interviews with a Life Orientation teacher when he stated, "I think you need to be open, you need to be frank, you need to be cautious as well, and knowledgeable about young people. Ja, but you need to have that enthusiasm" (TM2). By allowing the 'back stage' to become more fluid, the teachers could better relate to the students and become more humanised. Furthermore, it allowed them to understand their students' backgrounds and personal issues, which then helped the teachers when they taught their other subjects. One Life Orientation teacher stated,

> It helps me because then I get a clearer background, on or picture on their background. And also see how they interact with a different subject. Because Afrikaans is more academic and there's only certain things that we can do there. In LO it's open, uhm they're free to express themselves. And I learn more of them, about them when I teach them LO (TM2).

Goffman states that when one is engaged in a social interaction, one endeavours to ensure that the interaction remains 'on the straight and narrow'. He presumes that we all want our social interactions to be predictable and formulaic. He states,

> Each participant in the interaction ordinarily endeavours to know and keep his place, maintaining whatever balance of formality and informality has been established for the interaction, even to the point of extending this treatment to his own teammates…And to ensure that communication will follow established, narrow channels, each team is prepared to assist the other team, tacitly and tactfully, in manipulating the impression it is attempting to foster (Goffman [1959] 1999: 166).

However, this is not the case in Life Orientation lessons. Due to the content spoken about, the issues addressed in the front, and backstages of the lessons, Life Orientation is actually most

affective when it does not follow the expected patterns of classroom interaction. Goffman goes on to state that "at moments of great crisis, a new set of motives may suddenly become effective and the established social distance between the teams may sharply increase or decrease" (Goffman [1959] 1999: 166). Life Orientation is consistently in a 'moment of great crisis', as the teachers are faced with the individual and different daily issues of their learners. These range from the seemingly trivial to major life issues such as teenage pregnancy, drug use, and suicide, which are a daily reality for the learners in Eldorado Park. The social distance between the teacher and student has to decrease in these situations otherwise, the crisis could not be responded to.

Not all the students benefited from the fluidity of the frontstage. In the interviews that were conducted, it seemed that the female respondents were more likely to say that they would, or have already, approached their Life Orientation teacher after class regarding an issue that they have. This may have been due to the nature of the backstage, which was not dominated by the masculine discourse seen in the front stage. However, the backstage environment did not seem as accessible to the male students. A few of the learners said that they would not go to a teacher for advice and they reasons suggested for this were varied. One respondent stated that "I won't talk to the LO teacher 'cause eish, some other people skinner [will tell other teachers or their parents]" (LF13). Another, male respondent suggested that the boys in the class were put off by the age and gender of their Life Orientation teacher. He suggested that, "you get a young LO teacher and you get boys like worrying more about the teacher instead of what she's speaking about" (LM6). This could be a possible reason as to why the boys feel less comfortable approaching their Life Orientation teacher. However, I would suggest that it is more related to a wider, structural problem seen in Eldorado Park. The male students are, arguably, very influenced by the South African notions of masculinity; one of these traits is to

not show vulnerability. These young men often do not have people at home that they can talk to about their problems but they will not approach a teacher at school either as this will show, even if it is just to themselves, that they are not able to cope with the situation. One of the Life Orientation teachers interviewed mentioned this and stated,

> I don't know what it is but our learners don't talk to their parents about issues. They'll speak about, you know, normal things at home and so on, what they need and what you know. But nothing serious. You know uhm, they wouldn't discuss uh issues of drugs, issues of sex, issues of religion, uh how they feel if they're traumatized. They find it difficult to discuss it with parents. And uh, they rely on information they get from their friends, and or in some cases they'll speak to the teacher. And I think it's in cases where learners have maybe gone through uhm, something like that, where they feel that if they speak to the teacher, the teachers gonna hold it against them. If they speak to their parents, the parents are probably going to be angry and hit them. You know so I don't know why but I can see that they don't, they're not open to discuss these things with even teachers (TM2).

Furthermore, Life Orientation encountered problems with other teachers in the school and the unique nature of the Life Orientation lesson as interpreted through the symbolic internationalism of Goffman was not, however, entirely beneficial for the teachers involved. They had to sacrifice the solidarity of their 'team', their fellow teachers, in order to achieve this level of intimacy among the students. Goffman warns against the dangers of extensive 'communication out of character' and states,

> When one teacher in a school is deeply sympathetic to her charges, or enters into their play during recess, or is willing to come into close contact with the low-status among them, the other teachers will find that the impression that are trying to maintain of what constitutes appropriate work is threatened (Goffman [1959] 1999: 197).

The intimacy of the backstage in Life Orientation was not accepted by all and one of the teachers interviewed mentioned that "they [the other teachers] have a negative mentality towards it" (TM3). In its current guise, Life Orientation has not wholly been accepted by the other teachers, partly because it is threatening the institutional hierarchy of the teacher/student relationship that has been long established in the school context.

4.6: The Unique Traits that Life Orientation Teachers Possess

When Life Orientation was first introduced as a subject, it was seen by many as a 'soft subject', "one that a female, with her supposedly natural nurturing disposition is better qualified to teach" (Baxen in Dunne 2008:175). There is a degree of truth in this, as the interviews with the learners showed that some of them saw their Life Orientation teacher as a 'second mother' (LF5). However, this does not fully explain the teacher/student relationship in Life Orientation.

The Life Orientation teacher may have the traits of a 'second mother', but the key trait that made her approachable to the students was that she presented herself as far enough removed from the students' lives for them to have enough emotional distance. This subsequently allowed them to open up far more to the Life Orientation teacher, than to their own family. In addition, the teachers stated that openness was far more important than replicating the qualities of a mother or father. The female teacher stated that she was encouraged to specialise in Life Orientation, as she's "an open, friendly, kind teacher…the learners are not scared of me…they can talk to me. I'm open and transparent" (TF1).

Furthermore, the suitability of the Life Orientation teachers related to the extent to which they were trained. An early criticism of Life Orientation was that the teachers were ill equipped to deal with the life issues presented in the lessons. One of the Life Orientation teachers interview noted this and commented,

> You know what they normally do in schools? …they just take teachers that they think are not doing their jobs, or teachers that are not coming to school regularly…and then they are going to put you in Life Orientation. That is killing our children…. So if you're like a maths teacher, and then the learners failed in maths, and then they push you to Life Orientation, it's not going to be easy for you as a teacher to cope with the learners. Because you don't have that within you that you can be able to talk to the learners. Some of the learners come to you if they've got problems, they talk to you. They want you to talk and address their problem. They want to see your empathy, they want you to empathize with them. Can you see? They want you to be there for them (TF1).

Baxen's work reinforces this points as she states, "most LO teachers had previously been Home Economics teachers, who were now expected to take on new roles as LO teachers. This meant that at the participating secondary schools, male teachers *volunteered* to teach the subject, unlike their female counterparts, who were *expected* to" (Baxen in Dunne 2008:175). This, however, was not found in the school involved in this research. The Life Orientation teacher that was central to the research was a young, African woman, who stated that she chose to specialise in Life Orientation and took courses at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in order to become more knowledgeable about the subject. She also stated that she was specifically hired at the school to teach Life Orientation. Both of the male Life Orientation teachers, however, had less freedom in choosing their subject. One of them had returned to the school after taking a long break in his career and stated that the school had suggested that he teach Life Orientation, as there were gaps in his timetable. The other male teacher, who was the head of the Life Orientation department, stated that he was initially employed to teach Afrikaans, physical science and guidance. When the guidance and physical sciences subjects were incorporated into the new subject of Life Orientation, he stated that the school proceeded to make him head of the department. However, despite this seeming lack of freedom over teaching Life Orientation, both male teachers stated that they enjoyed

teaching the subject. The first male teacher stated, “I feel like I missed a lot in the ten years that I wasn’t there. Life Orientation has allowed me to get to learn about my learners, to get to know them, how they think, how they operate, so that’s the reason why I enjoy it immensely” (TM2). The Head of Department noted that, “I like interacting with people. I enjoy teaching people the realities of life. I enjoy developing the life of others. I enjoy making a difference in the life of other people. I also enjoy touching other people’s lives, bringing change” (TM3).

