

**UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY IN THE
MEMORIES OF FOUR FEMALE BASOTHO TEACHERS: AN
AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY**

**By
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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and contains no material which has been submitted previously for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To my knowledge and belief this dissertation contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signed:  _____

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September 2007.

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Abstract

This study explores the memories of adolescent sexual experiences of female Basotho science teachers in order to understand the influence of such experiences on their approach and handling of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. My argument is that Basotho teachers are facing a challenge of integrating sexuality, HIV and AIDS education into their teaching largely because of their lived sexuality experiences, which have been shaped institutionally and through societal expectations. An eclectic theoretical approach, with emphasis on feminism and involving Dewey's philosophies of experience informed the study. A qualitative research design was used. Data was produced through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and memory work with three participants. I was a participant-researcher and hence contributed my experiences to the study. Field notes and journal entries were used to supplement the data. The storied lives of the women teachers have been shared in their own words including the researcher's autobiography.

The findings show that the adolescent sexual experiences of the women teachers have shaped their teacher selves within sexuality, HIV and AIDS classrooms. Some of their experiences have been *educative* while others have been *mis-educative*, and thus have led to some of the teachers not being able to handle sexuality education at all, while others only handle it partially. Several stumbling blocks have been identified that impede the effective facilitation of sexuality education in Lesotho classrooms. These include religion, traditional practices, lack of training and societal constructions of what is and is not permissible in schools. Challenging and disturbing these stumbling blocks and breaking the silence around sexuality issues among Basotho societies could be helpful in ensuring that Basotho teachers gain the skills necessary for them to facilitate the teaching of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. Thus, Basotho children would be given the knowledge necessary for them to make informed decisions regarding their sexual behaviour.

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Preface

I am a female Mosotho science teacher, who is a mother of a teenage daughter. Looking at my daughter, I see myself as a teenage girl twenty years ago. I sometimes ask myself whether my girl has the same questions and anxieties that I had on becoming a young woman, and I wonder whether there are some issues she feels uncomfortable to discuss with me. When I was growing up, talk about sex and body changes was taboo. I could not get any information from my mother or my teachers about what was happening to my body and why I was having such strange feelings. Sex talk between the generations was and still is problematic because traditionally Basotho children are perceived as innocent and hence needing protection from corrupt adult practices such as sex.

Talking to my daughter about some of the issues regarding her sexuality has brought back memories of my growing up and how I experienced sexuality as an adolescent girl. I want to share with you one of those memories in order to highlight some of the anxieties and questions I had as an adolescent girl.

The “thing”

I was in a biology laboratory, in my first year of high school. I needed to use the toilet, but my teacher refused. There I was standing next to the table with my legs tightly crossed to stop any accidental flow of urine. Then I felt this strange tingling feeling between my legs. I pressed harder, afraid that the urine would come out. I felt my heartbeat increasing, the tingling feeling between my legs intensified and I got this warm pleasant sensation at the pit of my stomach. I felt as if I had exploded. I uncrossed my legs ready to see urine flowing to the floor, but there was nothing. I felt guilty as if I had done something wrong; yet I felt nice and warm inside. I had this nagging feeling that what I had experienced was wrong and that it should not have happened in the classroom. But if it was wrong, then why did it feel so wonderful? I remember asking myself why I felt so guilty, and what had really happened to me. I needed to ask someone about it but I felt ashamed to say anything to anybody. How would I explain it? I just ran out of the laboratory to the toilet without the teacher's permission. I never got the chance to ask anybody about it.

Nonetheless, my curiosity was highly aroused. I needed to know what the feeling I had gotten meant and how I could get it again. I remember that the very same day when I got home, I rushed to the bedroom and closed the door. I stood next to

a bed and crossed my legs again, the same way I had done in class. The same tingling feeling emerged. I crossed my legs tighter and the feeling intensified and exploded in me. I just stood there amazed! What was happening to me? I looked myself in the mirror and I could see my rapid heartbeat at the base of my throat. I felt really good about myself. The one thing I told myself was from then on, nobody should ever see me doing “that”, whatever it was. Though it felt so wonderful, I could not get rid of the shame I felt afterwards. From that day onwards, I managed to find some ‘alone time’ when I would do this “thing” which I had no name for, or explanation of. By the time I was in my third year of high school, I had improved my technique and I could do it lying down, beneath the cover of my blankets. This has always been my best kept secret. I never told even my best friend because I did not know what to say and also I did not want to lose her respect for me and our friendship because of something I could not explain (Personal journal entry).

This is just one of the many memories I have of growing up as an adolescent Mosotho girl. These were years of silence and isolation insofar as my budding sexuality was concerned. I never got any guidance or information to help smooth my transition into womanhood. My upbringing did not allow me to ask my mother, teachers, or any other adult about sexual issues because sex was not talked about between adults and children. Asking such questions would have been tantamount to admitting that I was sexually active and would have resulted in severe beatings. Now, as a teacher, I often ask myself whether my students confront the same challenges that I faced concerning their sexuality. I also wonder how my own experiences of adolescent sexuality have affected the way in which I relate to school boys and girls. It is through this self-questioning that I have begun to reflect on the significance of the lived experiences that accompany teachers into their classrooms when they teach about issues of sexuality, HIV and AIDS.

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

“Without education, AIDS will continue its rampant spread. With AIDS out of control, education will be out of reach...” Peter Piot, Head of UNAIDS (Washington 17-10-2002 10:00pm, from http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7195&URL)

AIDS has been recognised worldwide as a disease of young people, with an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 young adults aged 15 – 25 becoming infected every day and accounting for more than half of new infections (UNAIDS, 2006). Lesotho has the third-highest HIV rate in the world, but by far the worst affected are the young adults. Among them, young women are much more vulnerable and at higher risk of infection than young men. Within the age group of 15 – 25, 14.1% of young Basotho women are infected compared to 5.9% of young men (http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/lesotho_statistics.html). Without effective intervention, Lesotho will be faced with a crisis of major proportions.

In Lesotho, as in many other countries, HIV is spread mainly through heterosexual sexual activity, and this puts women increasingly at risk of infection in the context of gender inequality (Family Health International, 2002). Unequal power dynamics that are embedded in Basotho culture and society restrain women’s ability to adopt STI and HIV preventative behaviours, leading to women’s vulnerability to the infections. A large number of women and girls, especially those in rural areas, lack social and economic power to confront the hegemonic sexualities and they have little access to sexual decision-making or equality either in sexual partnerships or in the legal, medical, and social support structures which could promote rapid and positive changes to safer sexual practices (Patton, 1990). Basotho women also face the same challenges, even though there has not been any gendered study undertaken on HIV in Lesotho.

Of intervention work in relation to STI’s and HIV infection, sexuality education is considered as the most effective and efficient means to curb transmission among young people (UNAIDS, 2003). Across the world, schools play a major role in shaping the attitudes, opinions and perhaps most importantly the behaviour of young people. Today’s

generation of school-going children have been born into a world where AIDS is a harsh and unavoidable reality, a situation which their time at school can help them prepare for. With the capacity to reach large numbers of young people with information that can save their lives, basic school education can have a powerful preventive effect. At the same time, efforts to educate young people in developing countries are being hampered by the epidemic itself. Pupils and teachers are falling ill, taking time off to care for family members and, in many cases, dying as a result of AIDS (<http://www.avert.org/aids-schools.htm>). Making available systematic and scientific sexual knowledge and offering sex education can help young Basotho students to make informed decisions regarding their sexual behaviour. Evidence of the effectiveness of comprehensive sexuality education in HIV and AIDS prevention has recently emerged (Bruess and Greenberg, 2004).

The HIV and AIDS pandemic has prompted a variety of educational responses aimed at containing and preventing the spread of HIV infection. In Lesotho this has meant that HIV and AIDS prevention education is now mandated by the Ministry of Education and forms part of the curriculum as a cross-cutting issue to be infused and integrated in existing subject areas, because the curriculum is said to be already overloaded (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001422/142293e.pdf>). HIV and AIDS discourses have not only been successful in making people aware of HIV as a disease entity but have also opened up new ways of talking and thinking about sex and sexuality (Harrison, 2000).

Teachers who grew up in an era in which there was no talk regarding their own budding sexualities are now expected to handle the teaching of sexuality, HIV and AIDS without any training or preparation, or any consideration of how their own personalities and upbringing could affect the effectiveness of such lessons. Hence, further analysis and investigation need to be conducted to re-examine the nature and structure of school sex education, to explain sexual attitudes, beliefs and behaviours among Basotho youth, to explore the impact of gender and sexual norms on young women's as well as young men's sexual experiences, expectations and vulnerability to HIV, and to inform and, if

necessary, modify sexuality education and HIV prevention programs appropriate for the youth.

Basotho teachers face the challenge of having to learn to freely talk about what has been a taboo subject almost all their lives and be able to 'call a spade a spade'. Apart from this, teachers have to face the communities in which they are based regarding society's acceptance of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education in classrooms. This implies a consideration of culture and religion as well as the social constructions of what is and is not admissible in schools. Until such challenges are faced, there is little likelihood of a way forward in the prevention of new HIV infections through the schooling system in Lesotho. This is affirmed by Baxen and Breidlid's (2004) critique of research conducted over the last ten years in HIV and education, which suggests that new research needs to pay close attention to providing opportunities and support for teachers to engage with and explore the deeply private and personal area of sexuality. They highlight the need to acknowledge and explore teachers' lives and experiences as a key mediating factor in the teaching of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education.

1.2 Purpose and Rationale of the study

This study is a retrospective exploration of Basotho girls' adolescent sexualities to provide a *thick description* of the gendered nature of their stories. Denzin (1989, p. 83) explains that a thick description goes beyond mere facts and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. A thick description inserts history into experience and it establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In a thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. Guided by a feminist-grounded theoretical framework on sexuality, the study seeks to understand how Basotho girls experience their adolescent sexualities, and how such experiences affect the way female Basotho teachers handle issues of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. Despite the apparent high HIV infection rates among Basotho women, relatively little is known about the actual experiences of young Basotho women regarding their adolescent sexuality. In order to combat HIV infections

particularly in young women, we need to know more about how they experience and enact/perform their burgeoning sexuality. In that context, the following fundamental questions emerged:

- What are the memories of adolescent sexuality of four female science teachers from four Lesotho secondary schools?
- What impact do these teachers think their adolescent sexual experiences have had on their conduct as teachers, especially in the context of the sexuality and HIV/AIDS classroom?

By exploring the memories of a small number of female Basotho teachers' adolescent sexuality I hoped, firstly, to gain access to what has, largely up until now, been a room hidden from view. Sexual awakening for girls and sexuality for women is a complex and nuanced issue. We do not know much about how young girls encounter their sexuality (Wolf, 1997), and there has not been any such study done in Lesotho. By inviting a select group of teachers to talk about their memories of growing up, I hoped to expose memories that are seldom shared or recalled to the light of analytical scrutiny. Secondly, this process has led to a reflective engagement with teachers concerning how these remembered sexual experiences have influenced their professional lives, particularly in relation to their classroom interaction with students during sexuality, HIV and AIDS lessons.

A key part of our formation as teachers is our own experiences as learners. Much of what we do and do not do is in reaction to and influenced by those experiences. Our past experiences create hidden personal narratives about education, school, and schooling that have a profound and sometimes intractable impact on the way we teach our students (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger 2004, p. 908). According to Bullough and Gitlin (1995, p. 25), "to know the past is to know oneself as an individual and as a representative of a socio-historical moment in time." Allender and Allender (2006, p. 15) also argue that unless we are conscientiously aware of what is driving our choices of behaviour in the classroom, we are likely to revert to the ways of the teachers who taught us. This self-awareness is essential to breaking with non-functional teaching behaviours in an effort to discover personal strengths as classroom teachers.

Because who we are as people affects who we are as teachers and consequently our students' learning, there is a particular need to understand the driving forces behind female teachers' handling of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. This is especially important in this era where the epidemic is negatively skewed against women and girls (UNAIDS, 2004). Furthermore it often is the sad case that girls' sexualities are shaped by grim and exploitative encounters with males -often older men (Silberschmidt, 2001). These early experiences can distort the development of women's sexuality and lead them to inherit a culture which misleads them about their own desire; thus contributing to the constructions of submissive femininities (Campbell, 2001). In focusing specifically on sexuality, HIV and female teachers I knew that these teachers, unfortunately victims of yesterday and agents of tomorrow, will be in the position to open a 'window' on the situation of HIV, AIDS and female sexuality in Lesotho society, and so could contribute to positive change in societal attitudes. As teachers, these women are also vital in a sense that they can impart positive behaviours to students and as such, the community at large.

The results of the study could, I hope, potentially help the Lesotho Ministry of Education to establish a gender strategy for the education system, develop plans and set directives for schools regarding sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. We could also be more enlightened about the impact of the culture of sexual silence and absent female sexuality on the lives of female teachers in the Lesotho society. This information could be used to make better-informed decisions and to implement more effective curriculum practices. It might also provide policy-makers with the knowledge to facilitate the design of a national plan of action for implementing a policy on sexuality, HIV and AIDS education, and to increase the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls in society.

1.3 The research setting

Lives are never lived in isolation from social contexts (Cole and Knowles, 2001) hence researchers need to have an in-depth understanding of the focal context within which participants' lives are situated. Context is a reference point and an essential backdrop that helps us understand an individual's life and experience. For these reasons, I provide descriptions of the context within which this study unfolded.

approach to and understanding of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. The reporting, therefore, is mainly descriptive, drawing from qualitative data from field participants. The thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter one locates the study and frames the problem. It includes my experiences as an adolescent girl growing up in Lesotho. Chapter two reviews the literature related to the study. It provides the historical perspective, brings in the conceptual frameworks and includes the various theoretical models. It maps the territory, the relevant literature that frames the study and presents the various interpretations of sexuality as a concept from a Western perspective. Chapter three describes the research methodology, the approach and the procedure used for the data production. It also presents a brief description of my experiences of gaining access to the research site and participants. Later in the chapter, there is justification for the methods used in investigating issues of female sexuality within the context of Lesotho. This chapter also presents the data analysis strategies.

Chapter four presents the research findings which contain the experiences and perspectives of the participants collected through individual interviews, group discussions and memory writing. Finally, in chapter five I present discussions of the research findings presented in chapter four. These include summaries of the group discussions and memory narratives, conclusions and recommendations for reform and implications for further research.

Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented the context and overview of the study. I detailed the focus, rationale and the critical questions that drive the study. In this chapter I present the literature review. My motivation for this review emanates from the search for literature on female sexuality and sexuality education in my country. The search revealed that there are very few studies on female and adolescent sexualities in Lesotho. The only place where female and adolescent sexualities are discussed is within the context of unwanted teenage pregnancy. However, there are several studies from other Southern African countries which are relevant to this study.

The review and analysis of literature in this chapter is therefore framed by the question, 'How may my readings on sexuality education, female sexuality, and women teachers' lives in other countries inform studying the lives of women teachers within sexuality and HIV/AIDS classrooms in Lesotho?' There are four important theoretical strands in this eclectic approach to research: **experience**, **feminism**, **women studies** and **sexuality**. This review of literature is divided into four parts to provide an overview of the conceptual context and theoretical orientation that informed this research on adolescent sexual experiences of Basotho female science teachers.

Firstly, I discuss Dewey's philosophy of experience and how it guided my understanding and analysis of the adolescent sexual experiences. I then move on to discuss feminist theories as applied in the study. I link feminism with women teachers' studies and finally discuss sexuality as it is experienced by adolescents and females within the schooling context. To conclude, I create a space for my study within the existing research literature.