The teachers also recognised the importance of including the learners’ parents and guardians in the issues discussed in Life Orientation. It was noted that the learners often do not talk to their parents about serious life issues. Although the students compared the Life Orientation teachers to their parents, it seemed in reality that they preferred talking to the Life Orientation teachers, rather than their parents. This was raised by the teachers in the interviews held and they all stated that their aim was to include the learners’ parents and, indeed, the whole community, in the dialogue around Life Orientation. The female Life Orientation teacher recounted that some of the parents were initially shocked that their children were learning about sex in the classroom. However, she stated that they soon came around to the idea and actually thanked her for broaching the subject (TF1). A male Life Orientation teacher said, “I always ask [the learners] to after the lesson, discuss it with your friends. Discuss it with your parents, because I want to hear what they think about what we’re doing…if there’s a parent that perhaps has a different view, ask them to write a note or give you the message and then you come and tell us in class. That’s important for me. I can’t just teach my way and not know that… the parents must know what is happening as well.”

The Life Orientation teachers took different approaches to the subject depending on their age and gender, as this affected their relationships with the learners. However, they all seemed

committed to the subject and they all believed that it was an integral part of the school curriculum. Rather than replacing the role of the parents, the Life Orientation teachers took on their own, unique role in the learners' lives, as mature and respected members of the community with whom they could seek honest and meaningful advice. All of the teachers interviewed stated that their own race and religion did not affect how they taught the students. Instead, their wide moral standing was reflected, as one male Life Orientation teacher noted for example, "I feel like boys learn how to behave in Life Orientation and respect [women], while learning about difficult issues in their lives" (TM2).

4.7: The Limitations of Life Orientation as an Instrument of Social Change

It has been shown that Life Orientation can, to a limited extent, be an important tool in addressing the social issues that young South Africans face. A highly trained, approachable, and honest teacher can create a front and back stage that is accessible to the learners and a comfortable environment that helps them deal with their daily stresses and concerns. However, whilst Life Orientation is successful on this micro level, it is arguably not achieving any widespread social change. The socio-economic issues seen in the case study school and in Eldorado Park as a whole, are echoed across the country. If one refers back to the South African 2011 census data, one can see that in the combined wards of Eldorado Park, 75.2% of residents have an income that is less than R1600 a month. These low income levels are reflected in South Africa as a whole as 72.5% of residents have an income of less than R1600 a month.

One of Life Orientation's objectives is to affect change in this wider, country context and the 2011 Life Orientation Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) has several guiding principles that reflect this. One of which is "social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are

provided for all sections of the population" (Dept of Education 2011, 4). However, this important goal is not being realised and when asked about the change in society that Life Orientation can bring, the teacher was dismissive. She said, "what is happening in the community sometimes it's a like hurting *(sic.)*, because you'll find that uh, most of the time parents are fighting, most of the… time. Learners are committing suicide, can you see that. *We talk but there is nothing we can do*." (TF1). Furthermore, when the students were asked about their goals and aspirations and about the career advice aspect of Life Orientation, they did not seem as positive as when they were speaking about the sexual and relationship advice dimension. Many of them stated that they had not received careers advice in the lessons or did not see how the advice they did receive was relevant to their lives.

The example of careers advice within Life Orientation is a case where the subject is falling short. The curriculum itself espouses great things, and hopes to affect real change within South Africa. However, in my observations and interviews, this was not happening and few of the students thought that Life Orientation affected their decisions outside of the classroom. 'Careers and careers choices' is intended to take up eight of the sixty-six contact hours in Life Orientation in Grade Eleven and is thus the second biggest subject area in Life Orientation after 'the Development of Self in Society' *(Appendix 1).* A lot of time is supposed to be dedicated to the subject in Grade Eleven as this is a crucial year in the learners' lives because they must use their Grade Eleven grades when submitting applications to further education and training (FET) colleges or universities. The five key topics that Grade Elevens must learn about in careers and career choices are as follows:

> Requirements for admission to higher education institutions; options for financial assistance for further studies; competencies, abilities and ethics required for a career and personal expectations

> in relation to job or career of interest and knowledge about self in relation to the demands of the world of work and socio-economic conditions (Dept. of Education 2011: 10).

However, the reality of the situation in Eldorado Park is that very few learners knew about what career they wanted or how they could achieve their goals. One female learner who did mention that she had a future aspiration said that she wanted to become a 'business manager'. She stated that Life Orientation *did* help her with her career decisions but, when probed further, she could not go into detail about exactly how it did this. She said that "The topics covered today, they really help us, like to focus on which career we have paths that we have to focus on" (LF1). However, in the same answer, she then stated, "most of the time it's about your own understanding and your own time just to go and find information regarding the kind of future that you want to have" (LF1). She could not explain concretely any time when her Life Orientation lessons have helped her to pursue her chosen career path, even though one of the topics in the careers education section is intended to teach about the "personal expectations in relation to job or career of interest and knowledge about self in relation to the demands of the world of work and socio-economic conditions." This student did not see how Life Orientation could help her with careers guidance or with her life post-high school.

In another interview with a female student, it was revealed that they had not yet had any practice on filling out college or university application forms. When asked if she knew what grades she needed to get into university she said "Ja, in Grade Twelve, ja in Grade Twelve. But then you have to register, I think you have to register to university with your Grade Eleven report" (LF14). Many of the students seemed confused about the university application process. When asked if she knew about university entry grades, one interviewee said, "not really, I don't know. I'm trying to know but I can't find the person to help me"

(LF18). Furthermore, they were unaware that there were student bursaries available for learners who had good grades but came from a low economic background. One interviewee said that her current goal was to "just finish my standard nine and go through matric. And then study further if there is money for me to go study further" (LF19). She had not been told about any scholarships or bursaries available. A final quote from a male student sums up the confusion that these learners had about their life after school and how Life Orientation could help them.

> *Interviewer:* What kind of careers advice were you given?
>
> *Respondent:* Uh, uh, to consult a careers dictionary, from there uh you, what's a name, you get information about your uh, career that you want to follow. Uh, I can't remember the rest.
>
> *Interviewer:* So did it give you any, any advice about what to do after you matriculate, like about to go to university or?
>
> *Respondent:* Yes, ja. It gave me advice to uh send the application before the time, not going to them, what the name, when it's too late (LM9).

4.8: Conclusion

There are complex relationships between the front and back stages in Life Orientation and there are many factors in play that influence who is allowed access to the stages and to the extent that they are allowed access. The research revealed that it was the sexually active boys that dominated the front stage in Life Orientation and that the teacher did little to try to change this. She was inadvertently reinforcing the gender power relations by letting the boys always have their say. However, the stages were not set up to work solely in the boys' favour. It has also been shown that the back stage was very important as well in Life Orientation. This space, in contrast, was dominated by the young women and they took advantage of the

opportunity to talk with their teacher on a personal basis. They became freer and more open in the backstage and took full advantage of the unofficial obligation that the teacher had to counsel her students.

The backstage fed back into the frontstage through the teachers' interactions with the students, which enabled the teachers to get to know their learners more and developed their professional capacity in the other subjects that they taught.

It has also been shown that Life Orientation teachers are uniquely positioned to deal with the issues presented in the front and back stages and that they are an integral part of the learners' social and emotional development.

However, Life Orientation has not been successful in its wider attempts to instigate and develop social change in the wider sense of the word. This does not necessarily mean that the subject has failed. Instead, it is providing an important tool to effect personal growth and enhance the students' wellbeing in a socio-economic context where this is not normally provided.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1: Introduction

The concluding section of the report will attempt to answer the questions posed at the start of the research paper and recommend areas for further study related to the research. The main research question was: “What are the attitudes and experiences of teachers and students towards Life Orientation?” I will answer this by reviewing the research findings and addressing the four sub questions, which are: “How does the pedagogy influence the effectiveness of the Life Orientation lessons?” “How do gender dynamics within the Life Orientation classroom affect conversations around sex education and sexual relations?” “How does the teacher’s personality affect her interaction with the learners in what Goffman defines as the front and back stage?” “What are the aims and objectives of Life Orientation and is it an appropriate platform with which to teach young adults about life skills?”

5.2: The Classroom Setting and Pedagogy in Life Orientation

The classroom setting presented a situation where effective teaching was made difficult. There were few resources in the classrooms to support the teacher and the students in the process of learning apart from the blackboard and a limited amount of Life Orientation textbooks. There were no electronic resources such as projector screens or televisions to aid the learning. Resources such as videos would have enriched the students’ experience in the lesson and provided them with tangible examples of the curriculum content. Instead, the lessons were dry and the structure repetitive. They consisted of easily disrupted class discussions and rote learning methods such as note-taking, which has proven to be inefficient at helping students to apply the skills and knowledge learnt in the class to a real-world context, something which is so crucial in Life Orientation. The rote learning was combined

with a lack of discipline and control seen in the lessons and resulted in the potentially dynamic aspects of the lesson, such as the exercises using the textbook, to be abandoned quickly. These aspects combined contributed to a challenging classroom environment in which the Life Orientation lessons were executed poorly.

5.3: 'Sex Talk' and Gender Expectations in Life Orientation

The problems seen in the lessons cannot be attributed solely to the subject of Life Orientation as the lack of resources and challenging behaviour from the students were seen throughout the school. Additionally, there were aspects of the lesson that were unique to Life Orientation and affected the attitudes and experiences of the teachers and the students towards the subject. One such aspect were the gender roles, which were reproduced and reinforced through the lesson content. When it came to conversations about sex and sexual relationships, the young women took a back seat. They did not feel that it was their place in the lesson or, indeed, in society to express themselves as sexual beings. The women were surrounded by a sexual discourse but were denied the opportunity to be directly involved in it themselves, which will be explained further in the next paragraph. The only time when they were included in the 'sex talk' was when they were victims of hearsay. This was demonstrated in the incidents where the young men in the class openly discussed the sexual encounters that had with their classmates over the weekend. This had wider ramifications in Eldorado Park. As Fine (1988) states, women who cannot sufficiently express their social or sexual entitlement are far more likely to become pregnant at an early age and choose not to terminate the pregnancy.

Many of the interviewees stated that the boys were more knowledgeable and experienced in the realm of sexual relationships. This reinforced gender roles already prevalent in the society as the young men were not only *allowed* to be more knowledgeable than the girls were but

they were also *expected* to be more knowledgeable. These notions of masculinity affected the Life Orientation lessons in a deeper way as they limited the interaction with the male students and the female teacher. Boys were reluctant to enter the 'backstage' of the classroom. In the context of Life Orientation the 'frontstage' was the formal setting of the lesson in which certain roles were played by both the teacher and the student and there were boundaries that defined the interaction in the space. The 'backstage', however, was the time after the lesson finished, where the students could approach the teacher in confidence. This 'stage' was somewhat inaccessible to the boys, as entering the backstage and seeking counsel from the teacher was portrayed as a presentation of vulnerability and, subsequently, a loss of masculinity.

5.4: The Importance of the Teacher's Persona and its Impact on Backstage Interactions

The Life Orientation teacher represented openness, in both her personality and in the front and back stages of the classroom. The importance of this was reaffirmed by the interviews conducted with the other Life Orientation teachers. This openness was appreciated by many of the students, especially because it was coupled with an unspoken promise of confidentiality. The teacher took on an unofficial obligation to know about her students' private lives, which became very important to both the teacher and students and appears to be unique to Life Orientation classes. This obligation was also noted by the other Life Orientation teachers that were interviewed and was often realised in the backstage setting, especially when it concerned female students. One reason for this was because the backstage was an area where there was not the dominant discourse of masculinity as seen in the Life Orientation lessons and so the female students had the opportunity to open up to the teacher in a personal way. When the backstage was not accessible to the students, either because they did not feel comfortable to enter it or because they did not deem it necessary to go into the

backstage, the teacher would address their issues in the front stage, using specific interaction techniques to cover the severity of the situation. The Life Orientation teacher was constantly (re)negotiating the boundaries of interactions in both the front and back stages and allowed the fluidity of the back stage to be beneficial to both herself and her students as it enabled her to find out more about her students' lives.

The interactions between teacher and student became ever more important as many of the students did not have anyone else to turn to when confronted with a problem. Many of the students who sought counsel from the Life Orientation teacher did so because they perceived her as being suitably qualified and sympathetic enough to help them with their problems. Her perceived objectivity and impartiality was seen as an important attribute and helped to give the backstage a sense of legitimacy and purpose for the students that utilised it.

5.6: The Inadequacies of Life Orientation

Life Orientation was not successful in all topic areas but the failure of certain aspects, such as 'careers and career choices', cannot solely be blamed on the quality of the teaching or the lack of a comprehensive curriculum. It was clear that many of the students did not wish to engage fully with Life Orientation and whiled away their time by talking and distracting each other until the lesson was over. One learner stated "[the students] think they're big enough to know what's LO's [Life Orientation's] all about, so they don't take that much more interest… when we leave the gate it's totally gone, that's how most of us take it" (LM6). Prinsloo (2007: 165) also noted the limitations of Life Orientation as an appropriate platform for the teaching of life skills.

> The effect of the programmes on learners only extended to times when learners were on the schools grounds or in their classrooms. When the learners were out of school,

> the influence of the peer group, the media and the general climate of licentiousness in their communities eliminated largely the positive influence of LO [Life Orientation] programmes.

Life Orientation has to date, not yet met its grander objectives of achieving social change and development in South Africa. However, this does not mean that it should be disregarded. The Life Orientation teacher that I observed and her colleagues that were interviewed were doing relevant and important work and the students that they successfully communicated with, appreciated the time that the teachers had for them, even if it may be seen from an outsider's perspective that they were engaging in benign chats. This daily support and reliability made the Life Orientation teacher somebody who these young adults could turn to, in a situation where they often had no-one else playing an equivalent counselling role in their lives. If Life Orientation teachers were given the freedom and resources to develop these skills and were trained in counselling techniques, they would become empowered and able to become an integral part of the community support network across South Africa. For example, Prinsloo (2007, 165) describes an example in her work where the Life Orientation teachers and school counsellors formed a team and worked together. She states that this proved successful as "the information and skills which the conveyed in the LO [Life Orientation] periods were strengthened in follow-up sessions with the school counsellor and often in individual afternoon session with learners in which teachers acted as counsellors". This, however, would also require the Department of Education to recognise that Life Orientation may well also play a personal role in helping the students to overcome their life issues, as well as teaching them about social ills. It needs to be understood that the character of 'Dudu', who was on page 93 of the Life Orientation textbook and lived in the township of 'Freedom Village' is not only in a fictional person, but is also in the classroom. There are thousands of 'Dudus'

across South Africa who are facing the problems addressed in the curriculum in their daily lives. Life Orientation can and should tackle the specific problems of the learners and not merely approach them in an abstract manner.

Life Orientation cannot be the only tool employed to tackle South Africa's plethora of social and economic problems. It can play a part in the mitigation of wider social issues but it cannot treat the underlying causes. For example, the findings and discussion chapter pointed to the example of the careers advice, which was poorly implemented in the classroom and did not give students the skills to apply for Further Education and Training. This is one example of how wider social change is not being realised within the context of this subject. Furthermore, it can be seen that the subject cannot prevent teenage pregnancies if the young women cannot find their sexual voice within the lessons or help students aspire to greater things when their attendance is so bad that many of them are not even present in the careers guidance classes. When the Life Orientation teacher stated, *"we talk, but there is nothing we can do"*, she may be right unless there is wider societal and governmental support to help this already established education structure.

5.7: Limitations of the Research and Recommendations for Future Research

Many researchers have criticised the case study method as they state that it is not generalizable. Yin (2009: 15) notes however, that when case studies are done well, especially when there are multiple case studies involved, they are able to "expand and generalise theories". Therefore, there would be an opportunity to extend my individual case study to several schools across Johannesburg and, indeed, the whole country. This would build a more comprehensive picture of Life Orientation teachers and students as a whole and would help researchers and policy makers to see whether the counselling role of the teachers and the

fluidity of the front and back stages are seen in other Life Orientation contexts. I would hypothesise that the severity of problems faced in low socio-economic areas is higher than in wealthier suburbs and that the counselling role of the teacher becomes more important. My research revealed that the Life Orientation teachers in Eldorado Park felt as if they had an obligation to know what was happening in their students' lives. They felt as if it was important to understand the life issues of these students and saw it as their duty to help them. However, the research also revealed that the most important work was carried out in an unofficial setting, in the backstage after the lesson was over and was attempting to provide the students with support that they were not receiving elsewhere. This may not be the case elsewhere, for instance, in private schools, which have educational psychologists and where their students have access to private medical care and professional mental health practitioners.