2.2 The study of experience

While I acknowledge the works of Southern African scholars on experience and childhood studies, I mostly refer to Dewey's (1934, 1938/1963) philosophy of experience

as the theoretical foundation for this inquiry into female adolescent sexualities because of the pertinence of its principles to this study. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1994, p. 417), Dewey's philosophy of experience has two principles namely *continuity* and *interaction*. The principle of continuity claims that every experience borrows from those that have gone before and informs those experiences that will come after, while the premise of the principle of interaction is that every personal experience is not only connected to the past and the future, but is also a consequence of "a transaction taking place between the individual and what, at the time, constitutes [her] environment". The conditions that interact with personal needs, desires, purposes and capabilities to create an experience are, according to Dewey, a person's environment (Dewey, 1938/1963, pp. 43-44). Thus, the personal experiences of adolescent sexuality unfold within and through interaction with the environment (Dewey, 1934, p. 13). These principles were helpful to me in understanding the different environments in which the different experiences of adolescent sexualities unfolded, and in reminding me that our supposedly private and individual experiences grow out of previous experiences. As a result, when attempting to make sense of the memories of adolescent sexualities, I kept in mind both the past and the future experiences that could link up with these stories.

For Dewey, education, experience and life are inextricably intertwined. However, he warns that not all experiences are equally educative. Dewey purports that an authentically *educative* experience should allow one to remain open to stimuli and opportunities for ongoing development in new directions and should add to the general quality of one's life. If, on the other hand, an experience hinders or perverts the development of further experiences, it is "mis-educative" (Dewey, 1938/1963, p. 25). Understanding whether their adolescent sexual experiences were educative or mis-educative helped the research participants in reflecting on how these experiences have impacted on our conduct as teachers, especially in the context of the sexuality, HIV and AIDS classroom. Dewey's concepts of *educative* and *mis-educative* experience helped me explain and understand the memories of female Basotho teachers' adolescent sexualities and the positioning of female teachers as sexual beings in their teachings of sexuality, HIV and AIDS.

Because this study is about women, by a woman and mostly for women, I now discuss the feminist ideas that shape it.

2.3 Feminism

Dewey did not attend to feminism or to the specifics of women's experiences. However, Dewey's philosophies and feminist ideologies supplement each other within this study. Therefore in this section I present the feminist theories that informed this inquiry.

2.3.1 Feminist theories

Feminist theory highlights that individuals occupy often conflicting and mobile spaces and as a result, individuals do not have any fixed identities (Kincheloc and McLaren, 1994). Feminist theory has been a valuable tool that has moved beyond traditional research by the active removal of power imbalances between the researcher and the researched, and is also motivated by the political intent to change oppressive situations while it begins with women's lived experiences. Central to feminist theorising is the assumption that realities are socially created and that there is a close link between oppression and practices of the individual and society at large (Giroux, 1992).

A post-structural feminist analysis exposes the historical and contemporary oppression of women of all races both in organisations and societies through the daily interactions that lead to the creation of multiple identities based on gender, social class and race (Lather, 1991). According to St. Pierre (2000), post-structural feminism conceptualises human beings as active agents participating in the creation of their own realities rather than as passive victims of social reproduction. Taking this view, I therefore consider women as active agents who have the power to make choices in their own situation, even though they may be victims of circumstance at the same time. This framework has been important for this study because it helped me understand the agency as well as the victim status of women in their memories of adolescent sexual experiences. I also align myself with Nnaemeka's (1995) *negofeminism* which focuses on the negotiations of give-and-take within relationships, and its concerns for multi-perspectives, multidisciplinary, and intersections of difference. The women in this study are involved in constant negotiations

of the meanings and implications of being a sexual Mosotho girl and woman within a patriarchal gender order. For Nnaemeka, African feminism is embedded in culture while it also “critiques and cautions against the ego trip that engenders feminist arrogance, imperialism, and power struggles” (Nnaemeka, 2002, p.12).

2.4 Women teachers

This section deals with issues of being a woman and a teacher, two separate but linked identities, and how *teacher* and *woman* shape each other in the construction of a woman teacher. I discuss the research on women teachers within a feminist framework, and how the female body is involved in the experiences of being a woman teacher. These studies helped in my understanding of the positioning of the research participants as women teachers within sexuality, HIV and AIDS classrooms in Lesotho.

2.4.1 Feminist research on women teachers’ lives

Feminist scholarship insists that gender plays a significant part in the ordering of social structure and consciousness, profoundly shapes the concrete conditions of our lives, and as such cannot be excluded from any analysis of experience in any aspect of life. This is particularly true of a field of study that is tied to women’s social and professional positions in public school teaching (Lather, 1994).

Feminist researchers challenge dominant, male-oriented paradigms and write women’s experiences of teaching and learning into the centre of educational theory-making. Feminist approaches also commit teacher-researchers to a consciousness of their own positionality and of the power of their own voice. Central to feminist analyses of schooling and teaching are the constantly shifting power and gender dynamics, the contradictions and paradoxes of lived experience, and the complex realities of female teacher lives. It is important to consider the multiple ways in which being a woman may shape teaching identities, how being a teacher may shape experiences of being a woman, and how they may overlap, interconnect, and/or contradict. Also to be acknowledged is how other aspects of individual identity, such as race, class, sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity, further shape gendered experiences of teaching (Kirk, 2003).

A small number of feminist scholars have worked intensively with groups of women and men teachers to explore their lived experiences. Although these studies take place in western contexts (North America and Australia), their conceptual frameworks and methodological approaches to women teachers' lives make them highly relevant to studying women teachers' lives in a developing country such as Lesotho.

Common to the scholarship of Munro (1998) and Middleton (1993) are frameworks that allow for the co-existence of agency and accommodation, action and resistance, power and powerlessness, and the interdependence of self-definition with external factors. The women teachers they talk with are active agents in history, living, and yet at the same time refusing to live the impossible fiction of female teaching experience. Walkerdine (1990) draws our attention to the "impossible fiction" of being a woman teacher in today's society. She points to the tensions and contradictions that are inherent in an identity which asserts power, status and commands respect (teacher) at the same time that it speaks of subordination, marginalisation and repression (woman). Walkerdine suggests that any fixed, institutionally-determined position or subjectivity defined by the term 'woman teacher' is impossible. In support, Munro explains that "to be a woman is to lack authority, knowledge and power. To be a teacher is to have authority, knowledge and power" (1998, p. 1).

Munro (1998) explores the life histories of three female educators in order to better understand how women teachers construct their selves both within and against dominant educational and cultural (androcentric) norms and discourses. Munro uses post-structuralist theorising to position non-unitary women teachers as subjects of, but also creators of, educational discourse history. Central to feminist scholarship across different disciplines and to Munro's work in particular, is the trickiness of creating subjects of women. Through the complex and often contradictory stories of her interviewees, Munro argues that women's resistance does not depend on traditional conceptualisations of power as a commodity to be acquired, seized, or shared. She claims that women are not only victims of patriarchy, but also agents of both its perpetuation and of its disruption. Munro's theorising therefore opens up spaces in which to envision women teachers and

researchers as accommodating dominant discourses whilst simultaneously challenging them, at the same time highlighting that if given attention, women's experiences may challenge established norms and the patriarchal status quo.

A number of feminist scholars have taken an autobiographical, self-reflexive approach in order to better understand not only their own teaching selves, but also the teaching selves of other women. The theorising of scholars such as Middleton (1993) and Grumet (1988) places women teachers' lives, and the knowledge generated through their experiences of being mothers, wives, sisters and daughters, at the centre of pedagogical knowledge.

Using a life history approach, Middleton (1993) focuses on the tensions, contradictions and complexities of women's educational experiences, intertwining her own story with those of her research participants. Reflecting on her own experiences as feminist educator and feminist activist, Middleton connects history, biography and social structure in order to examine master narratives of education from the inside out. From a feminist perspective she critiques education as a complex sociological field, shaped by multiple inequalities and power differences. She posits that seeking, hearing and valuing women teachers' voices, experiences and subjectivities within educational contexts, where female experience has been trivialised and female voices marginalised, is certainly challenging. However, by making visible the constructed nature of these voices, as well as of her text itself, Middleton challenges dominant and oppressive constructions of the female teacher.

2.4.2 The female teacher's body

Grumet (1988) seeks to reclaim the teacher's body from curricular and pedagogical invisibility. Her writing on women teachers and women's education is infused with a strong sense of her own embodied self, as teacher, mother, wife and daughter. Her physical movements and the clothing she wears define and inform her pedagogy. The knowledge she generates through attention to such dimensions of lived experiences becomes important sources of curriculum theorising. Mitchell and Weber (1999) also disrupt the apparent social taboo that divorces the professional practice of teaching from aspects of self that we all experience, such as appearance, dress, body shape, sensuality, sexuality, desire, fantasy and emotions. They are nonetheless aware of how bringing

these terms into discussion of teaching practice quickly takes one onto shaky ground, especially so when issues of sexual abuse are at the forefront of the public mind.

In Lesotho, I am on shakier ground because open discussion of issues such as sexuality, sensuality and the body is still taboo. On the other hand, as didactic approaches to teaching about the dangers of sex to Basotho adolescents were seen to be problematic and less effective than hoped in the battle against HIV/AIDS, alternative approaches are being taken. Sexuality, masculinities, femininities, gender roles and relationships and the interconnections between them have become important discussion topics in some innovative life skills and reproductive health curricula. Despite this change in focus, Coombe (2003) still warns that preparing teachers to comfortably and effectively present and work on such body-focused topics as sexuality with adolescents is a great challenge and one to which more attention has to be given. This challenge is compounded by the conflicting ideas regarding adolescents and their sexuality.

2.5 Sexuality

I begin this section by a definition and discussion of the terms adolescence and sexuality. I then discuss research on adolescence and sexuality education. Lastly I bring in issues of female sexuality into the discussion.

2.5.1 Definition and discussion of terms

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), anyone below the age of eighteen is a child. **Adolescence**, on the other hand, refers to a developmental stage that spans the period from puberty into young adulthood and is characterized by transition, physical and emotional development and change; while young people, according to the World Health Organization, are those between the ages of ten and twenty-four. The separation of childhood, adolescence and young adulthood is rather difficult for me because in Lesotho anyone who is not married is a child regardless of their age, while women are also regarded as children even if they are married. Therefore, in this study, the terms children, adolescents and young people are used interchangeably to denote those between the ages of ten to twenty-four.

Sexuality, on the other hand, is a complex term with multifaceted meanings referring to deep emotional feelings as well as to issues of power and vulnerability in gendered relationships. The feelings and power dynamics seem to be linked to the biological existence of an individual as either male or female (Weeks, 2003). Nonetheless, the scope of sexuality is socially constructed. Sexual feelings and behavior are influenced and constrained by cultural definitions and prohibitions rather than by physical possibilities for sexual indulgence. Consequently, the proverbial question of who should teach children about sex, what should be taught and how it should be taught has been an issue debated by national planners in many countries (Bernstein and Schaffner, 2005; Epstein, O'Flynn & Telford, 2003; Reddy, 2005).

In the context of this study adolescent sexuality therefore marks the important transitional stage from childhood to adulthood (girlhood to womanhood) in a specifically gendered way. The problematic nature of adolescent sexuality is perpetuated by the ongoing battle between social radicalists and traditional moralists on the merits of sex education in schools. According to Weeks (2003) the traditional moralists believe that sex education should be done by parents not teachers. They believe that the values upheld by society are eroded by teaching learners about sexuality. This group argues that abstinence till marriage is the only way to help children avoid STI's, HIV and unwanted pregnancy. They posit that teaching children about sexuality promotes sexual activity and bad behaviour: increased frequency of sex and increased number of sexual partners. On the other hand, the social radicalist group, whose views on sexuality are progressive and focus on the rights of individuals to enjoy sexual pleasure, believes that schools should affirm the value and pleasure of human sexuality, empowering learners with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make responsible choices that enable them to enjoy a happy healthy sex life (Lee and Jenkins, 2002). Their argument is that sex is portrayed overwhelmingly in a negative light, with far too much emphasis on the dangers (disease and teenage pregnancy) rather than the pleasures.

2.5.2 Adolescence and sexuality education

The works of several scholars highlight the predominant discourse regarding adolescent sexuality as that of childhood innocence, in which children are constructed as de-gendered, desexualised and in need of protection from sexual knowledge (Bhana, 2003; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Epstein *et al*, 2003; Mitchell, Walsh, & Larkin, 2004; Renold, 2005). This discourse has justified the silencing of adolescent sexualities in schools and society at large, on the premise that once children are sexually knowledgeable then they are no longer innocent. Childhood innocence is not only an excuse for keeping young children ignorant, but it is dangerous for them (Epstein *et al*, 2003, p. 16) because it denies them the knowledge they need to make informed decisions. Mitchell *et al* (2004) warn us that presenting young people as children and hence as unknowing and being unprepared for their own sexuality, in this era of HIV and AIDS, is as good as gambling with their lives.

Several studies have been conducted on sexuality and the construction of sexual identities by young people in Western countries (Measor, Tiffin, and Fry, 1996; Epstein, 1997; Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Epstein *et al*, 2003; Paechter, 2004; Renold, 2005). Measor *et al*'s (1996) article is based on research into sex education at the heart of which is an interest in adolescent sexuality. The focus of the study is adolescent perspectives on sexuality and the values and views they bring to bear on the sex education they receive. The findings suggest that boys and girls respond differently to sex education schemes and highlight that boys react more negatively than girls. Conclusions made are that innovative teaching strategies which reach boys more effectively are needed. There is also an equal need for strategies which create and protect spaces for the girls' interests, suggesting some justification for single-sex teaching of sex education in the early years of secondary schooling. The authors argue that the boys react negatively to the provision of sex education because it affronts their sense of their sexuality or gender identity in some way. One of the advantages of a single-sex sex education lesson is that it allows girls to ask questions, while in mixed-sex lessons boys challenge and tease girls who ask questions. Measor *et al* (1996) propose that it might help if more sex education for boys was provided by men and included issues the boys said were relevant to them. A policy challenge remains, to develop programs of sex education which manage to offer the

opportunity to both genders to learn about the aspects of sexuality and sexual behaviour which they are curious about.

Epstein's (1997) study builds on to the Measor *et al* study by arguing that schools are highly sexualized sites within which struggles around sexuality are pervasive, of consuming interest and at the same time taboo. She suggests that the struggles around sexuality are intimately connected with struggles around gender, and that the explicit homophobia and implicit heterosexism found within schools derives from and feeds macho and misogynistic versions of masculinity. Her findings suggest that misogyny and homophobia are not merely linked but are so closely intertwined as to be inseparable. The boys in Measor *et al*'s (1996) study are already exhibiting misogynistic practices by teasing girls who ask questions in sex-education lessons, while at the same time displaying their aspirations to the hegemonic masculinity by rowdy and negative reactions to mixed-sex lessons. Many young men and women have a considerable investment in continuing the privileges that are available to them through normative heterosexuality (Harrison 2000).