I would argue that this calls for a change in the way that Life Orientation is seen as a subject. The curriculum currently acknowledges that Life Orientation is designed to deal with life issues that young people face. However, it does not pay enough attention to the fact that these differ depending on the area that the student lives in and the type of school that they attend. For example, a private boys' school in the Northern Suburbs in Johannesburg may have an issue with students taking steroids whereas a state-run school in Cape Town on the Cape Flats may be dealing with extensive crystal methamphetamine addiction.

The curriculum should provide better training for the Life Orientation teachers and more freedom in relation to how they chose to teach the curriculum. They would be better supported if they were able to talk to fellow Life Orientation teachers about their problems with the lessons and ways that they have dealt with these. An online forum for the teachers would enable them to have a sense of community and collaboration when facing their

students' particular personal issues. These teachers are well positioned to see the community problems in their areas and thus should also be given the opportunity to report to the Department of Education on a regular basis and ask for specific support in dealing with the issues that arise in Life Orientation.

5.8: Conclusion

This research has presented, with the use of an individual case study, the reality of Life Orientation lessons in Eldorado Park, Johannesburg. It has shown that the success of the subject within the classroom is partly dependent on gender and power relations. Furthermore, it has shown the Life Orientation does not appear to be achieving its greater aims of instigating social change within South Africa. However, the research has also shown that many of the students still see the benefit of the subject, especially when they feel free and welcome to approach their Life Orientation teacher in the back stage of the lesson. Recognition from the Department of Education of this crucial element of Life Orientation would support the teachers in the important work that they are carrying out, helping their students through the difficult years of adolescence.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Table showing the allocation of hours for each Life Orientation subject area

Source: "Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades 10-12: Life Orientation", Department of Basic Education, pp. 9

	Topic	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
		Hours	**Hours**	**Hours**
1.	Development of the self in society	8	11	9
2.	Social and environmental responsibility	4	3	3
3.	Democracy and human rights	7	7	4
4.	Careers and career choices	11	8	8
5.	Study skills	3	4	4
6.	Physical Education	33	33	28
	Contact time	**66**	**66**	**56**
	Examinations	14	14	24
	Total hours	**80**	**80**	**80**
	Total weeks	**40**	**40**	**40**

Appendix 2: Table detailing the breakdown of topic content for each subject area in Life Orientation

Source: "Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades 10-12: Life Orientation", Department of Basic Education, pp. 10

	Topic	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
1.	Development of the self in society	• Self-awareness, self-esteem and self-development • Power, power relations and gender roles • Value of participation in exercise programmes • Life roles: nature and responsibilities • Changes towards adulthood • Decision-making regarding sexuality • Recreation and emotional health	• Plan and achieve life goals: problem-solving skills • Relationships and their influence on well-being • Healthy lifestyle choices: decision-making skills • Role of nutrition in health and physical activities • Gender roles and their effects on health and well-being	• Life skills required to adapt to change as part of ongoing healthy lifestyle choices • Stress management • Conflict resolution • Human factors that cause ill-health • Action plan for lifelong participation in physical activity
2.	Social and environmental responsibility	• Contemporary social issues that impact negatively on local and global communities • Social skills and responsibilities to participate in civic life	• Environmental issues that cause ill-health • Climate change • Participation in a community service addressing an environmental issue	• Environments and services which promote safe and healthy living • Responsibilities of various levels of government • A personal mission statement for life
3.	Democracy and human rights	• Diversity, discrimination, human rights and violations • National and international instruments and conventions • Ethical traditions and/ or religious laws and indigenous belief systems of major religions • Biases and unfair practices in sport	• Democratic participation and democratic structures • Role of sport in nation building • Contributions of South Africa's diverse religions and belief systems to a harmonious society	• Responsible citizenship • The role of the media in a democratic society • Ideologies, beliefs and worldviews on construction of recreation and physical activity across cultures and genders
4.	Careers and career choices	• Subjects, career fields and study choices: decision-making skills • Socio-economic factors • Diversity of jobs • Opportunities within career fields • Trends and demands in the job market • The need for lifelong learning	• Requirements for admission to higher education institutions • Options for financial assistance for further studies • Competencies, abilities and ethics required for a career • Personal expectations in relation to job or career of interest • Knowledge about self in relation to the demands of the world of work and socio-economic conditions	• Commitment to a decision taken: locate appropriate work or study opportunities in various sources • Reasons for and impact of unemployment and innovative solutions to counteract unemployment • Core elements of a job contract • Refinement of portfolio of plans for life after school
5.	Study skills	• Study skills and study methods • Process of assessment : internal and external • Annual study plan	• Study styles and study strategies • Examination writing skills • Time-management and annual study plan • Goal-setting skills	• Reflection on own study and examination writing skills • Strategies to follow in order to succeed in Grade 12
6.	Physical Education	• Physical fitness: programmes to promote well-being • Skills in playground and/ or community and/or indigenous games • Environmentally responsible outdoor recreational group or individual activities • Skills in traditional and/or non-traditional sport • Safety issues	• Improvement of current personal level of fitness and health • Umpiring and leadership skills in self-designed and modified games (teach peers) • Various leadership roles in a self-designed recreational group activity • Umpiring and leadership skills in self-designed and modified sport (teach peers) • Safety issues	• Achievement of own personal fitness and health goals • Long-term engagement in traditional and/or non-traditional sport or playground and/ or community and/or indigenous games or relaxation and recreational activities • Safety issues

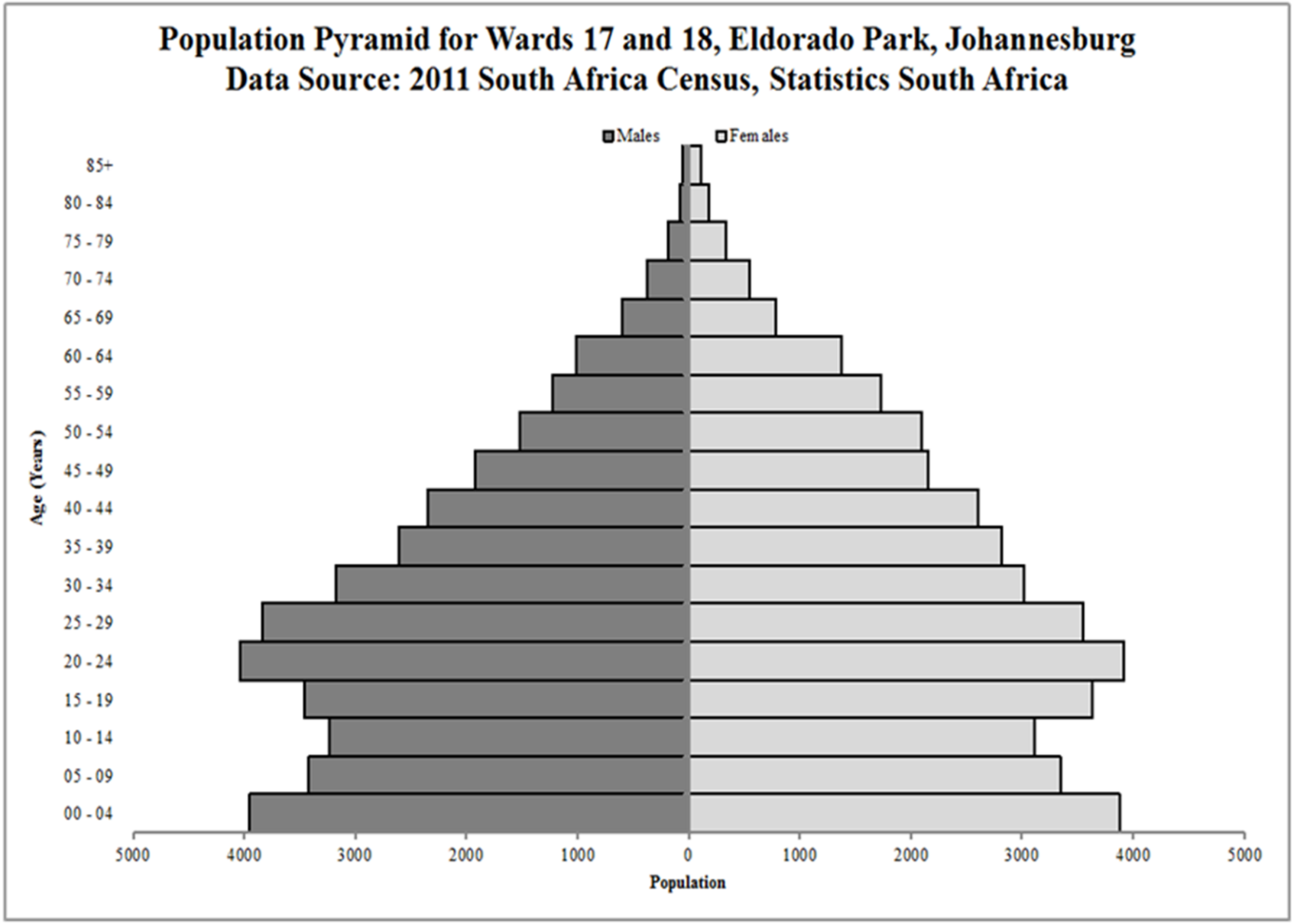
Appendix 3: Map Showing Eldorado Park in Relation to the Whole of Johannesburg

Source: http://maps.google.com



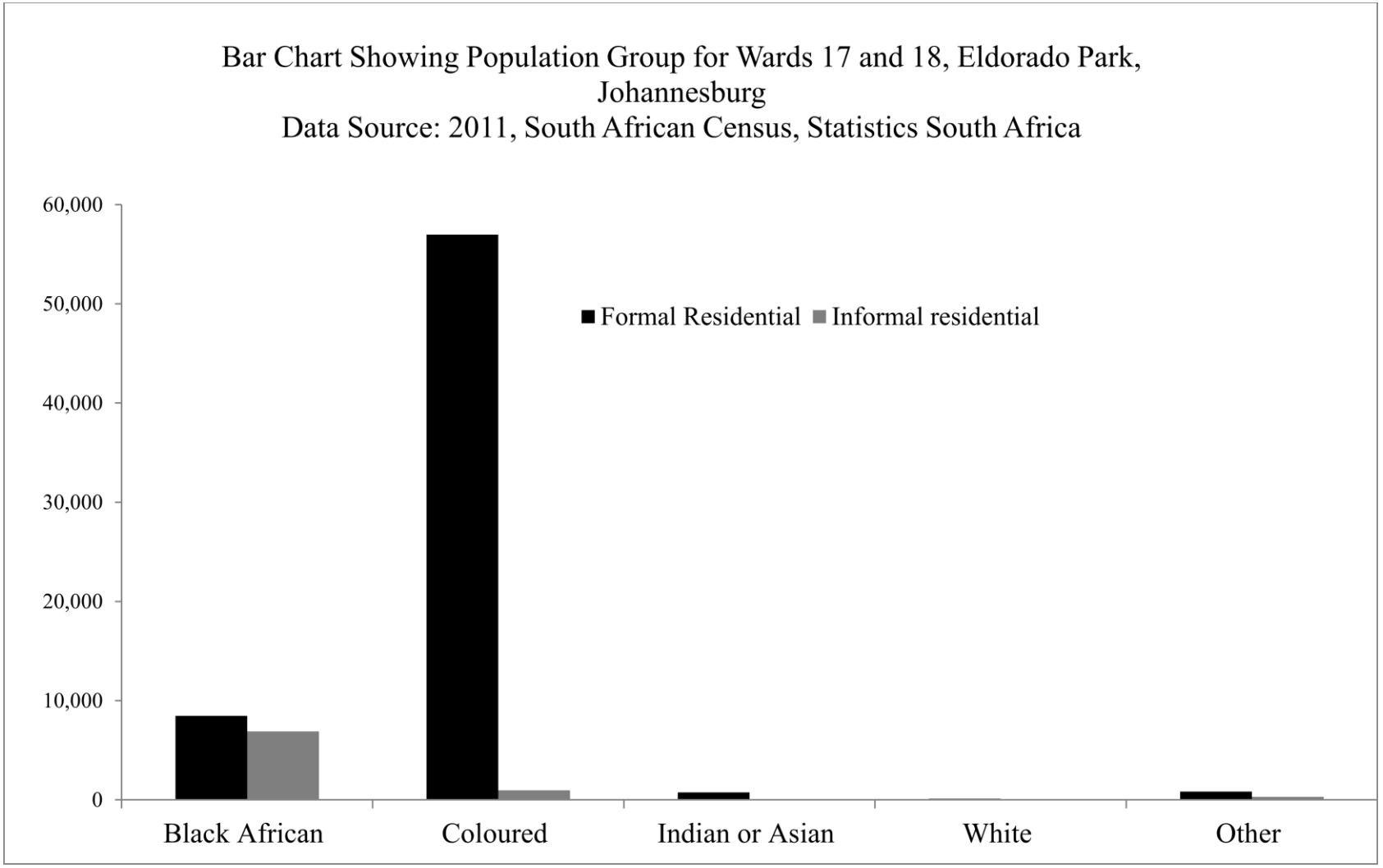
Appendix 4: Population Pyramid for Wards 17 and 18, Eldorado Park

Source: 2011 South Africa Census, Statistics South Africa



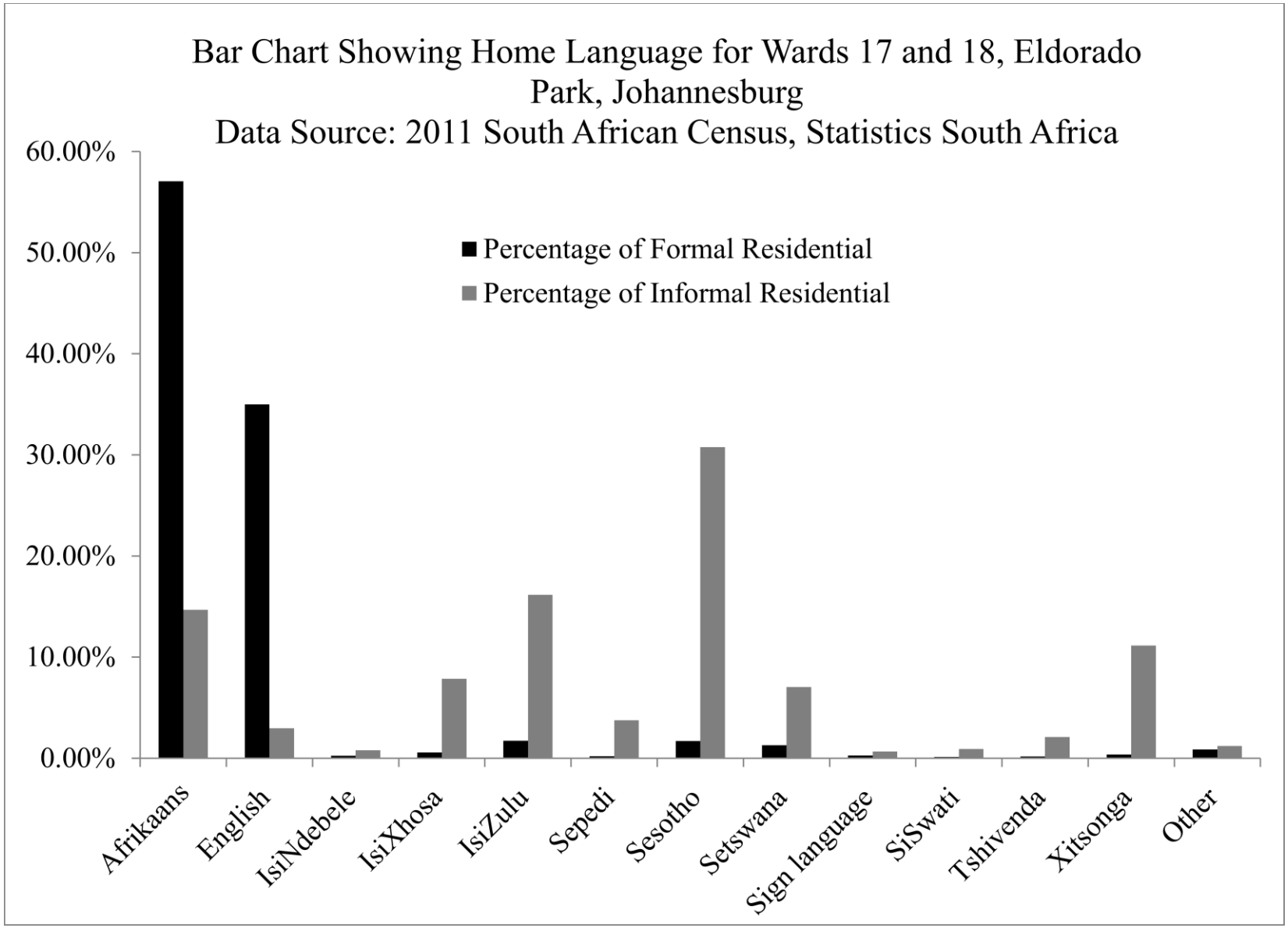
Appendix 5: Population Groups for Wards 17 and 18, Eldorado Park