While schools try hard to promote 'compulsory heterosexuality' as an ideal, they also deny children the necessary information about sexuality in order to preserve children's 'innocence'. This is affirmed by Schaffner (2005) who highlights the fact that the mere mention of childhood and sexuality in the same breath sparks controversy in legal doctrine as well as in the broad domain of cultural politics. She posits that in popular and political discourse, children's exposure to sexuality has predominantly been framed as a grave social danger, necessitating staunch preventative measures and clear legal protections. According to Schaffner, childhood sexuality has rarely been viewed as encompassing experiences that are worthy of being nurtured or encouraged, because children's sexual needs and rights have more to do with the opinions of those who are in positions of legal, economic and cultural authority than with any reckoning of serving children's best interests. On the other hand, Renold (2005) argues that it is the construction of childhood as a time of innocence, and specifically sexual innocence as the ultimate signifier of childhood, that primarily leads to the neglect surrounding children's

sexualities. Hence, she proposes what she calls a “queering” of childhood, that is paying attention to the multiple and contradictory ways in which sexuality is constitutive of both the subject ‘child’ and the social and cultural institution of ‘childhood’.

Epstein and Johnson (1998) also claim that the idea of childhood sexual innocence inhibits attempts to alter the terrible and oppressive tangles which form part of child – adult relations, because sexual and other social identities are produced in relation to the cultural repertoires and institutional conditions of schooling. They also argue that sexuality is intrinsic to the formation of individual and group identities and schools are sites for the active making of such identities and of meanings around sexuality; even though talking about sexuality and schooling in the same breath can be seen as disturbing in many societies. Epstein’s (1997) and Epstein and Johnson’s (1998) studies are a clear indication that even though schools are sites for the constructions of sexual and other identities, the taboo nature of sex and the presumed innocence of children lead to a silence in schools regarding children’s emerging sexualities.

Epstein *et al* (2003, p. 2) argue that there is an “official silence” about all kinds of sexuality in the vast majority of mainstream schools and universities in Anglophone countries, and where sexuality is permitted or encouraged, the form of sexuality allowed is the “straightest of straight versions”. Their overall argument concerns the naturalization of heterosexuality, and the way that sexualities, nuanced by other social differences, are manufactured in and by schools and universities. They argue that sex education in its current forms does not meet the needs of young people, regardless of their sexual identities. They propose that sexuality education in secondary schools should be developed to include the introduction to writings about sexuality by major theorists and researchers on sexuality; to enable young people to place their own lived experience in broader contexts. The silence surrounding sexuality education is exacerbated by issues of power and discipline in educational institutions. In most educational institutions the main focus is on developing a sound mind, while marginalizing and disciplining the body.

Paechter's (2004) study tries to explain why sex education is marginalized. She argues that the dualistic vision of the world encapsulated in Descartes' thought has led to a situation in which students' bodies are sidelined in schools, making sex education paradoxically both marginal to the school curriculum and a central preoccupation of the schooling process. She discusses how schools discipline both children's bodies in general and their sexuality and sexual expression in particular, and contrasts this with the sidelining of education through and about bodies, and the positioning of these aspects of education as potentially polluting. In her argument, Paechter (2004) posits that educating the body is peripheral to the mainstream of school life; a lot of it takes place in extra-curricular and therefore voluntary activities rather than as part of the main curriculum. She points out that one reason the body has to disappear within schooling is that it is associated with sex, and sex has no place in school.

The school as a system has worked very hard to exclude the body, privileging the sound mind and marginalizing any subject which deals directly with bodies. This means that while the overt curriculum of sex education at least acknowledges the value and pleasure of some forms of sex within some kinds of relationships, the hidden curriculum of sex education emphasizes that sex, along with the body with which it is implicated is something that should itself be hidden. Paechter (2004) proposes that children should be taught all they need to know and all they want to know regarding sexuality because even if the formal curriculum marginalizes certain aspects of sexuality, children get these from their peers and the media hence building up false impressions of what sexuality entails. Kimmel (2004) also points out that our sexual learning comes during adolescence and most of our sexual socialisation is accomplished by our peers.

All these studies conducted in Western societies show that sex education in schools is used to promote compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia and misogyny; which are all characteristics of the current gender order of patriarchy. However the taboo status of sex education and the presumed innocence of children regarding sexual matters make it difficult for children to get the information they need to help them develop and shape their sexualities, and also poses challenges for the teachers who are supposed to handle it.

The same challenges are faced by African societies (Morrell, 2003; Mitchell, Walsh, and Larkin, 2004; Pattman, 2005; Reddy, 2005; Simpson, 2007).

Morrell's (2003) study highlights the impact of sexual silence on the spread of HIV among South African teachers and students. He discusses the schooling system as a site for the production of silence. He argues that silence is an effect of unequal power dynamics which exist within relationships. It prevents negotiations of safer sex, exploration of self and expression of vulnerability. Morrell suggests that interventions which attempt to break the silence around sexuality, HIV and AIDS may make major contributions to reducing further spread of HIV and promote gender equality. Silence is also an important factor in the problematic nature of intergenerational sex talk where adults, especially teachers, are expected to teach 'innocent' children about sexual matters. This is highlighted in Mitchell *et al's* (2004) study which is focused on gender, youth and HIV prevention/AIDS awareness in the context of South Africa. It investigates the uses and abuses of images of 'childhood', 'youth' and 'adolescence' in the age of AIDS.

Mitchell *et al* (2004) are particularly concerned with the ways in which social constructions of age can contribute to reducing or exacerbating the vulnerability of young people to HIV infection, particularly in a country where there is a high incidence of sexual violence in schools and communities. They highlight the ways in which young people who are at the age of experimenting with sex and who are most in need of information about sexuality, HIV and AIDS are often publicly referred to and visually constructed as children in need of protection, rather than as young people who have the right to relevant information about their own bodies and their sexuality. They propose that notions of innocence in HIV/AIDS campaigns should be challenged and replaced by constructions of young people as knowers, as being actively involved, living and surviving in the age of AIDS.

On the other hand, Reddy (2005) examines how young adults in South Africa perceive the messages about HIV, AIDS, sex and risk that they receive from adults and how this impacts on their sexual practices. Her findings suggest that adults expect young people to

be sexually abstinent. Adults also control young people's sexuality through a strong message that "sex is dangerous", and they try to maintain the dividing lines between adults and young people. In discussing her findings, Reddy (2005) argues that the adult – child context of sexuality education is currently an inappropriate one to manage an effective dialogue about sex. She suggests that issues of control and resistance that characterize intergenerational relationships and discourses need to be addressed for any messages about safe sex to be effectively embraced by the young people. For any effective communication between generations to be possible, the dividing lines between what is considered as public and private, legitimate and taboo, proper and shameful, adult and child, have to be challenged directly.

2.5.3 Female sexuality

Adolescent girls are doubly disadvantaged when they are regarded as children and also as females whose sexuality is not acknowledged in society. Female sexuality, desire and pleasure have been an issue of contention for many scholars. Building on Vance's (1984) *Pleasure and danger: Exploring female sexuality* and Fine's (1988) work on the missing discourse of desire and pleasure, Wolf's (1997) study presents and discusses stories of girls who came of age sexually in the 1970's in San Francisco. She highlights the need for collaborative first-person accounts in studies of adolescent female sexualities because of the sensitivity of the issues. Sato (1998, p. 16) posits that girls are often made to believe that sex is the key to "becoming a woman". On the other hand, Simpson's (2007) study shows that boys also "become men" when they achieve vaginal penetration and ejaculation.

Pattman's (2005) study claims that the popular stereotype of girls and women as lacking desire and sexual agency means that it becomes difficult for many girls and women to talk about their feelings. The implication is that women are raised to believe that to be sexually active is to transgress the rules of femininity. The pursuit of sex transforms good girls into bad girls, hence most women accept the cultural standard of minimalism defined as "fewer partners, fewer positions, less pleasure and less sex" by Kimmel (2004,

p. 240). These rules of femininity are enforced not just by men, but also by other women, and institutionalised in churches, the state and schools.

2.5.4 Women and patriarchy in Lesotho

In order to understand women and sexuality in Basotho society, it is important to understand the broader position of women in Lesotho. While Lesotho has had a history of female resistance to male domination (Epprecht, 2000), it is still the case today that patriarchal patterns are wide spread within the society. These include male dominance of public positions and male domination of decision making in family contexts. However, Epprecht (2000) provides a nuanced picture of gendered relations in nineteenth-century Lesotho, showing that the social presence of Basotho women was once contingent and independent, subordinate yet oddly powerful.

2.5.4.1 Female sexuality in Lesotho

In Lesotho, female sexuality is addressed only within discourses of unwanted teenage pregnancy, where female sexuality is depicted as a moral and health problem. Several studies have been conducted on teenage pregnancy and its impact on the physical health of the mother and child, their psychological well-being, the economic impact and moral issues (see Polonyana, 1993; Tau, 1994; Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999; Mokobocho-Mohlakoana, 2005). The only study I found which focused on young people's sexuality in Lesotho is Mturi and Mocrane's (2003) study which indicates that there is a complete lack of communication between parents and young people on sex related issues. However, this study does not focus on female sexuality.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, without proper education there is little hope for reducing the numbers of new HIV infections among young people, especially young women. There is need for us to understand the interactions between social constructions of adolescent and female sexualities in order to address the power inequalities and disadvantageous contexts that make women and girls vulnerable. Hence there is need to interrogate the everyday lived experiences of young women's sexuality and make them available through the language of research. Women and girls in Lesotho continue to be

neglected and there is dire need to engage them in dialogue on their experiences. This will be helpful in contesting the socially constructed perceptions of female sexuality.

It is also important that the educators entrusted with the task of teaching young people about issues of sexuality, HIV and AIDS are understood and also understand themselves in terms of what influences and shapes their teacher selves within sexuality classrooms. As Baxen and Breidlid (2004) have already stated, new research needs to pay close attention to providing opportunities and support for teachers to engage with and explore the deeply private and personal area of sexuality. There is need to acknowledge and explore teachers' lives and experiences as a key mediating factor in the teaching of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. At present, teachers are not coming out with their biographies with regard to their sexuality and hence there is a strong likelihood that the taboo around sexuality talk will go unchallenged and another generation of children will grow up not talking about sex, and this will lay them open to taking unnecessary sexual risks.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, literature that is relevant to sexuality education and adolescent sexuality has been discussed together with the position of women teachers within sexuality, HIV and AIDS classrooms. I have also highlighted the importance of teacher biographies in challenging the taboo status of sexuality in society. This study, which uses teacher biographies in understanding adolescent female sexuality in Lesotho, seeks to fill the identified gap in the literature on female and adolescent sexualities. In the next chapter I present the methodology and processes employed in this study.

Chapter 3

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the process and procedures employed in this qualitative inquiry which seeks to retrospectively understand the particular phenomenon of female sexuality among Basotho girls. Tisdell (1996) outlines several principles of feminist research, which have relevance to my study. Amongst these are the pervasive influence of gender as a category of analysis and organisation, the deconstruction of traditional commitments to truth and objectivity, the involvement of the researcher and the research participants, as well as the use of a multiplicity of research methods. Lather (1991, p. x) also argues that the ultimate aim of feminist research is action on the everyday world by women as subjects and objects of their own experiences.

Locating myself from the outset within feminist research methodology, I acknowledged my own position as both a researcher and a producer of the narratives of female adolescent sexualities, while deconstructing traditional conceptions of truth and objectivity in my analysis. I chose to locate myself within the personal experience genre of qualitative research and used interviews, field notes and memory work which have been used successfully within feminist research worldwide. Feminist research brings forth for scrutiny the practical and lived experiences of women in everyday life, by sorting, supporting and problematizing the meanings associated with these encountered conditions and complexities of our contemporary world (Grumet and Stone, 2000).

The first part of this chapter focuses on the particular methods employed in this study. In the second part of the chapter I describe the whole process of gaining entry and the actual data collection procedures. I describe the difficulties, disappointments and happy moments in gaining access to the participants in the study. I then go on to explore the ways in which I engaged in the analysis of the data. Finally, I include a section about my role as a researcher researching into the subject of female sexuality, a domain which has been silenced in Lesotho so far, and how this has affected the ethical considerations of the study.

3.2 Data production methods

According to Wolf (1997), most of the studies on female adolescent sexualities have been undertaken by adults who question and observe their young subjects. She argues that this has not been the most effective way of gaining in-depth, detailed knowledge of female adolescent sexuality because most teenagers would rather endure torture than reveal their sexual issues to an adult interviewer. Against this background, I conducted my study as a collaborative peer inquiry into adolescent female sexualities. While the participants and I are no longer adolescents, the memories of our adolescent sexual experiences provided the grounding of this study. My decision to undertake the study in this manner is supported by Clandinin and Connelly (1994, p. 425), who argue that personal experience methods permit researchers to enter into and participate with the social world in ways that allow the possibility of transformation and growth.

3.2.1 Interviews

I chose to interview the women individually and in a focus group. The aim of the interviews was to collect in-depth data about the adolescent sexual experiences of the women and the interaction of such experiences with schooling. Kaplowitz (2000) argues that individual interviews are more likely to address socially sensitive discussion topics than focus groups, but I also believe that participants draw confidence and a sense of safety from being a part of an interview group.

3.2.1.1 *Semi-structured one-on-one interviews*

The use of semi-structured interviews in eliciting information from the women was driven by the flexibility of such interviews in allowing the interviewees more control over the process (Patton, 2002) and guiding the flow of their interaction with issues they considered more important. Kvale (1996) notes that in interviews, both the researcher and participants co-create knowledge and meaning about the world around them. For this reason, I was very aware that my particular being and world-view could influence the responses of interviewees and my interpretations of the data especially because I was also going to interview myself.

3.2.1.2 Focus group interviews

The choice for focus group discussions was based on the fact that they provide the researcher with a valuable tool for gaining insight into participants' opinions and experiences (Krueger, 1994) that may not be available with individual interviews. I also wanted to encourage participants to engage with one another, and to illuminate their perspectives through a debate on the issues. The objective was to understand how these teachers experienced their adolescent sexualities, and to learn how they talk about sexuality, HIV and AIDS in their lessons.

Focus groups are described as an effective and relatively inexpensive, quick and convenient means of collecting data from several people simultaneously, while requiring relatively little structure on behalf of the interviewer (O'Brien, 1993; Krueger, 1994). In addition, focus groups are important in the advancement of social justice for women because they can serve to expose and validate women's everyday experiences of subjugation and their individual and collective survival and resistance strategies (Madriz, 2000). The basis of the suitability of the focus group discussion in an African context is related to the tendency towards communalism and groups as units of social activity. This communal spirit makes group interviewing a fairly reliable way of generating data in the African context (Obeng-Quaido, 1987), and hence Lesotho.

Morgan (1988) and Madriz (2000) regard focus groups as fundamentally unnatural settings for getting interview information. From a Western or North American perspective, their comment may be acceptable but not in Africa, where the predominant unit of activity in natural settings is the group. In effect, the group approach allowed me to discover information that might not have come up in one-on-one settings and encouraged the emergence of a plurality of opinions. In the single-sex group context, these female teachers were afforded the opportunity and encouraged to bring out their experiences of adolescent sexuality through support from each other. They were able to openly discuss the sensitive issues pertaining to their adolescent sexual experiences, while it might have proved difficult to get them to talk about their experiences in a

mixed-sex group. The women also had the opportunity to view others' perspectives and ultimately to actively participate in the construction of their own awareness and learning.

3.2.2 Memory work

Memory work as a method was developed within the fields of sociology and psychology. It was formally labelled by the German sociologist and feminist scholar Frigga Haug and a group of other feminist socialists in the sixties (Schratz *et al*, 1995), and continues to evolve within a feminist context. Some of the key people associated with feminist approaches to doing memory work include Crawford *et al* (1992) in Australia and Mitchell and Weber (1999) in the Canadian context. Samaras and Freese (2006) have also used memory work in their studies of teacher development and they argue that memory work is a self-study method used to represent autobiographical inquiry with critical and reflective revisiting, and hence it is a situated inquiry.