Source: 2011 South Africa Census, Statistics South Africa

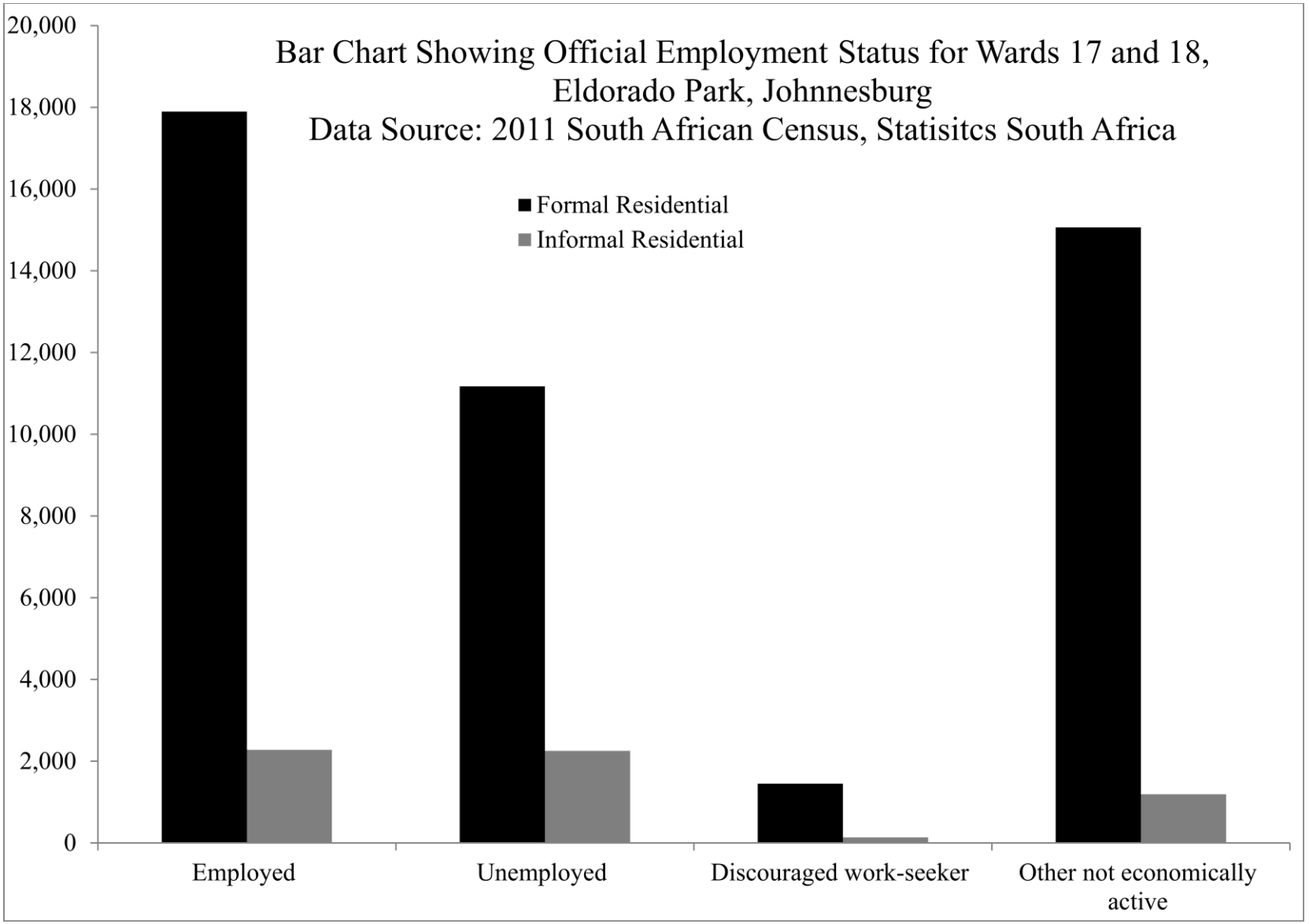


Appendix 6: Home Language for Wards 17 and 18, Eldorado Park

Source: 2011 South Africa Census, Statistics South Africa



Appendix 8: Individual Income for Wards 17 and 18, Eldorado Park



Source: 2011 South Africa Census, Statistics South Africa

Appendix 9: Table Detailing Classroom Observation Sessions

Date	Period	Tutor Group	Lesson Topic
Thursday 16/08/12	Six	E6	Risky behaviours
Tuesday 04/09/12	Six	E3	Social and Environmental Issues
Tuesday 04/09/12	Seven	E5	Social and Environmental Issues
Tuesday 04/09/12	Eight	E6	Social and Environmental Issues
Wednesday 05/09/12	Three	A1	Social and Environmental Issues
Wednesday 05/09/12	Four	E6	Social and Environmental Issues
Wednesday 05/09/12	Six	E2	Social and Environmental Issues

Appendix 10: Example of Life Orientation Textbook

Source: *Focus on Life Orientation* pp. 92-94

6.1 Helping hands

Baseline assessment

- How do you promote social and environmental justice?
- How do you take part in community action to solve a problem?

Environmental justice *means stopping people with few choices from being exploited. Poor people are often exposed to pollution, jobs hazardous to their health, and unequal access to resources such as housing, land, water and electricity.*



Environmental sustainability *means to meet people's needs in ways that do not damage or use up our environmental resources. Environmental resources are clean water, air, healthy soils and ecosystems. If we look after these resources, we will develop, live well and meet our needs for many future generations.*



Social justice *means setting right the situation where people with fewer choices suffer most from discrimination and human rights abuse.*



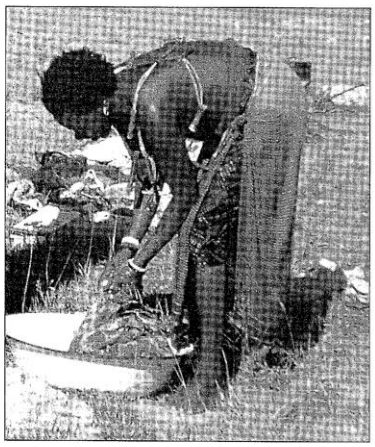


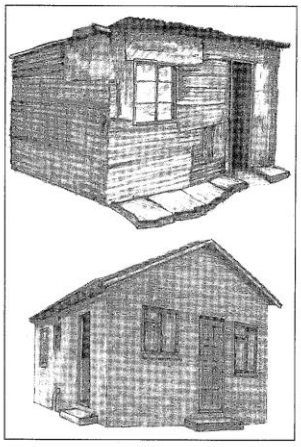
Redress *means making up for the evils of the apartheid regime, where people were exploited, abused and discriminated against. Many people in our country are poor because of the legacy of apartheid. All of us, as proud citizens of South Africa, need to work together to redress past injustices.*



Link the photos and illustrations below and on the next page to the principles described by the learners above.

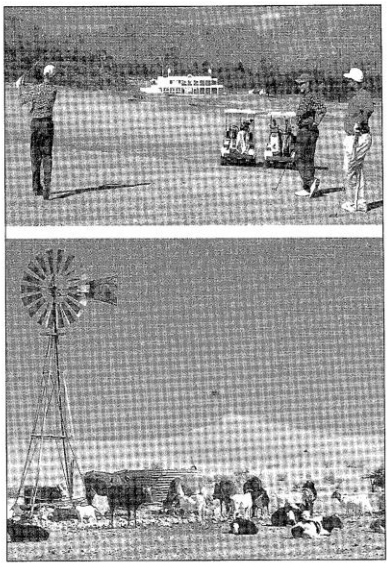












Environmental problems such as rapid urban population sprawl, human waste production, urban pollution, poor urban living conditions, climate changes due to global warming, inadequate water supplies, loss of biological diversity and globalisation, affect well-being.

Social and environmental justice for all

SCENARIO



Dudu is a 16 year old Grade 11 learner who lives in an informal settlement, called Freedom Village. Freedom Village is between a sewage farm, an oil refinery and a highway. Often the air smells bad. There is a strong smell of human waste, smoke from the oil refinery, and petrol and diesel fumes from speeding vehicles that drive past on the highway.

Dudu lives with her mother, younger sister and two baby brothers. They do not own a house or a plot. They had a house once in another town, but their father chased them away when he married another woman. Dudu's family live in a tiny shack made from pieces of corrugated iron, a few bricks, cardboard and plastic. There are about 500 of these small shacks in her village.

There is one tap that serves the whole community. This tap had been leaking for a few months. One day the municipality just cut off their water. Since then they have had to cart water from the next settlement. Dudu coughs a lot. Her mother has got TB. They stay far away from the clinic and Dudu's mother does not always have transport money to go and get her tablets.

Dudu goes to school, but sometimes has to miss school because she is feeling weak from not having any food to eat. She often has to look after the babies and does not get time to do her school work.

The **South African Constitution**, Section 24, (Act 108), of the *Bill of Rights* states that everyone has the right to:
(a) An environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being
(b) Have the environment protected, through reasonable legislative and other measures that:

- prevent pollution and degradation
- promote conservation
- secure ecologically sustainable development and the use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

Chapter 7 states that the objectives of local government include:

- ensuring the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner
- promoting social and economic development
- promoting a safe and healthy environment
- encouraging the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government

ACTIVITY 1

LO2: Citizenship education – AS1: Participate in a community service that addresses a contemporary social or environmental issue

Work in a group.

a) Identify Dudu's social and environmental rights that have to be redressed.
b) Discuss the social issues, such as lack of essential services and unequal access to basic resources, which Dudu is exposed to.
c) Explain how you think Dudu is feeling.
d) What appropriate action could be taken to help Dudu?
e) Summarise your discussion of a)–d) so that you can present the main points to the class.

Call to action

Addressing social and environmental problems in your community

The world we live in is wonderful, exciting and challenging – but at the same time, it has many problems. There is much joy, as well as tragedy. If we all reach out our helping hands, we can make a huge difference to improve the world for everyone.

The first step in reaching out is to investigate the problems in your area. There are many ways in which you can help to address an issue. For example, you can:

- take action to reduce pollution from industries
- promote road safety
- take a stand against substance abuse
- assist to build a house for homeless people
- educate people to not overload donkeys and cart horses
- advise people how to save water
- stop cruel chicken farming methods
- campaign for recreational facilities
- fight for the reduction of pesticides on fruit and vegetables
- help care for the elderly
- promote fire prevention measures

In the next activity you are going to choose a social and/or environmental problem in your area to investigate. The examples below and on the next page will give you some ideas of possible issues to consider, and possible solutions.

Civic, social and environmental responsibilities

A group of women health workers started the Philani Nutrition Centre crèche in Site C, Khayelitsha in 1980. They got involved due to the poverty and unemployment in the area. Now various centres serve around 500 000 people living in informal areas. An increasing number of HIV positive children are being cared for at Philani as well.

Appendix 11: **Table Detailing the Interview Participants**

Code	Teacher/Learner	Date	Gender	Race	Tutor	Duration
LF1	Learner	22/08/12	F	African	E6	20m 35s
LF2	Learner	22/08/12	F	African	E6	19m 46s
LF3	Learner	22/08/12	F	African	E2	29m 6s
LF4	Learner	22/08/12	F	African	E2	7m 9s
LF5	Learner	28/08/12	F	Coloured	E3	12m 49s
LM6	Learner	28/08/12	M	Coloured	E3	12m 31s
LF7	Learner	28/08/12	F	White	E5	17m 55s
LF8	Learner	28/08/12	F	African	E5	6m 23s
LM9	Learner	28/08/12	M	Coloured	E6	10m 22s
LM10	Learner	28/08/12	M	Coloured	E6	10m 9s
LM11	Learner	29/08/12	M	African	E5	29m 50s
LM12	Learner	29/08/12	M	Coloured	E6	8m 25s
LF13	Learner	29/08/12	F	African	E6	9m 48s
LF14	Learner	29/08/12	F	Coloured	E2	11m 50s
LF15	Learner	29/08/12	F	Coloured	E2	14m 50s
LM16	Learner	11/09/12	M	African	E3	8m 25s
LM17	Learner	11/09/12	M	African	E3	1m 57s
Interview with LM17 taken as a refusal due to the short duration of the interview.						
LF18	Learner	12/09/12	F	Coloured	A1	7m 15s
LF19	Learner	12/09/12	F	Coloured	A1	6m 41s
LM20	Learner	12/09/12	M	Coloured	E6	11m 17s
LF21	Learner	12/09/12	F	Coloured	E6	9m 23s
TF1	Teacher	27/09/12	F	African	N/A	35m 23s
TM2	Teacher	27/09/12	M	Coloured	N/A	26m 2s
TM3	Teacher	27/09/12	M	African	N/A	19m 3s

Appendix 12: Student Participation Sheet

School of Social Sciences – Development Studies

Student Participant Information Sheet Regarding Conducting MA Research at [redacted]

My name is Jennifer Brown and I am conducting research for my Masters course at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am researching the attitudes of teachers and students towards Life Orientation.

My research will be focussed on Grade 11 learners and their teachers. It will include participant observation, where I will sit in and observe some of the Life Orientation classes, interviews with the teachers and the learners about their experiences of Life Orientation and some focus groups with the learners, which will be about five to ten people in size and last for about an hour.

The interviews will be semi-structured which means that there will be a few key points that I will want to address but this can change depending on the answers that you give and the direction that the interview takes.

The focus groups will be informal and will be led by the learners, giving you the opportunity to talk in a group about your experiences of Life Orientation.

The interviews and focus groups will be recorded, as this will help me to remember the answers when I am writing up my research. All information that you give during the interview will be anonymous and confidential. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed during the focus groups, as these will involve other learners who may talk about the details of the focus group.

When I am writing up my research, I will ensure that no personal details about you will be disclosed apart from your age, gender, and the type of school that you attend. The only people that will have access to the research data are myself, Jennifer Brown and my adviser, Prof. David Dickinson. No details about the interviews or focus groups will be disclosed to any teacher, staff member, or parent.

If you want to withdraw from the research at any time or do not want some or all of the data to be used in the research, please contact me.

If you want to find out any more information about the research, please contact Jennifer Brown on 0784452841 or e-mail jennifer.brown89@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and contribution.

Appendix 13: Student Assent Form



School of Social Sciences – Development Studies

Student Assent Form

Jennifer Brown is conducting research at [redacted] about the attitudes of teachers and students towards Life Orientation. I am aware that my participation in the research is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time. I am also aware that during both the interviews and the focus groups, I can chose not to answer any question. Apart from my age, gender and the type of school that I attend, no other information about me will be disclosed to anyone apart from the researcher. The information that I will disclose during the interview will only be assessed and used by the researcher for research purposes.

I am aware that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained during and after the interview process but confidentiality is not guaranteed during and after the focus groups as these involve other learners who may disclose details of the focus groups. I understand that this is out the researcher's control.