The pertinence of memory work is espoused by Mitchell and Weber (1999), who maintain that memory work is an excellent method for gaining insight into childhood. In their book "*Reinventing ourselves as teachers: Beyond nostalgia*", Mitchell and Weber used memory work in a study with teachers to explore their experiences of childhood in relation to their identity and practice as part of professional development and to suggest how relevant memory work is in gaining insight into the experiences of teachers and students. They also suggest ways in which teachers can work back through personal memories of school to make the past usable in their teaching, drawing in particular on the systematic and deliberate approaches to memory work suggested by Crawford *et al* (1992), Haug *et al* (1987), Kuhn (1991) and Zandy (1995).

Haug *et al* (1987) argue that the act of writing memory allows us to transgress boundaries, to explore new territory, and to enter a place where we can take ourselves seriously. In agreement, Kuhn (1995, p. 8) maintains that those who engage in memory work "may be conscientised simply through learning that they do indeed have stories to tell, and that their stories have value and significance in the wider world." The implication is that we store in memory images of value, even though the value may be

lost over the passage of time. This is why Hampl (1996, p. 270) argues that memories of negative experiences, especially painful incidents, are the most vivid in our minds.

Mitchell and Weber (1999, p. 56) also believe that putting grief to good use is interesting. For them “retrieval of those memories can influence one’s work both in the classroom and professional life generally.” In that perspective, DeHay (1994) reminds us that remembering is also the process of reclaiming and protecting a past that is often suppressed by dominant culture, and in this sense it is essential in the process of “gaining control over one’s life” (p. 43-44). Remembering, as suggested by Mitchell and Weber (1999, p. 9), is an act of private and personal nostalgia. Used within the education context, this personal nostalgia helps teachers to reflect on their own schooling and how they can develop to improve their teaching. Allender and Allender (2006, p. 15) argue that unless we as teachers are conscientiously aware of what is driving our choices of behaviour in the classroom, we are likely to revert to the ways of the teachers who taught us. Our past experiences create hidden personal narratives about education, school, and schooling that have a profound and sometimes intractable impact on the way we teach our students (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger 2004, p. 908). Hence self-awareness is essential to breaking with non-functional teaching behaviours in an effort to discover personal strengths as classroom teachers.

3.2.3 Autobiography

Feminist research allows for the use of experience as data, hence in this exploration of the adolescent sexual experiences of female science teachers I also used my knowledge and experiences as data. Cole and Knowles (2001) point out that autobiography is a structured account of life written by and about oneself. As I embarked on my autobiography, I was aware of the challenges to the use of autobiography as data. These involve lack of objectivity, lack of scientific evidence, and a reliance on memory. Because of these, Smith and Watson (1998) claim that women’s autobiographical writing was not deemed appropriately complex for academic dissertations before the seventies. In addition, when used in research, an autobiographical approach involves the researcher in self-examination and scrutiny whose potential effect is exposure to emotional threat. Despite

these challenges, my conviction in using autobiography was strengthened by the idea that women who would read my autobiographical writings would experience them as mirrors of their own unvoiced experiences.

Several feminist researchers have noted that women researchers often choose topics which mean something to them, and argue that drawing from and theorising on one's own personal experience is valuable (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Ribbens and Edwards, 1998). My topic was also chosen because I had personal experiences relating to it and it was of meaning to my development as a woman science teacher and researcher. Some writers, however, have been critical of the inclusion of personal experience as data (see Kelly *et al.* 1994, pp. 29 – 32).

3.2.4 Questionnaire

I am not referring to a typical questionnaire for surveys or opinion polls, but a set of questions whose answers would help to guide the third session of focus group discussions. A list of questions from adolescent girls to the agony aunt column of *People* magazine was used to produce this questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was for the participants to respond to questions from adolescent girls, in order to analyse their responses in relation to their adolescent sexual experiences and classroom practice. This questionnaire was used to guide group discussions on how we thought our adolescent sexual experiences have influenced our teaching. Information produced through the questionnaire and the discussions was to help in answering the second research question: What impact do these teachers think their adolescent sexual experiences have had on their conduct as teachers, especially in the context of the sexuality, HIV and AIDS classroom?

3.3 Developing and piloting the instruments

My overall aim was to develop instruments that would be useful in guiding the memory processes of the participants. I embarked upon a small pilot study with three Basotho female teachers with whom I shared a flat on Edgewood campus. The objective was to explore input from these women about the different instruments and to use their criticism to re-evaluate them and to reflect on ways in which they could appropriately be used in

Lesotho. The instruments piloted were a memory guide for written memory, a semi-structured interview schedule and a questionnaire.

Before engaging in the pilot project, the women were given details about the study, including the rationale for the memory writing exercise, interviews and questionnaire. The information gathered from the pilot exercise allowed for me to revise some of the questions which were not clear to the pilot participants. The interview guides were later revised and the final versions used for the actual study. This experience also allowed for an improved approach in dealing with the issues while reflecting on the cultural reality of the context of the study. The input from this group also provided me with a sense of the difficulties or frustrations I was likely to encounter with the type of methodology I was using.

3.4 The research participants

The selection of the three participants was purposive (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000) for this in-depth qualitative research. Purposive sampling utilizes convenience samples, whereby the researcher relies on individuals who are available and willing to participate (Creswell, 1994). I based my choice of the participants on their accessibility and specificity. The participants had to be Basotho female science teachers who had grown up in Lesotho. Another key factor of the selection was that we already had an existing relationship of trust, which was essential to the sensitive nature of research into personal experiences of sexuality. I took on the role of participant-researcher and contributed my memories of adolescent sexuality to the research process. Cole and Knowles (2001) argue that in the personal experience genre, we aim for depth over breadth and that the aim of participant selection is not population representativeness. They claim that it is much more important to work thoroughly, meaningfully and authentically with one participant than to end up with very partial and sketchy understandings based on work with many. Following this argument, I worked with only these three teachers. The choice for a small number of participants allowed for an in-depth focus and offered greater opportunities for clarification and discussion.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The participants were all female Basotho science teachers I had formed acquaintances with during our high school and university years. We had strong friendship bonds that I thought would enable them to feel free to partake in such a sensitive study. They had agreed to take part in the study and signed informed consent forms. They also retained copies of the letter detailing what the study was about and how I would be conducting it. What I was not expecting was for them to get cold feet towards the actual dates we had agreed on to start our project. They asked questions of trust and secrecy and how confidential a published document could be. We had to go over the issue of anonymity and confidentiality all over again. Even though they eventually consented again to take part in the study I could sense that they were still very afraid of exposing their secret lives. I had to enlist the services of a professional counsellor and made sure that I created an environment that would enable them to expose as much as they could without feeling overly vulnerable.

3.6 Actual data production

The sensitivity of the study made me break the data production into different phases, with a preparation phase to re-establish our friendship bonds, the data production phase and a debriefing stage at the end of the data production to allay any anxieties that could have been a result of taking part in the study. I also kept a journal of my memories of adolescent sexual experiences, which also recorded field notes. The data was produced over a period of five weeks.

3.6.1 *Keeping a journal*

I kept a journal in which I recorded memories of my adolescent sexual experiences. My recollections had been prompted by discussions with my teenage daughter regarding the changes to her body. I supplemented this by using photographs from my high school albums as prompts, and reading Wolf's (1997) "*Promiscuities: A secret history of female desire*". While I acknowledge the difficulty and challenges of retrieving the memories, I want to highlight the importance and effectiveness of memory triggers such as I used.

This journal was also used to record my impressions of the research process and reflections on the interactions between the participants because field notes are an indispensable data source (Patton, 2000) and they should contain everything the researcher finds worthwhile. I therefore included all my personal reflections, physical reflections of the setting, and decisions made that altered and directed the research process. Journals are not simply records of events; they also provide an intimate space for people in the field to mull over happenings, thoughts and feelings (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 103). For me, the journal was a memory enhancer that filled in the spaces of forgotten field occurrences and feelings.

3.6.2 Preparation phase

When the date for commencement of data production approached, I telephoned all the ladies and organised a pyjama party at my place. I was to take care of all the entertainment, food and transportation. My aim was for us to reconfirm our bonds of friendship and have fun together. I hired some video films such as *Coming to America*, *Lambada: the forbidden dance* and *Dirty Dancing* which were some of our favourites as we grew up. As we watched the films that evening in our night wear giggling like school girls, we all reconnected. We discussed the film *Dirty Dancing* afterwards and how “Baby” had shocked her father and everybody by admitting that she had spent a night with a man who was being accused of theft. How would your father have reacted? Would you have done it? What did you do that shocked your parents? These are some of the questions that we discussed which led to us thinking back to those days when we were adolescent girls. During this session we just talked and discussed all the pranks we played as adolescent girls and had fun being together.

3.6.3 One-on-one interviews

After the preparation phase I met individually with each participant for in-depth, semi structured one-on-one interviews. These interviews were conducted at different places depending on the individual participant’s choice. The discussions mostly lasted for one hour and were tape-recorded. Because these were conducted during the day, the participants seemed pressed for time and to my judgement did not pay full attention to the

questions or the responses they gave. I was not very pleased with the data I had from these interviews because the participants were not forthcoming with their responses. I felt that some important data was being withheld. The probability is that these one-on-one encounters were intimidating for the participants, or they felt more vulnerable as individuals to expose their secret lives. This experience was contrary to my expectation that I would get more in-depth data from the one-on-one encounters.

I met more challenges when I had to interview myself. I read the interview schedule and tried to respond to the questions and record my responses on audio-tape, but I found that it took more time for me to recollect the memories and talk about them to myself. It became easier to write down my responses to the interview questions.

3.6.4 Conducting the focus group discussions

The focus group technique discussed by Krueger (1994) is normally made up of between 6 and 12 participants with similar characteristics using a predetermined, structured sequence of questions in a focused discussion. However, I felt that the four of us were enough for my study in conducting the focus groups discussions. Krueger also argues that focus group participants are more likely to share their experiences and perceptions if they do not know one another before the focus group, but the nature of my study required participants who had a bond of trust among them and this meant people who already knew each other before. Due to the negative experiences of the one-on-one interviews, I felt that I had to pay more attention to how the focus groups were organised and conducted such that the participants would be more forthcoming in their responses.

The first group discussion was at a park in Maseru where we were to have a picnic after the discussion. Before conducting the group discussions with the participants, we addressed the issue of security and confidentiality. Next I provided them with an oral description of the study so that they could be free to ask questions about what they had not understood in the letters they had received. In addition I assured them of confidentiality and anonymity and that all necessary safety measures will be taken to protect their identities and safeguard any information that was shared during the group

discussions. Participants agreed to be tape-recorded and pointed out that information that may emerge from the group discussion should remain within the group, arguing that only the four of us should know which memory belonged to whom. I also assured the group that there was no right or wrong answer and that the contribution of each participant was very important.

Oakley (1981) suggests that by appealing to sisterhood, researchers can equalise their relationships with their respondents. For this reason, I offered my own experiences as a starting point for the conversations in the group around each of the issues discussed. Narrating memories among the teachers in this research filled an intense need within all of us that yearned towards making sense of women's experiences in Lesotho. In the beginning I was inquirer, interested in their stories. As they came to understand that no subject would be censored, our stories grew lively and daring, replete with an intense focus on gender and gender relations in ways that are seldom permitted in other settings.

As we talked it was clear that I had to keep reassuring the ladies of the confidentiality of my work. At one point, one of the ladies left the group and told me that she was leaving the project for good. She was not feeling safe. She said that what she had kept hidden most of her life was now going to be public knowledge. It was a great challenge trying to convince her that only the four of us would know whose experience was which and that I would not include anything she felt she did not want in the study. As she left the group, the other participants seemed uncomfortable. I could sense some doubt in their demeanour and I felt I would not get any useful information from them at that moment. I understood that the stories they had to share were very sensitive, but I had not bargained on them quitting before we even started. I decided to stop the data collection for that day and just be with them. We enjoyed a relaxing picnic and left the park to our different destinations.

I organised another sleepover with the ladies for the following weekend at my house again as I felt the identities of the participants could be protected thus. The lady who had 'quit' the study was back with the rest of the group. To break the ice I gave each one an

Archie comic to read and we discussed the characters of *Betty (homebody)* and *Veronica (sexy)* and which one we thought we identified with. We then moved to discussing our experiences. They asked about my experiences and I narrated my memories until I felt I had laid my soul bare before even one of them had disclosed even one sensitive memory. I felt really vulnerable and at a loss. With a sense of hopelessness I told them that if they still felt uneasy, I would plan for us to meet another time. That night there was no more talk of the study.

The following morning however, I found the three ladies discussing my memories and relating them to their own. They were ready for us to talk. Amidst laughter and tears we discussed our memories of adolescent sexuality and how we thought bringing up such memories could help us improve our approach and handling of sexuality, HIV, and AIDS education. For example, when I told a story about my sexual/romantic experience with another girl, it evolved into a perfect opportunity to discuss the fluid nature of sexual/gender attraction in contrast to my confusion regarding an either/or sexual orientation. My attention to the importance of the context of Lesotho helped the teachers to better understand how the pervasive male gaze (Dentith, 2004) and male control over female sexuality could likely play out. Such understandings helped us all to move out of dichotomous thinking into a wider arena.

3.6.5 Memory writing

As noted earlier in the chapter, memory-work is a process that involves various steps and rules for writing. Some of the rules described by Mitchell and Weber (1999), Crawford *et al* (1992), and Haug *et al* (1987) include:

- Writing a memory of a particular episode, action or event
- Writing in the third person
- Providing as much detail as possible
- Withholding judgement as to what one might consider inconsequential or trivial detail, and refraining from importing explanation, interpretation or biography

These authors maintain that to create distance between the person who is doing the actual remembering and the memory itself, memories should be written in the third person and in as much detail as possible.

The memory writing was conducted at an individual level where participants recorded their memories in their own time in small notebooks provided by the researcher. Participants were briefed about the memory exercise before they started the process and were given a week to record their memories. The memory guideline for guiding the participants in their writing was as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;">Memory guide</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Looking back at your life as an adolescent school girl, can you please recall any particular episodes or events pertaining to your sexuality that caused a shift or change in your life?2. Please write about one such incidence which you consider a life changing experience for you, in as much detail as possible. Do not worry about spelling and grammatical mistakes. Just write what comes to mind as it comes. Write your story in the first person. When you feel you have written all there is, then re-write your story in the third person using your name or a pseudonym.3. What impact do you think this particular experience has had on your life and on your teacher self?
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Figure 2

Nash (2004, p. 22) argues that to write a personal narrative is to look deeply within ourselves for the meaning that just might, when done well, resonate with other lives; maybe even inspire them in some significant ways. With this conviction in mind, I urged the participants to look deeply into their selves to produce their memory accounts. During the writing period, I kept in touch with the participants telephonically in order to encourage them as well as answer their questions regarding the exercise. After a week, I personally collected the written memory accounts and made photocopies of the stories that were written in the third person. These were used for our next discussion session where we focused on these critical incidences.

Another picnic was organised and the participants were given copies of the third person memory accounts of each one to read prior to the meeting. This session proved to be one of the most difficult during the course of the study. Some of the stories shared were very emotionally taxing for all of us and we had to stop the discussions to allow for crying and comforting each other. There was a point when I felt there had been enough crying and decided that we had to stop. I was drained. I never expected such sad experiences to emerge from my friends, and the fact that we had been friends for years but never shared such stories was another unsettling factor for me. The emotional laughter and tears forced me to visit a counsellor who had already agreed to assist us in case we needed professional counselling services.

3.6.6 Questionnaire

The next stage of our project was answering questions from adolescent girls who had written in to the agony aunt column of *People* magazine. The purpose was for us to respond to the questions and discuss why we had responded the way we did. This was to find out how we thought our adolescent sexual experiences have influenced our understanding and handling of issues concerning sexuality, HIV and AIDS. As we discussed our responses it became apparent that even among ourselves as friends, women, adults, teachers and mothers, we were not able to freely talk about issues of sexuality. It felt as if there was someone watching us and listening to what we said. We were policing ourselves to be socially and culturally correct. This discussion also brought up a heated debate about what was permissible for children to know regarding sex. This argument was brought about by some of the questions that adolescent girls had asked, which the teachers felt were not permissible coming from young girls. An example of such a question is:

- My boyfriend went away for three months and since his return he has told me that my vagina is not the same anymore. He suspects that I cheated on him. He said it feels as if my vagina is very loose, without any elasticity when he penetrates me. I have used ice cubes in it to make it smaller. I am just not happy with the way my boyfriend looks at me after we have sex. What can I do?

3.6.7 Debriefing phase

The final stage of the data production stage was the debriefing session in which we discussed how being involved in this collaborative study into adolescent female sexuality has affected our thinking in relation to our understanding of and approach to sexuality, HIV and AIDS education in our classrooms. The discussion also included the effect of recalling these memories and letting them out into the open. Some of the questions discussed were: what insights have you gained from this collaborative exercise of memory retrieval with respect to your adolescence and development of your sexuality, and your current and future approaches to issues of sexuality and HIV/AIDS education?

It was understandable that some emotions that had been suppressed for years resurfaced and the ladies needed to reconcile their past with their present lives. A great challenge was trying to convince the participants that they should use professional counselling services. I had negotiated a discount with the counsellor, but even then they could not go. They argued that they had managed to live with their experiences for almost twenty years and they could do it for twenty more years. Despite this argument I gave them the contact details of the counsellor in case they changed their minds. I followed up telephonically and through e-mail for two months after the data production to find out how the ladies were coping. Still they had not gone for counselling.

3.7 Working with data

This section deals with how the data was processed. I discuss how I went about preparing the data for analysis and the analysis process, and then discuss issues pertaining to the translation of some Sesotho words used within the interviews.

3.7.1 Data processing

There were four main data sources namely: transcripts of the audio-tape recorded one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with the participants, the written data from the memory work, and field notes based on the whole process of research. According to Ely *et al* (1991), audio-taping and hence transcribing discussions allows the researcher to review the events, recall the experiences and augment the details. This was appropriate

for this study because it permitted me to reflect on and review the events of the recorded discussions and hence gain a better understanding of what was said.

Once the data production was complete, I transcribed all the audio-tapes of the individual and group discussions and entered the memory data on the computer along with my field notes. The names of the participants were not mentioned during transcription of the data, nor did any of their names appear on any form of raw data, thus making unintentional disclosure impossible. When I was done with the transcription, I carefully read and analysed responses of the group and picked out some major themes that came up in the interviews, the memory writings, and the responses to the agony aunt questionnaire. Through close reading of the transcripts and analysing the memory accounts of the participants, I searched for commonalities and differences and brought to light the common concerns, insights and experiences of the participants. The transcripts together with the memory accounts were taken back to the participants for them to ascertain that what was recorded was what they wanted to say. This was followed by a group discussion on our interpretation of the information we had produced, looking for common thoughts, feelings, and experiences. We also discussed what our interpretations meant for us as women teachers.

Feminist research stresses the importance of the process of data collection, particularly the researcher's role in that process (Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Oakley, 1981, Reinharz, 1992). Thus, at every stage of this research, a conscious attempt was made to present the women as experts on their experiences. In presenting and analysing women's narratives, a concerted effort was also made to represent women's voices in a way that is true to their stories. Therefore the excerpts in this study are presented verbatim. The organising themes in relation to the participants' testimonies are fully discussed in chapter 4.

3.7.2 Language and translation

All the participants were qualified science teachers who could converse fluently in English but there were situations when they preferred to use Sesotho. When discussions got to what was labelled as 'sensitive talk', the women preferred to express themselves in

English arguing that some Sesotho words sounded very vulgar. During the transcription phase, I tried my best to translate as much as possible the Sesotho versions into English. It was a very challenging exercise even though I am a native Mosotho. The greatest problem was the multiple ways one word could be used. An example is the word *ntho*¹ (thing) which could be used for any word one felt unable to express. I had to read and re-read to contextualise the words before I could get the right meanings. At times I had to refer to the participants to find out what they actually meant.

3.8 Positioning myself as a researcher

During the course of the research I found that working out my role as a researcher was a big challenge, not because I could not handle it, but because as a researcher I found myself in a position that was emotionally delicate and that could jeopardise my research. However, being in a same-sex research group proved beneficial to this sensitive study, because I could appeal to the sisterhood within the group to disrupt the power differentials. Being a participant-researcher also proved to be a greater challenge than I had initially expected. I found it unsettling when the participants asked me of my experiences instead of answering the questions, even though it eventually paid off.

The participants agreed to take part in the study because they trusted me with their information. They also expected some kind of help from me, while at the same time they refused what I offered. How far does one go in helping research participants through difficult moments without appearing to be the powerful ‘all-knowing’ outsider? My limited knowledge of psychology could not allow me to offer full fledged counselling, even though I did offer some assistance as I felt it was required during the course of the study. One nagging question was how the participants would cope after the data production stage was over. On my part, I engaged the self-care tips suggested by Rager (2005) and used peer debriefing during regular research group meetings at Edgewood campus. I kept a journal to keep track of my emotional engagement in the research and used member checking to allay some anxieties that came up during the field work. Having supportive flatmates on campus also helped to balance my involvement in the research process with other aspects of my social life.

3.9 Methodological limitations

Triggering the memory process was challenging for the participants, especially recalling such old memories from almost twenty years ago. This was made worse by the cultural nature of oral societies such as Basotho, where the keeping of personal journals or diaries is very recent. Total reliance on memory is problematic because we do not choose what can be remembered and what is to be forgotten. Individuals give preference to certain memories over others either consciously or otherwise, hence making it difficult to give a complete account of a lived experience because “experiential accounts are never identical to lived experience itself” (van Manen, 1990, p. 54).

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methods adopted, the process of gaining entry, the difficulties, disappointments and happy moments of conducting this study. The challenges of memory dependent research have also been highlighted together with the emotional upheavals of sensitive research topics. I have discussed how I worked with data and my positioning as a participant-researcher. In the next chapter I present and discuss the findings of the study.

3.11 Notes

1. The word *ntho* can be used very widely. Here are some examples:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a) Ke teane le <i>ntho</i> 'aka. | I have met my <i>lover</i> . |
| b) Banna ba bats'o ba <i>ntho</i> li kholo | Black men have big <i>penises</i> . |
| c) U ile are ke hule <i>ntho</i> tseno. | She told me to pull the <i>inner labia</i> . |

Chapter 4

Research findings and data analysis

A delinquent boy is criminally active; a delinquent girl is sexually active...and a social danger to society... (Ericsson, 2005, p. 131)

4.1 Introduction

This study seeks to understand how Basotho women teachers' lived experiences of adolescent sexuality influence their understanding and handling of issues pertaining to sexuality, HIV and AIDS in their classrooms. In line with Ericsson's argument above, Basotho societies also perceive sexually active females (girls and women) as delinquent. The women I interacted with in this study are social actors, constructing their lives and the stories they tell of their lives from a number of different discursive resources. As they tell their life stories they strive for coherence and continuity of self (Mishler, 1992). Thus, by recounting and pondering both the mundane and critical moments in their lives, they are better able to make sense of their lives and assert their identities. As theorised earlier, I conceptualise these memory accounts as situated within socially constructed and gendered power relations (Holland et al., 1998), where the women are both active agents and victims of their sexuality in their interactions within society. I also conceptualise the experiences as representing the women's negotiations of their feminine sexual scripts (Nnaemeka, 1995) within the prevailing patriarchal gender order in Lesotho.

In this chapter I present and discuss data. I work with interview transcripts, questionnaire responses, written memory accounts and field notes, juxtaposing the words of the participants with my own perspectives. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents the narrative accounts of the four female teachers and a discussion of the pertinent themes emerging from them. The purpose of this part is to paint a picture of the participants through their memory accounts. While pseudonyms are used for the participants, their stories are in their own words. In the second part of this chapter, general issues of growing up as a girl in Lesotho are discussed. Important key issues that emerged from the participants' responses are included with full quotes describing the women's memories of adolescent sexual experiences.

4.2 Part 1: The memories

In this section I present the written memory accounts of the participants with regards to critical incidences in their adolescent sexual experiences. I present these narratives in the participants' own words to ensure ownership of their experiences. Each narrative account is preceded with a description of the situations within which the experiences unfolded.

4.2.1 Maya's story (MM)

Maya was 16 years old and in her last year of high school. She was staying with her single mother and three other siblings in Maseru where her mother was working. Maya recorded her memory as follows:

One day, after our last Form 5 examination paper was done, I phoned the rich boy with whom I had danced on 'farewell' night. I asked him to go out for a movie with me the following Saturday. After the movie he drove me home. I then gathered enough courage while in the car to tell him my plan: that I wanted to lose my virginity and I needed his help. I was tired of being the only virgin in class. You should have seen his face. He became purple! He asked me if I heard properly what I had said to him and whether I was drunk. I told him I was very sober and I had thought about what I asked him to do. "Why me?" he asked. I told him that I thought he would do a 'good job' of it. I remember the relief on his face as he started laughing. He told me that I should wait for one month and if I still felt the same way then he would do it.

A month went by very quickly and he was the first to call me. He asked if I still wanted to go ahead with my plan, and I told him "Yes". He then told me that we had to find a place to do it. He volunteered to pay for a motel room. We agreed on a date and time. When the day approached I felt anxious and scared of what I had put myself into. The day arrived, a Saturday morning in early December 1988. As I was getting ready to leave my home, the radio was playing Betty Wright's "Tonight is the night" (that you made me your woman, you said you'd be gentle with me and I hope you will. I'm nervous and I'm trembling waiting for you to walk in, I'm trying hard to relax, but I just can't keep still).

I sang along with the song and my excitement was getting the better of me. I remember my brother asking me why I was so excited and I told him we were having lunch at a girlfriend's house. I arrived at our rendezvous and I found him waiting for me, immaculately dressed. I nervously greeted him and we walked to our room. When we got there, he started undressing and told me to do the same. He wanted us to be over with it before we both could change our minds. As we lay naked beneath the sheets he asked me if I was using any birth control, and I was not using any. He asked what I would do if I got pregnant and I just told him that I would not get pregnant. I do not know why I believed that I would not get

pregnant. I just wanted to lose my virginity. I would worry about being pregnant afterwards. I started kissing him and he responded. We touched each other and got ourselves in the mood.

When we finally did the thing, I asked myself “Where is the pain they usually talk about?” At that moment I did not care about the pain, I was having fun. When it was over, he hugged me and thanked me for giving my virginity to him. When we left the motel I felt triumphant. I was no longer a young girl. I was a woman.

4.2.2 Tia’s story (TM)

Tia was 17 years old and living with both her parents. She was the only girl among three children and she was her father’s little girl. It was in June of her final year when this incident occurred:

When I was in form 5 I had a friend whose brother was working in a government office in town. We usually visited him with my friend and he treated me like his younger sister. He was such a handsome man I could not stop telling my friend about it. She just laughed it off most of the time and never took me seriously. I lived for the moments when my friend would ask me to visit her brother’s office. It was easy because we passed near his office everyday from school. At this time I had never had any serious boyfriend and I fancied myself having my friend’s brother as my boyfriend. I really liked him. I think I had a serious crush on him. I tried everything I knew to get him to notice me as a young woman and not as a child, in vain.

One day my friend asked me to visit her at home on a weekend. I was thrilled by the fact that her brother would be there. I dressed in my best clothes to make an impression. I wanted him to like me as much as I liked him. When we got there I asked where he was and my friend told me that he had gone to collect his girlfriend. I was shattered. “How could he have a girlfriend? I am his girlfriend”. When they finally arrived, I realised that the girlfriend was a real beauty and I could not compete with her, but I still wanted him. I really thought I was in love. I decided that I would get him in my own way. I hatched up one of the most devious plans I could ever think of. “I would entice him to have sex with me, give him my virginity, and then surely he would love me!” I thought.

One Friday, I took some private clothes to school with me so that I could change out of my uniform when school was out. I chose the most seductive of my clothes, a very short dress and a figure hugging low cut vest. I wanted him to see all my ‘assets’. My friend wanted us to go for a movie that afternoon but I had told her that I had some errands to run. When school was out I waited for my friend to leave and then changed into my private clothes and went to the brother’s office. When I got there he was surprised that I was alone. He instinctively thought something was wrong with his younger sister. I told him that she was fine and that

I had just come to see him as I was passing by. He was a bit suspicious at first, but then allowed me into his office.

He was busy with some paperwork so I just sat opposite him at his desk and looked at him. There was only an hour before knocking off time. I wanted him to stop working and concentrate on me. I stood up and massaged his back as he was working. He tried to stop me but I just continued. Eventually he relented, but he did not stop working. I asked him how he felt and he said it was good. This gave me the courage to move and sit on his lap facing him. He was so shocked he lost his balance on the chair and toppled us. There we were with him on top of me on the floor, just what I wanted. I held on to him as he tried to get off me. I kissed him, right on the lips I kissed him. He responded to the kiss and we started kissing each other and touching. I have never felt myself having so much power, so much control over another human being. It was exhilarating. He pulled off and tried to get out of the office, but his erection was too visible.

“What do you think you are doing? You are too young to be thinking about this” he said. I just looked at him and removed my vest. I locked the door and asked him to touch me like a real woman. You should have seen his face! I think our touching was too much for him to bear, so he asked me whether I was on any birth control and I said yes though I was lying. When that thing got inside me it was so painful that I wanted to ask him to stop, but I had enticed him. When it was all over, we walked together to the bus stop. He told me that he had never really realised how grown up I was and that it was good that I had proven it to him.

Needless to say, the next month I missed my period and the two months after that. On the third month I decided to get tested and I was pregnant. The shock of it was too much to bear. It is funny because I knew that having sex without protection would lead to pregnancy, but I just thought it would never happen to me. I went to his office to tell him and I got a big shock. He told me that he is not responsible as I was the one who had seduced him. He said he had a girlfriend whom he loved and wanted to marry and that I could do whatever I wanted with the baby. That was the saddest day of my life. I had to make a decision and make it fast. If I kept the baby it meant missing a year of my schooling and if I aborted the baby there were chances of complications. I kept quiet about my dilemma and I never even told my friend. My mother noticed one morning when I just vomited all over the kitchen table. She asked what was wrong and I told her that I was pregnant. My dear mother nearly collapsed. She sat down and looked at me with the saddest eyes I have ever seen. “How could you do it?” I had no answer for that. I do not know why, but my father was more understanding and told me that I could have the child and continue with my studies the following year. I have a son now who is a constant reminder of my little plot to trap a man I had thought I loved.

This is one experience I have never talked about to anyone. Even my parents do not know the context in which my son was conceived. They just know who the father is. I do not want my son to know this either. I want him to continue

believing that he was conceived in love. It has been difficult over the years being a mother and a student at varsity, but it was worth it. I love my son very much.

4.2.3 Lisa's story (LM)

Lisa's parents worked in South Africa and she was staying with a relative near her school. Her parents hardly paid her fees or bought books for her. Her teachers knew of her plight and they helped where they could because Lisa was good academically. One April morning in 1988 this happened:

In high school one of the female teachers, Mrs. K, asked me to collect food for staff members from the main school kitchen. When I got to the staff-room kitchenette, I was expected to dish out the food for the teachers. I started washing the plates so as to put the food on. Mrs K came in with a male teacher, Mr P, who was still young. Mrs. K asked me if I knew that the male teacher was still single and looking for a potential wife. I told Mrs. K that I knew. Then she told me that she is leaving me with this teacher to 'talk'. She locked the door and left. I am not sure where the other teachers were but we stayed in there for almost twenty minutes without anyone coming in. He kissed me and started touching me. I tried to get off but there was nowhere to run. I wanted to scream, but I was scared of what the other teachers would think of me. I eventually stopped struggling. He forced me to bend and I just felt his thing inside me, without even removing my panties. He just pushed them to the side. He did it right there in the kitchen, while other teachers were busy with their work.

When he was through, he wiped my thing with a handkerchief and put it in his pocket. We then started to dish up for the other teachers and by the time we were through, the door was opened and Mrs. K came in. She asked for her money and Mr. P gave her R200.00. I felt so ashamed. I had been pimped like a prostitute by my own teacher and I felt there was nothing I could do about it. I wanted to tell my mother, but she would have beaten me instead of hearing my side of the story.

I hated Mrs K so much that I vowed never to attend her lessons. Every time she got in, I got out of the classroom. "How could she hate me so much?" I always asked myself. Needless to say, she never complained about my behaviour and I failed her subject. From that time I hated the staffroom and I never collected teachers' food again. Luckily Mr P moved to another school. One day I heard another girl talking about Mrs K and how much she hated her. I asked why and she said that Mrs K is a slut. It seemed that this girl had also undergone the same experience as me. That experience has left me with a lot of questions regarding who to trust. I had trusted my teachers and I had become a victim of that trust. "How could a female teacher, a woman who is a mother, do that to a student? What was going through her mind? How did she feel about the whole thing? Was the money more important than my wellbeing?" What surprised me most is that Mrs K has only one child, a girl. I wonder how she would feel if something like

this happened to her. You know I always prayed for something bad to happen to Mrs K's daughter, but it seems it was not in God's plan.

What I went through with Mrs K made me decide to be a teacher, a good teacher whom students could really trust and talk to. I asked myself then as I ask myself now about how many other girls are going through the same experience. I try my best to find out from my students what is happening in their lives because I know how traumatised I was. I never told anyone, except my best friend. If I had told anybody, I would be 'spoiled goods'. No boy would want to go out with me. Even my present husband does not know, and I want to keep it that way. I know he would understand and forgive me, but things would change between us. So my friend, make sure this does not get known to my husband.

4.2.4 Belinda's story (BM)

Belinda lived with her grandparents because her parents were working in a different district. She and her sisters were the envy of most of the village children because their parents bought them good clothes. When Belinda was 17 years old in grade 11 this is what happened:

I had a good body when I was a girl. I knew that boys and men were interested in me because they liked what they saw. You know, I was not staying with my parents in high school, but I stayed with my grandparents. I cut my uniform so that it was shorter than the other girls' dresses. I tell you I had curves in all the right places and I was proud of it. Almost all the boys at the neighbouring school wanted to go out with me and the boys at my school were not happy with this. When we had sports days with other schools, there would always be a group of boys from my school who would be walking with me as my 'bodyguards'. When I was in form D, I had a boyfriend in a neighbouring school. I was happy that I was his girlfriend because he was from a wealthy family and he bought nice things for me.

The boys at my school were never happy about this and some of them came to me and told me that I should stop seeing him. I did not listen to them because these boys had also tried to propose love to me and I had refused them. You know you could never believe that boys could be so hateful but I learnt that the hard way. One evening I was sent to the nearby shop to buy paraffin. It was still dusk and there was enough light for me to walk alone to the shop. When I left the house, my grandmother saw me walking with my boyfriend, but she said nothing. I walked with him to the shop and he left me there. When I left the shop it was beginning to get dark. As I walked on home I met my schoolmates, four of them, the same boys who kept telling me not to go out with my current boyfriend. I was happy to see them thinking that I was safe to walk along with them. One of them asked me where my boyfriend was and I told them that he left me at the shop.

We had to cross a small donga before getting to my home. While we were down there, one of the boys said “Now is our chance. When we propose you, you refuse. You know that you have a fit body which makes us want you, but you do not want to give us what we want peacefully. Today we are going to show you who we are...” I cannot tell you what happened next, but I remember finding myself beneath one of them while the others held me down. While the one was doing me, the other three were holding their things and caressing them. I was shocked at what was happening to me. I had had sex before but this was crazy. When the one finished, the others took turns pinning me down and doing me. When they were satisfied they let me go, tearing my clothes and punching me. They said that I did not even cry because I was a whore and I had done it with many boys.

I remember walking home in the dark asking myself what I was going to tell my grandparents. When I got home they had already retired to their bedroom so I did not tell anybody. The next day I went to the clinic and told the nurse what had happened to me. She gave me the morning after pill and checked me for sexually transmitted infections. The nurse asked me if I wanted to lay charges against the boys but I said no. I did not want other people knowing what had happened. My family never knew about it and the guilty boys never said anything because they were afraid of being arrested. I felt cheap and dirty and spoiled. I changed the way I dressed. I wore longer clothes. I hid my body behind my clothes. I was no longer the sexy girl people wanted. I felt that being sexy was dirty.

Since then I have never worn anything that is sexually explicit or revealing. After that incident, I never had sex again until I got married. Even today I am very particular about what I wear because I want to hide my body from the eyes of boys and men. Sometimes when I am teaching I feel like the boys are watching me. I do not even like to talk to male colleagues because I feel like they are not looking at me as a person, but they are looking at me as a sex object. Apart from the nurse, this is the first time I have ever talked about this. Nobody else should know.

4.3 Discussions

These are memorable incidents for various reasons, and their sensitivity made me realise again the difficulty of studying female sexuality within a context of sexual silence. For the participants, these are experiences they wish they could have shared with those close to them, but never had the chance. There are different meanings that can be made from these stories depending on the lens one is using. These lived experiences portray girls experiencing the dangers and pleasures of female sexuality. They highlight the fact that women and girls have the potential to be active agents in their sexuality, even though

more often than not they are in danger of the very sexuality. I therefore discuss these narratives within the frames: virginity loss and sexual violence.

4.3.1 Virginity loss

In Basotho culture virginity was reserved for marriage because a virginal bride was her mother's pride and her father's wealth (bride price). The status of virginity has lessened over the years, with fewer girls and women keeping their virginity for marriage. The fact that Basotho societies have become more flexible with the issue of bride price has also reduced the prestige of being a virginal bride. The participants, however, argue that they have never heard of the virginity status of a Mosotho man being questioned prior to marriage, especially because men are the ones who pay the bride price.

Maya and Tia's experiences show the status of virginity during their adolescent years. They disprove the common belief of passivity concerning female sexuality. They actively ensured the loss of their virginity through the choices they made. While for Maya virginity was a burden to be disposed of, Tia valued her virginity as a special gift for someone she loved. Maya felt compelled to lose her virginity because of peer pressure. She did not want to be the 'other' in discussions of sexual experience among her friends. Maya's experience is not unique, as there are boys and girls who also face same challenges of sexual experimentation. Maya was lucky that she did not fall pregnant, but her story highlights the common "it won't happen to me" syndrome. This is also visible for Tia who fell pregnant despite this belief. Because of the silence around sex, boys and girls start experimenting with sex while they do not have adequate knowledge and hence carry the same belief as Maya and Tia.

Basotho girls who fall pregnant out of wedlock are labelled as 'spoiled goods' (*o senyehile*). While children are expected to be sexually innocent, a pregnant girl is a delinquent because her sexual activity becomes apparent (Ericsson, 2005, p. 131). Pregnancy makes it visible to the society that a girl has been sexually active and hence devalued, while boys have no such worry. Tia had to stop schooling for a year to have her baby because she would not have been allowed to continue while still pregnant. She had

to find a different school afterwards where her parenthood status was unknown. In Tia's case, there is a possibility that the fact that she never got married can be explained by her fear that she would never find a man who would value her because she had been devalued by pregnancy. It is also possible that she chose not to marry, as an expression of her agency (cf. Arnfred, 2004, p. 23).

4.3.2 Sexual violence

Belinda and Lisa's experiences highlight the dangers that women and girls face due to their sexuality. Belinda's experience is common for Basotho girls. The practice of gang-raping is sometimes called 'streamlining' (see Jewkes *et al*, 2006) and is mostly common in boarding schools, where it can sometimes be organised by the 'boyfriend' himself to teach the girlfriend a lesson. Wood, Maforah, and Jewkes (1998) also discuss the issue of women being gang raped by their partner's acquaintances to punish them for suspected infidelity.

The fulfilment Belinda enjoyed in being labelled as sexy was eroded by the gang-rape. In its place was instilled the fear of being sexually appealing. Belinda chose not to tell her grandparents because she felt 'dirty, cheap and spoiled'. While they might have understood her problem and even supported her, Belinda felt that it was better for the shame to be borne by her alone. The silence was perpetuated by the fact that she believed that she could be blamed for what had happened to her, that she had worn provocative clothing (cf. Morrell, 2003). Belinda's choice to change her dress style is a common coping mechanism for rape survivors (Sharpiro, 1997; Ullman, 1996; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). While she argues that she has managed to live with her experience for years, its effects are still negatively affecting her teacher self and how she positions herself within sexuality, HIV and AIDS lessons. Unfortunately for Belinda, she is enduring forced sex even in her marriage, her argument being that "at least it is my husband..." The issue of marital rape in Lesotho has been discussed elsewhere (Motalingoane- Khau, 2006), problematising male sexual entitlement within marriage.

On the other hand, there have been reported cases of male teachers forcing themselves onto their female students (Human Rights Watch, 2001) and even getting them pregnant, but I have never heard of a case where a student gets 'sold' by her teacher (especially a female teacher) like in Lisa's case. It is difficult to figure out why this could have happened and what could have forced teachers to behave thus.

4.4 Part 2: General experiences of being a girl in Lesotho

This section presents issues pertaining to the societal expectations of Basotho girls with regard to their sexuality. Within this context participants relate their experiences of what being a girl was like during their adolescent years and how they handled their budding sexualities. This discussion starts with women's sexual agency and pleasure, followed by same sex relationships among Basotho girls and the practice of inner-labia pulling. I then discuss issues of language in sex talk and being a woman teacher within sexuality, HIV and AIDS lessons.

4.4.1 Sexual agency

While women and girls are mostly painted as victims in sexual relationships within the existing literature, this study shows that women and girls have the potential to be active agents of their sexuality (Hunter, 2002). The participants highlight incidences in which they played the seductive temptress through dressing up in sexually suggestive clothing. They stated that these acts of seduction gave them a sense of achievement and fulfilment. They realised that they had sexual power over their targeted males. The consensus was that every once in a while each girl or woman wants to know that she is appreciated as a sexual being. This is evidenced in the following quotations:

I dressed in very short skirts and tight jeans to show off... I had curves in all the right places and I felt good when men looked at me...BM

I wanted to show off my breasts so I wore low cut vests to reveal my cleavage. One day a male teacher stared down my cleavage in class and the boys laughed at him... it made me feel good... MM

One participant, however, highlights the opposite. She points out that in her school, those girls who wore tight clothing that was revealing were not appreciated. These girls were

believed to be fallen girls who wanted to lead other children astray. This is because women are raised to believe that to be sexually active or promiscuous is to transgress the rules of femininity. These rules are enforced not just by men but also by other women, and institutionalized in church, state and school. The pursuit of sex transforms good girls into bad girls, so most women accept the cultural standard of sexual minimalism- few partners, fewer positions, less pleasure, and less sex (Kimmel, 2004, p. 240). The participant points out that:

If a girl wore a tight jean or a short skirt, we were told that she is a whore and that she is looking for men to have sex with... even the boys did not like girls who wore such revealing clothing. They wanted their girls to be innocent... LM

This image contradicts the traditional Basotho dress for unmarried females which just barely covered the genital area. Basotho girls did not wear anything to cover their breasts, and their bead-skirts were extremely short, with no panties underneath. Then they were not called whores, but today if they wear short skirts they are labelled as whores. One wonders whether the whore status comes with the type of clothing, or any revealing clothing. Women are thus denied the power they get from feeling sexy. This labelling of women leads to their sexual victimisation. If one is a whore then one is assumed to be ready for any form of sex. This is the mentality of some Basotho boys and men who regard women who dress in revealing clothing as 'ready for it'.

These testimonies highlight the double standard that is used regarding male and female sexuality. While men are applauded for being sexually appealing, women are punished through sexual violence. Ericsson (2005, p. 141) argues that the idea of 'problematic sexuality' still resides in girls and that the sexual behaviour of boys is seldom made an issue. While men are free to dress in a manner that enhances their sex appeal, women are wary of it lest they be punished. Kimmel (2004, p. 239) argues that men still stand to gain status and women to lose it from sexual experience: "he is a stud who scores; she is a slut who 'gives it up'". Ericsson (2005, p. 135) also points out that women are pictured as basically having a problematic and unruly body whose sexuality and reproduction is in need of constant surveillance and regulation. The female body has been socially constructed as problematic and needing to be protected from the male gaze. This unruly

body constitutes a threat to the moral and social order. Meanwhile, focus on the unruly female body diverts attention from the pleasures that a female body can attain from sex.

4.4.2 Sexual pleasure

The participants argue that while adults (school and church) focused on the dangers of sex- disease and unwanted pregnancy, peer talk focused on the fun and pleasure of sex. They were told that masturbation is a sin and that sex is only for procreation. Contrary to this, Kimmel (2004, p. 249) argues that masturbation is an “expression of sexual agency” and is not wrong. Some of the women have memories of incidences when they experienced sexual pleasure by themselves or with a partner:

I stood next to a bed and crossed my legs again. The same tingling feeling emerged. I crossed my legs tighter and the feeling intensified and exploded in me... I felt really good about myself... MM

As she kept touching my thing, I experienced this wonderful feeling. She continued her kissing and teasing until I screamed... TM

These women state that they were not sure what was happening to them, but they enjoyed it. While they were expected to be sexually innocent, they could not ask anybody about what their experiences meant. These became secrets that they kept for fear of being labelled as bad girls. Some of the women, however, never experienced sexual pleasure until they were very old:

I tell you, I had all my three children without knowing what the fun was about sex. People talked about all these sensations they felt but for me I never knew it ... LM

I had several boyfriends and I had sex with most of them, but I tell you, I was just doing it because it was done. I never really enjoyed it... BM

A chance discussion with some older women teachers revealed that in their day, sex was for making babies: “The man comes in, call you to the bedroom, jumps on top of you and you are pregnant”. They argued that they do not think women in their day thought about sexual pleasure, and hence they were able to stay for many years without sex when their husbands were in the mines. Their argument is that sex is portrayed overwhelmingly in a

negative light, with far too much emphasis on the dangers (disease and teenage pregnancy) rather than the pleasures.

4.4.3 Preparing the female body for sex

Despite the negative portrayal of sex, Basotho girls were prepared for marital sex and childbirth through different rituals. One of the memories of the women is that of having to pull their inner labia to elongate them. This practice was common throughout Lesotho in the past, and is still practised today in some regions (cf. Arnfred, 2007; Tamale, 2005). For all the participants, they were told that they have to pull their inner labia before they started menstruation because after they menstruate the labia would be too hard to pull. There was hardly any clear information given on why pulling was necessary and we were taught that good children do not ask “Why?” The following testimonies express our memories of the pulling exercise:

My mother told me that I had to pull those things so that they become longer, otherwise I would be eaten by crows down there... MM

One of the aunts came into the room while I was bathing. She asked me to sit facing her and she showed me those things. She pulled them and told me that I had to pull them every night so that I would have an easier childbirth... TM

We did our washing at the river and that is where the older girls showed us what to do. We would sit in pairs and pull each other every time we went for washing. It was disgusting to pull somebody else down there... I never continued the pulling... LM

The older girls at school used to tell us that if we wanted to be good women we had to pull those things. I remember one of them saying that if I do not pull them then I will never have any man staying with me because I would be cold...I pulled for a short time and stopped. It was too painful... BM

It is evident that even though they were told what to do, these women did not know why they were doing it. This led to some of them abandoning the pulling exercise completely. These women argue that they learnt later in their lives that the pulling was done to reduce the size of the clitoris so that girls and women would be less sensitive and hence become ‘good’. It was believed that women who had elongated inner labia were more pleasurable to their men and hence would retain their men for longer. Pulling formed a central part of

sexually preparing the female body both for sexual activity with a husband and for childbirth. Elders commonly invoked the idea of a vagina needing a cover and the inner labia was conceptualised in the image of a door.

In addition to covering the opening of the vagina, pulling was supposed to increase the man's satisfaction by elongating the passage through which the penis passed, and was considered one of the most effective ways of "winning the favours of a husband" (Parikh, 2005, p. 134). Contrary to Parikh's claim, Basotho women who have the elongated labia still lose their husbands to other women. Should women and girls continue pulling? The major reason given for encouraging the pulling is to heighten the man's sexual pleasure, while there was little or no talk of the woman's pleasure. On the other hand, Arnfred (2007) and Tamale (2005) claim that in Mozambique and Uganda respectively the pulling of inner labia was and still is perceived as enhancing the erotic experience of both men and women.

The bodies of Basotho women therefore are believed to exist for the pleasure of men, as the Basotho saying states that 'women are blankets' for men. Literally, a blanket is a possession paid for and which can be used in any way without it ever talking back, initiating activity, responding to any stimulus or enjoying anything. It is possible; however, that boys and men were also taught how to pleasure their women sexually, especially during the traditional initiation schools, but because of the taboo nature of sex talk in Lesotho this could be known only to those men. This study focused only on women's experiences and hence we did not know of any incidence where men discussed women's sexual pleasure.

4.4.4 Mummies and babies: Girls' play or lesbianism?

To learn about their sexuality, some Basotho girls used same sex relationships which were looked upon as harmless games. It is common for Basotho girls to have 'mummies and babies', with older girls being the mummies. This is supposedly an innocent game where the mummy takes care of the baby and gives her presents. The baby is expected to run errands for the mummy and help her with some chores. This is very helpful in

boarding schools where the younger girls also get protection from bullies through their mummies. However, this practice has been forbidden in many Catholic schools because it is believed to promote lesbianism. This is because in some cases, the attachment between the mummy and the baby becomes very sexual. Some of the participants have the following memories of their relationships:

Anyway I started kissing her and caressing her breasts. I then moved to touch her thing and play with it. She held me more tightly. I felt her body stiffen and she moaned... TM

This woman touched me all over. She even touched my thing and she was breathing heavily, sweating, while I was scared and wanted to run away...I asked myself whether she had a thing and she was going to do me... BM

From our discussions it is clear that these women never talked to their parents or teachers regarding these experiences for fear of being labelled as lesbians. However, in Basotho culture homosexuality 'does not exist'. Within this context, it is rather difficult to say whether kissing another girl counts as lesbianism. On the other hand, Kendall (1999) reports that women she interviewed in Lesotho, who engaged in what was seen with Western eyes as same-sex practices, did not see this behaviour as sexual at all. To them sexuality has to do with penetration. She argues that from their point of view "you cannot have sex unless somebody has a (penis) *koae*" (Kendall, 1999, p. 167). No *koae*, no sex means that women's ways of expressing love, lust, passion, or joy in each other are neither immoral nor suspect (see also Arnfred, 2007; Murray and Roscoe, 1998). The institutionalised normalisation of heterosexuality makes it difficult for Basotho to accept any 'other' sexual identity. While there is information on homosexual practices in neighbouring African countries and there is evidence of homosexual activity in Lesotho, Basotho people still maintain that homosexuality does not exist in Lesotho because there is no vocabulary for it or it is not talked about.

4.4.5 The 'Thing': The language of sex and sexuality

Despite the argument that there is no vocabulary for homosexuality, this study shows that there is also limited vocabulary on heterosexuality for women. It is notable from our stories that we, as female teachers, are uncomfortable using explicit language to talk

about sexuality. There is common usage of the term ‘thing’ for any word which we are uncomfortable with. This poses a problem in a context where we are expected to teach about sexuality, HIV and AIDS using open and frank language in order to give students the right information. The following testimonies attest to this fact:

We were told that only girls who do bad **things** with boys bleed... MM

So she said that pulling those **things** down there helps to stop girls from sleeping around... TM

I told my grandmother that my **thing** had been injured because it was bleeding... LM

He forced me to bend and I just felt his **thing** inside me... LM

While the one was doing me, the other three were holding their **things** and caressing them... BM

In Sesotho, there is a word for thing, *ntho*, which is used for anything living and non-living. For anything whose identity is not known or cannot be revealed, the word *ntho* is used. When reading the transcripts, I had a problem of identifying what the participants were talking about. It was only through taking the transcripts back to them that they cleared with me what ‘thing’ meant in each phrase. What is striking about the usage of the word ‘thing’ is that we were talking to each other as adult female teachers and age-mates. I had assumed that we would be free in discussing our sexuality with each other, but it turned out that even among ourselves we could not say the names of our sexual organs. Even after the follow-up interviews and member checks, it was still problematic for the ladies to use the names of the different parts.

The participants were raised within a culture of sexual silence. There was hardly any talk about sex and the sexual organs within families or school. The women remember certain words that were used instead of the given names of the sexual organs, and these names are peculiar to each family or region. There is such a wide array of words used that it would also prove problematic if teachers were to use such words to teach their students. A few examples of the names for the penis are: *tsubi*, *ntoto*, *moshana* (boy), *motsoalle* (friend), *mpipi*, and *koae* (cigarette or tobacco). When asked whether they think male

teachers would be more free using the sexual terminology, the women vouched it would definitely be easier for men. They argued that boys grow up using sexual language in their play and it is taken as part of being a boy, while for girls there are words which are out of bounds. This would warrant a different study to find the ease with which male teachers use sexually explicit language in their teaching. Penelope (1990, p. 46) argues that there are conversational rules governing who can say certain kinds of words. Only men are permitted to use the slang of sexual slurs, while women, in contrast, are generally forbidden the use of that vocabulary, are chastised should they experiment with its terms as children, and usually don't learn most of its words. Should a woman be bold or fed up enough to speak the male dialect of her culture, she is marginalised and labelled outcast.

Due to the mentioned reasons, these women teachers are also wary of using sex talk. The women pointed out the following questions which worried them regarding sexuality, HIV and AIDS education:

- Will the society be accepting of the need for children to be taught about sexuality, HIV and AIDS?
- Will the church condone comprehensive sexuality education in church schools?
- How will I talk about sex with children when it is still difficult for me to talk to adults or age mates?
- What can I do to make my sexuality, HIV and AIDS lessons more effective?

The overall reaction of these women is that they are not able to successfully teach about sexuality, HIV and AIDS in their classrooms because they are restricted by the language, their upbringing and experiences, religion and societal expectations.

4.4.6 Women teachers in sexuality, HIV and AIDS education: What do teachers bring into their classrooms?

As mentioned in chapter 1, Baxen and Breidlid (2004) highlight the need to acknowledge and explore teachers' lives and experiences as a key mediating factor in the teaching of HIV, AIDS and sexuality education. A key part of our formation as teachers is our own

experiences as learners. According to Samaras, Hicks, & Berger (2004, p. 908) our past experiences create hidden personal narratives about education, school, and schooling that have a profound and sometimes intractable impact on the way we teach our students.

The memories shared highlight the experiences of the participants as learners and the value of such experiences in their adult lives. Their professional lives are affected by their past experiences either positively or negatively. They each learned different lessons from their sexual experiences as adolescent girls. The exercise of answering girls' sexual questions showed how each of the participants felt regarding sexuality education. The discussion also brought up a heated debate about what was permissible for children to know regarding sex. It was interesting to find that the women had left most of the questions in the questionnaire unanswered. These were questions they felt they could not talk to their students about. For some of the questions, the women had limited knowledge of the concept, or they felt that children should not be asking such questions. Examples of such questions are:

- I am a 16 year old girl and I don't actually know what oral sex is. What falls under that category? Can I get HIV from oral sex?
- My boyfriend went away for three months and since his return he has told me that my vagina is not the same anymore. He suspects that I cheated on him. He said it feels as if my vagina is very loose, without any elasticity when he penetrates me. I have used ice cubes in it to make it smaller. I am just not happy with the way my boyfriend looks at me after we have sex. What can I do?

In the group discussions it became apparent that we wanted to become good teachers and help our learners overcome some of the anxieties that we had faced growing up, even though we were still not comfortable with our own sexuality. The following are testimonies concerning how we thought our experiences had affected our handling of sexuality and HIV/AIDS education:

I do not want any girl to go through what I went through... I am always very sensitive in my classrooms to girls' stories. I want them to be free, to tell me everything, to trust me. I try to answer their sexuality questions as truthfully as possible, but, you know, I cannot say those words... LM

I am sorry that I am passing this on to my students, but that is how I am. I want the girls to cover up their bodies lest they become victims like I did. I am not really comfortable with boys in my class, you know, I am a bit scared. They look at me you know, and I feel like I am naked... I often ask a male teacher to talk to the boys alone... BM

I have a high position in church and I cannot teach children to have sex. I teach 'abstinence only'... I always hope the other teachers are teaching them properly, I really can't force myself to talk about sex with those young things...I know they are doing it but... TM

Sometimes I am not sure what the right thing to do is. I sometimes find myself sticking to the biological facts only and leaving the rest for somebody else... MM

These comments indicate the dilemma that women teachers face in having to teach about sexuality. Their problems include the sexualised female body, the lack of sexual vocabulary and institutional influences. Their actions and attitudes are shaped by their own experiences, and the fact that they never talked about sex as children impedes on their teaching. There is a common tendency of hoping that other teachers would cover the areas that the women are uncomfortable with. This assumption runs the danger of no teacher actually delivering 'sensitive' sexuality education lessons. It is puzzling, however, that despite the agency in their adolescent sexual experiences these teachers are unable to use their experiences as resources in their teaching.

Smyth (1996, p. 47) points out that when teachers write about their own biographies and how they feel these have shaped the construction of their values, then they are able to see more clearly how social and institutional forces beyond the classroom and school have been influential. We saw the ways in which we had been shaped by our culture, our gender, our institutions and our profession, but we also saw that each of us had learned to write her life in unique ways that came from her personal experience of the world. We began to know our own stories better by sharing each others' stories. As we listened to these stories, we not only heard echoes of our own stories, but saw new shades of meaning in them. Through these experiences we gained "new possibilities for writing our lives differently" (Clandinin, 1993, p. 2).

4.4.7 Can women teachers be sexuality, HIV and AIDS educators?

There is need for young people to be taught about their sexuality and how they can avoid HIV and AIDS. If women teachers are to do the teaching right, they argue that they need a lot of resources in order that they can holistically handle sexuality education. They point out that the general public needs to be conscientised for them to have a mentality change regarding sexuality, HIV and AIDS. The participants say:

I can teach freely if I knew that I would not be blamed for leading the children astray, you know, that the church would not curse me, and that I would still be regarded as a good mother to my children... LM

These days there are support groups in the villages and they can be used to reach the rest of the community in teaching about sexuality, HIV and AIDS. Teaching children involves the government, the parents and the schools you know. We all have to agree on what is permissible in school... BM

If sexuality, HIV and AIDS education can be examinable subjects I think that teachers and students could be more serious in discussing them. If it becomes a stand-alone-subject, then there would be teachers specifically trained to teach it and they would do a good job other than when we are told to integrate it into our subjects. Nobody does it you know... TM

The difficulties facing women Basotho teachers within sexuality, HIV and AIDS classrooms require intervention of stakeholders within the Lesotho education system. Women teachers, as well as male teachers, can be effective sexuality, HIV and AIDS educators provided their needs as discussed above are met. There is a need to change the environment for teaching such that it is conducive for sexuality education. Understanding the sexual experiences of teachers and helping the teachers understand their own experiences within sexuality, HIV and AIDS classrooms can help in challenging the taboo status of sexuality education. There is a need for teachers to interrogate their sexual experiences to establish its link to their practice of teaching. At present, teachers are not coming out with their biographies with regard to their sexuality and hence there is a strong likelihood that the taboo around sexuality talk will go unchallenged and another generation of children will grow up not talking about sex, thus taking unnecessary sexual risks.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings relating to the conceptual, practical and physical challenges of being a woman teacher within sexuality, HIV and AIDS classrooms in Lesotho. The narratives I present are a constant presence in the lives of women teachers, and have to be acknowledged and worked with if teacher support, education and other projects and programs are going to be meaningful for sexuality, HIV and AIDS education.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and implications

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I present a summary of the study. I then discuss some conclusions to be made from this study on the adolescent sexual experiences of female Basotho teachers as well as its limitations. I describe how my thesis responds to my research questions, and where unresolved questions and issues remain. I then make some suggestions for what the “action sensitive knowledge” (Van Manen, 1990) produced by this study may imply for educational policy and programming, and for future research on gender and sexuality in education.

5.2 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the memories of adolescent sexual experiences of female Basotho science teachers in order to understand the influence of such experiences on their approach and handling of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. My argument is that Basotho teachers are facing a challenge of integrating sexuality, HIV and AIDS education into their teaching largely because of their lived sexuality experiences, which have been shaped institutionally and through societal expectations. Data was produced through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and memory work. Field notes and journals were used to supplement the data. The findings show that the adolescent sexual experiences of the women teachers have shaped their teacher selves within sexuality, HIV and AIDS classrooms. Some of their experiences have been *educative* while others have been *mis-educative*, and thus have led to some of the teachers not being able to handle sexuality education at all, while others only handle it partially. Several stumbling blocks have been identified that impede the effective facilitation of sexuality education in Lesotho classrooms.

I discuss the conclusions to be drawn from the study in the following section.

5.3 Conclusions

This study concludes that women teachers' lived experiences do affect their approach to and understanding of sexuality, HIV and AIDS in their interactions with boys and girls in Lesotho schools. The adolescent sexual experiences of the women teachers are as varied as the women are different. The commonality in the experiences of the participants is that they all were affected by the same institutional structures and social expectations. They were subjected to the same scripts of what it takes to be a good woman; though these varied slightly depending on the region of the country one is from. The culture of sexual silence and the absence of female sexuality in educational discourses during their adolescence have disadvantaged these women in their professional lives. They have never been prepared to handle sexuality, HIV and AIDS education in their classrooms but they are expected to teach adolescent boys and girls about responsible, healthy and pleasurable sexuality. The findings highlight that these women teachers are not able to talk openly about sexuality even among other adults. How much more difficult would it be for these women to teach adolescent boys and girls about their sexuality if they cannot use the given names of body parts?

While their adolescent experiences have been educative for them as female Basotho teachers, how they choose to teach is not something that can or should be regarded as the outcome solely of individual will, disposition, preference or style. Because education is political in the sense that the organization of the school, curriculum content, and practices are outcomes of contested political goals, then how we operate in classrooms is always constrained and mediated by the discourses, practices and structure of the school. Thus "teaching is the outcome of political, moral, historical and ethical differences" (Smyth, 1996, p. 47).

The effectiveness of women (and men) teachers as sexuality, HIV and AIDS educators is dependent upon different stakeholders. The fact that sexuality, HIV and AIDS education in Lesotho is integrated into existing subject areas makes it impossible for teachers to do justice to it because of their heavy teaching loads. Teachers place priority on examinable subjects and leave the teaching of sexuality to the 'other' teacher. For those teachers who would be willing to handle sexuality education, they are limited by lack of support from the school and community at large. Churches, as owners of schools, are also implicated in

the hurdles of handling sexuality education in schools, especially Catholic schools. For example, men teachers can be able to successfully teach sexuality, HIV and AIDS education provided constructions of masculinity change, and this would probably involve changes in the gender order of Lesotho's institutions.

Some of the women teachers have had sad life changing experiences which have shaped the kind of teachers they are today. They want their learners to have different and more pleasurable sexuality experiences. Based on the focus group discussions one can claim that these women teachers would be more comfortable teaching in a girls only sexuality education classroom. This would help in reducing their fears of being sexualized by the male students during the lessons, especially because at high school level the boys are becoming young men with raging hormones. Because of their past experiences, these women teachers feel vulnerable to sexual harassment during sexuality education lessons within a mixed sex grouping.

On the other hand, one can also argue that the influence of their upbringing on their teacher selves will be more challenging for these women teachers to shake off. Even if they could have girls only classrooms for sexuality education, they would still be unable to answer some of the questions that the girls could ask regarding their sexuality. The fact that the women teachers were not able to answer questions that adolescent girls had sent to an agony aunt column is evidence to this. They felt that the girls should not be asking such sexually explicit questions because they were still young. The implication here is that the teachers are still operating within the discourse of childhood innocence and that children should be sexually unknowing. They still feel duty-bound to protect the innocence of the children from the corrupt influence of sexual knowledge.

This leads us to the issue of adequately preparing teachers to properly handle the teaching of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. Based on the discussions with the participants, one can conclude that there are some sexual issues that the women teachers feel they are not conversant with and hence cannot handle discussing such within sexuality lessons. They require more information on a wider spectrum of sexuality issues for them to be

able to confidently teach adolescents. One could argue that this lack of knowledge regarding sexual issues is another effect of the women's upbringing, because in Basotho culture women are children, '*Basali ke bana*'. The implication of this saying is that women, as children, should be sexually innocent and hence are brought up protected from sexual knowledge through silencing their sexualities.

The silencing has led to the lack of colloquial vocabulary when the women teachers talk about sex, probably because they had never had a chance to use and practice such terminology. It is not that the women teachers do not know the terminology used to talk about sex, but that their upbringing has made it impossible for them to use it. Penelope (1990, p. 46) argues that in every culture there are conversational rules governing who can say certain kinds of words. Only men are permitted to use the slang of sexual slurs. Women, in contrast, are generally forbidden the use of that vocabulary, are chastised should they experiment with its terms as children, and usually do not learn most of its words. This argument is also true in Basotho culture as exemplified in the previous chapter.

The fact that teachers are not trained to teach sexuality, HIV and AIDS education could also have an effect on their ability to facilitate this subject. There is need for higher education institutions in Lesotho to offer sexuality, HIV and AIDS education as a specialisation for teachers so that they can overcome their scepticism about the subject. While we cannot guarantee that such training would be successful in helping Basotho teachers facilitate the subject, it might give them the conceptual knowledge to at least handle some of the issues involved in sexuality.

Teachers who are already in the field could be reached through in-service training such that they get on-going support in their teaching of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. Another option would be to make sexuality, HIV and AIDS education in Lesotho to be a stand-alone-subject (Life Orientation) which is examinable, instead of having it integrated into existing subject areas. As such, teachers would specialise in this subject and hence get the necessary training to effectively handle its delivery in classrooms. Because education is a three-legged-pot: parents, school and the government, the training

also needs to be addressed at community level through established health support groups within villages. These groups would assist in changing the mindset of parents regarding the teaching of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education in schools. This community conscientisation would reach community leaders and religious leaders involved in the education of children about their sexuality. It is possible that through proper sexuality education, communities might change the sexual double-standard they use regarding boys and girls' sexual behaviour. Boys and girls are all sexual beings and hence have a right to enjoy the same standards of regulation regarding their sexual behaviour so that they can lead a healthy sex life.

5.4 Limitations and unresolved issues

Having asserted such conclusions, I cannot, however, ignore the impossibilities, the tensions and the limitations of this study and the unresolved issues within it. These should be given some attention. Firstly, I have to recognise that although the study was developed and carried out with feminist research methodology very much in mind, it is limited in the extent to which it can respond to the demands of feminist approaches, such as emancipation of the oppressed. It is a study by a woman, about women and at least to a large extent for women. It takes women's lives very seriously, and accords importance to their everyday realities, the tensions and contradictions within them. It also challenges the patriarchal structures, systems and language of education, and advocates for a woman teacher-centred perspective on gender and education. However, the study is not one that can necessarily mobilise women to act. My study is a small-scale in-depth study that cannot be generalized across Lesotho or to other contexts, but it raises significant issues and ideas that could be further explored in different contexts and/or on a larger scale. By providing a clear and detailed description of how I went about my study, I hope to offer some ideas and inspiration to others who are interested in undertaking similar work.

I am also very conscious of the emotion evoked through the memory accounts of the participants, and their lack of desire to seek professional counselling. I would love to think that they will be fine without the counselling, but my ethical duty as a researcher is to make sure that no harm is done. I cannot guarantee that no harm will come to the participants if they do not get help, but also I have a duty not to impose my thoughts and

beliefs on them. I therefore ask myself whether I have done them justice in telling their stories along with mine. Am I the right person to be telling such intimate and private stories of women's lives? One entry in my field notes reads:

I do not think I am doing the right thing with this study. What if the repressed emotions of the traumatic experiences cause harm to the women? If they feel they do not need counselling, what is my duty as the researcher in protecting them? I want to protect their anonymity as well as their wellbeing, so what is the right thing to do? (Field note excerpt, March 2007)

As researchers, when we tell the stories of our subjects do we betray trust, do we violate privacy? How much of the telling is our construction, interpretation, or interests? Perhaps herein lies the difficulty of theorizing and even writing about the experience of others in addition to ourselves (Tisdell, 1996, p. 123). I ask, along with many feminist writers such as Michelle Fine (1992), 'can I speak on their behalf?' Is it ethical to use their experience to support and tell my own story in the enterprise of feminist theorizing? While I may not be able to answer all the questions about being true to the individual women, I can definitely say that as a Mosotho woman, an insider, I can speak on the issue of sexuality and claim some level of authenticity and fidelity. As Ireland (1996, p. 129) argues, "writing from experience about experience- our own and others- is a messy business". The mess involves an inside-out approach in which we attempt to make sense of what we do. It involves subjective evaluations, the difficult interplay between the individual and the collective and the relation between group practice and the broader social context in which that practice takes place.

5.5 Implications for further research

From the findings of this study, one can claim that there is a need for further studying the lived experiences of women, and men, teachers in Lesotho because it is not only their sexual past that affects their teacher selves, but their lived experiences as a whole. The secrecy surrounding the women's sexual past and their lack of desire to seek professional help regarding such traumatic experiences says a lot about the society in which they live. If one is afraid of seeking help, then the implication is that the help offered is not what one needs or there is no help available at all. Another implication could be that people are more comfortable with what they know. They develop their comfort zones from which

they do not want to venture out, especially if they have to face painful and difficult situations.

There is need to find out what support structures are available in Basotho communities for survivors of sexual assault and what the channels of reporting are. Another question is why the women teachers in this study tell of great agency in their sexual lives but they are unable to use their experiences as resources in their sexuality lessons. One also wonders how men teachers would react in the same situations. Do men teachers face the same challenges as women teachers in handling sexuality, HIV and AIDS education?

On the other hand, there is not much in the literature on gender-based violence within Lesotho schools. There is need to find out what kinds of violence are perpetrated, by whom and against who. What are the constructions of sexual violence among Basotho youth and what shapes such constructions? How do Basotho youth construct their sexual identities and how do such constructions affect their view of love and sexual relationships? Answering these questions would help in creating safer spaces for boys and girls within school compounds (Leach and Mitchell, 2006).

There is further need for teachers to reflect on their teaching practice and improve on it such that they do not make the same mistakes their teachers made. This calls for more reflexivity in teachers who research the lived experiences of their teaching selves. As Dewey(1916, p. 76) argues, when teachers reflect on their experiences they take an essential first step toward “transforming those experiences into a guiding philosophy, a set of personal beliefs, and a repertoire of actions to be drawn upon in the future.” The reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences is education.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the summary of the study, the conclusions to be drawn, unresolved issues and limitations, and the implication for further research. Through this chapter I have tried to pull together the threads that bind the whole thesis and link them to future endeavours within sexuality research in Lesotho.

Sexuality education in Lesotho has not found any particular home within the curriculum yet. Therefore, the effective delivery of sexuality education in Lesotho schools would largely depend upon a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including parents, community leaders, religious leaders and educators, to apply their minds to find ways and means of dissuading learners from engaging in risky sexual behaviour. This study is therefore an appeal to all stakeholders in education to be actively involved in designing and implementing curriculum strategies that will enable the smooth delivery of sexuality, HIV and AIDS education for Basotho boys and girls.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of informed consent

P.O Box 11012

Maseru 100

Lesotho

10th October 2006

Dear Participant

I am a Masters' student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. My research topic is "**Understanding adolescent sexuality in the memories of four female Basotho teachers: An auto/biographical study**". The study focuses on the memories of adolescent sexual experiences of female teachers and how such sexual experiences have affected the way in which these teachers approach and understand issues of sexuality and HIV/AIDS in their classrooms. I will be conducting my research using conversations, group discussions and questionnaires. You will get a copy of the questions a day prior to the interviews and questionnaire discussions so that you have an idea of what to expect. I hope to conduct the interviews on weekends and I will take only one hour per session. Confidentiality will be highly guarded and depending on the choice of each participant, pseudonyms will be used. The participants' permission to audiotape all conversations and group discussions will be requested and I will personally transcribe each session and give you a copy of the transcript. I might need follow-up interviews with you so that we could discuss further about the topic and issues arising from your responses.

All materials that have been part of the study will be kept safely and I will not use them for any other purpose without prior permission from yourself and the other participants. If at any time you feel that you wish to withdraw from the study, you are free to do so

without any form of disadvantage for you. You are not obliged to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with. Even after the story has been written, I will discuss with you whether the material that is written is what you meant. If you feel uncomfortable with any part of the story, it will not be used. All the costs for your participation in the study will be borne by me (transportation and food). There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. I am hoping that your participation in this study will help you reflect on your teaching of sexuality and HIV/AIDS education and gain strategies of improving your teaching on these issues.

I would like, therefore, to request your participation in this study. Please feel free to inquire at any moment should you require further information. My contact details as well as those of my supervisor on this project are provided. If you agree to participate in the study, please indicate that you are informed about the study and understand its intention by giving your consent in the form of a signature below. A copy of the signed letter will be given to you to keep.

I understand the purpose of the study and hereby give my consent to participate.

Names _____

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Yours truly,

Ms Mathabo Motalingoane-Khau

073 192 6038

khaum@webmail.co.za

Proff. Robert Morrell

031- 260 1127

morrell@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 2: Interview schedule for female Basotho teachers

Understanding adolescent sexuality in the memories of four female

Basotho teachers: An auto/biographical study

Interview schedule for female Basotho teachers

Dear respondent

I am a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting interviews to collect information on female teachers' memories of their adolescent sexual¹ experiences in order to understand the influence of such memories on their understanding and approach in dealing with issues of sexuality and HIV/AIDS in their teaching.

This interview is anonymous and I will not disclose your particular responses to anyone without your consent. You are free to stop the interview at anytime if you feel uncomfortable. I will respect your wishes and not capture your partial responses for use in the study. The information from this interview will only be used for the study.

If you agree to participate in the **interview**, please indicate that you are informed about the study and understand its intention by giving your consent in the form of a signature below.

I understand the purpose of the study and hereby give my consent to participate.

Names _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Yours faithfully

Mathabo Motalingoane- Khau (Ms)

073 1926 038

khaum@webmail.co.za

Proff. Robert Morrell

031- 260 1127

morrell@ukzn.ac.za

Resources

Tape recorder, cassettes, batteries, pens, paper, table and chairs, electricity cable and adaptor, extra cassettes, batteries and stationery

Preparation

At the respondent's home arrange to have a table and two chairs for interview purposes, in a room where there will be little or no disturbances. Test the tape recorder before commencing with the interviews

Recorded interview conversation guide

Welcome the respondent and tell her that you would like to talk to her about the memories of her adolescent sexual experiences. Tell the interviewee that she will get a copy of the interview report. Ask for her permission to tape record the conversation. If she does not agree, have a pen and some paper ready to record the conversation as you talk.

If she agrees, turn the recorder on and say:

I am _____, I am talking to _____ who is a female teacher at _____ in Lesotho. It is _____ [day, date and time]. Our interview will hopefully last for one hour.

Ask the following question: **Could you tell me about your adolescent sexual experiences?**

Use the following themes and expand on them to explain as necessary, using your own memories of adolescent sexual experiences. Probe the responses in order to understand the memories of the teacher and the meaning she makes of them.

Themes for guiding memory retrieval

- ✓ Onset of puberty: wet dreams, menstruation, body changes
 1. When did it happen and where were you?
 2. Who told you about it?

3. Were there any explanations?
- ✓ Sexual experimentation: virginity and loss of, ‘mommies and babies’, First “real” kiss
 1. When did it happen and where were you?
 2. Who did you tell?
 3. What activities were involved in the ‘mommies and babies’?
 - ✓ Sexual fantasies and crushes
 1. Teachers?
 2. Students?
 - ✓ Sexual exploration of the female body: pulling of the inner labia
 1. When did it happen and where were you?
 2. Who told you about it?
 3. Were there any explanations?
 - ✓ Being a girl: clothes, make-up, mannerisms (pursuit of male attention)
 1. What was fashionable?
 2. What did you do to get male attention?
 - ✓ Sex talk: peers, home, school
 1. Who did you talk to or ask sex-related questions?
 - ✓ Sex information: school texts, media (magazines, news-papers, television)
 1. Where did you get your information from regarding sexuality, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS?

Thank the respondent for taking part in the interview and assure her that she is free to contact you anytime about the study. Tell her that there may be follow-up interviews in the future to discuss matters that may arise from the study.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire for female Basotho teachers

Understanding adolescent sexuality in the memories of four female Basotho teachers: An auto/biographical study Questionnaire for female Basotho teachers

Dear respondent

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information on how female Basotho teachers understand and approach issues of sexuality and HIV/AIDS in their interactions with boys and girls