By signing this form, I certify that Jennifer Brown has satisfactorily explained the research project and that I consent to participate in it under the conditions described above.

I consent to participate in a semi-structured interview:

Name	Signature	Date

I consent to participate in a single sex focus group with five to ten other learners:

Name	Signature	Date

Appendix 14: Teacher Participant Sheet



School of Social Sciences – Development Studies

Teacher Participant Information Sheet Regarding Conducting

MA Research at [redacted]

My name is Jennifer Brown and I am conducting research for my Masters course at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am researching the attitudes of teachers and students towards Life Orientation.

My research will be focussed on Grade 11 learners and their teachers. It will include participant observation, where I will sit in and observe some of the Life Orientation classes, interviews with the teachers and the learners about their experiences of Life Orientation and some focus groups with the learners, which will be about five to ten people in size and last for about an hour.

The interviews will last about an hour and will be semi-structured which means that there will be a few key points that I will want to address but this can change depending on the answers that you give and the direction that the interview takes. If you do not understand a question, please tell me and I will explain further. Also, if you do not want to answer a question, I will move on to the next one.

The interviews will be recorded, as this will help me to remember the answers when I am writing up my research. All information that you give during the interview will be anonymous and confidential.

When I am writing up my research, I will ensure that no personal details about you will be disclosed apart from your gender, what subjects you teach and the type of school that you teach in. The only people that will have access to the research data are myself, Jennifer Brown and my adviser, Prof. David Dickinson. No details about the interviews will be disclosed to any other member of staff or any parent or learner.

If you want to withdraw from the research at any time or do not want some or all of the data to be used in the research, please contact me.

If you want to find out any more information about the research, please contact Jennifer Brown on 0784452841 or e-mail jennifer.brown89@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and contribution.

Appendix 15: Teacher Consent Form



School of Social Sciences – Development Studies

Teacher Consent Form

Jennifer Brown is conducting research at [redacted] about the attitudes of teachers and students towards Life Orientation. I am aware that my participation in the research is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time. I am also aware that during both the interviews and the focus groups, I can chose not to answer any question. Apart from my gender, the subjects that I teach, and the type of school that I teach in, no other information about me will be disclosed to anyone apart from the researcher. The information that I will disclose during the interview will only be assessed and used by the researcher for research purposes.

I am aware that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained during and after the interview process.

By signing this form, I certify that Jennifer Brown has satisfactorily explained the research project and that I consent to participate in it under the conditions described above.

I consent to participate in a semi-structured interview:

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date

Appendix 16: Parent Consent Letter



School of Social Sciences – Development Studies

Dear Parents,

RE: Conducting MA Research at [redacted]

I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, currently studying for my Masters in Development Studies. My course requires me to undertake individual research based upon a developmental issue. I have decided to research the attitudes of teachers and students towards Life Orientation.

When considering a site for my research I came across your child's school and I believe that it would be very valuable if the teachers and students in the school were involved.

The research will be conducted during the second half of the 2012 academic year and will involve in-depth interviews with students from grades eleven, as well as their Life Orientation teachers. In addition, I will be undertaking participant observation in the Life Orientation classes as well as some gender specific focus groups with the students involved.

If you have any concerns or questions about the research or how your child will be involved, please do not hesitate to contact either my supervisor or myself:

Jennifer Brown: jennifer.brown@students.wits.ac.za

Prof. David Dickinson: david.dickinson@wits.ac.za

Yours Sincerely

Jennifer Brown

MA Development Studies Candidate

This letter grants Jennifer Brown, under the supervision of Prof. David Dickinson, permission to conduct research involving my child at [redacted]. This research will take the form of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions surrounding the teachers' and students' attitudes to the subject of Life Orientation.

I have read the subject information provided and understand what this research entails. I also understand that all data given will be kept in the **strictest of confidence** and every measure will be taken to ensure that **the identity of the participants and the school as a whole will remain anonymous.**

_____

Name of Child

_____ _____ _____

Name of Parent Signature of Parent Date

Appendix 17: Audio Recording Consent Form



School of Social Sciences – Development Studies

Audio Recording Consent Form

Jennifer Brown is conducting research at [redacted] about the attitudes of teachers and students towards Life Orientation. I am aware that my participation in the research is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time. I am also aware that during both the interviews and the focus groups, I can chose not to answer any question. Apart from my gender, the type of school that I teach in/attend and - for learners - my age, no other information about me will be disclosed to anyone apart from the researcher. The information that I will disclose during the interview will only be assessed and used by the researcher for research purposes.

I am aware that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained during and after the interview process but confidentiality is not guaranteed during and after the focus groups as these involve other learners who may disclose details of the focus groups. I understand that this is out the researcher's control.

By signing this form, I certify that Jennifer Brown has satisfactorily explained the research project and that I consent to have my interview and focus-group **tape** recorded for this study.

I consent to have my semi-structured interview tape-recorded:

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date

I consent to have my focus group tape-recorded:

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date

Appendix 18: Letter from Principal at Secondary School

School of Social Sciences – Development Studies

Dear Mr. LeRoux,
Principal Silver Oaks Secondary School

RE: Conducting MA Research at Silver Oaks Secondary School

I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, currently studying for my Masters in Development Studies. My course requires me to undertake individual research based upon a developmental issue. I have decided to research the attitudes of teachers and students towards Life Orientation.

When considering a site for my research I came across your school and I believe that it would be very valuable if the teachers and students in the school were involved.

I believe that my research will benefit the school in its understanding of Life Orientation lessons as well as contributing to the body of literature that has already been established regarding Life Orientation.

The research will be conducted during the second half of the 2012 academic year and will involve in-depth interviews with students from grades ten to twelve, as well as their Life Orientation teachers. In addition, I will be undertaking some gender specific focus groups with the students involved.

If you have any concerns or questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact either my supervisor or myself:

Jennifer Brown: **jennifer.brown@students.wits.ac.za**
Prof. David Dickinson: **david.dickinson@wits.ac.za**

Yours Sincerely

Jennifer Brown
MA Development Studies Candidate

This letter grants Jennifer Brown, under the supervision of Prof. David Dickinson, permission to conduct research among the students and teachers at Silver Oaks Secondary School. This research will take the form of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions surrounding the teachers' and students' attitudes to the subject of Life Orientation.

I have read the subject information provided and understand what this research entails. I also understand that all data given will be kept in the strictest of confidence and every measure will be taken to ensure that the identity of the participants and the school as a whole will remain anonymous.

Signature	Name	Date
	J.R. le Roux	14/06/12.

School of Social Sciences • Private Bag 3, University of the Witwatersrand, 1 Jan Smuts Avenue, 2050, Johannesburg
Tel: +27 11 717 4404 • Fax: + 27 11 717 4419
Development Studies Department: www.wits.ac.za/socialsciences/developmentstudies/8613/development_studies_home.html

Appendix 19: Gauteng Department of Education Approval Letter

education
Department: Education
GAUTENG PROVINCE

For administrative use:
Reference no. D2013/94

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	2 July 2012
Validity of Research Approval:	2 July 2012 to 30 September 2012
Name of Researcher:	Brown J.C.
Address of Researcher:	Flat E 22
	West Campus Village
	University of the Witwatersrand
	1 Jan Smuts Avenue
	Braamfontein
	2000
Telephone Number:	078 445 2841
Email address:	jennifer.brown@students.wits.ac.za
Research Topic:	What are the attitudes of both teachers and students towards Life Orientation lessons
Number and type of schools:	ONE Secondary School
District/s/HO	Johannesburg Central

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research
9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
4. *A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
5. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
6. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
7. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.*
8. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
9. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
10. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
12. *On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Dr David Makhado 2012/07/02

Director: Knowledge Management and Research

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
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Appendix 20: University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Approval Letter

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON MEDICAL)
H120726 Brown

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER H120726**
PROJECT TITLE	'What are the attitudes of teachers and students towards Life Orientation classes?'
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ms J Brown
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Development Studies
DATE CONSIDERED	20 July 2012
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	31 July 2014

DATE 03 September 2012

CHAIRPERSON (Professor T Milani)

cc: Prof. D Dickinson

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature **Date** 12 / 11 / 12

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES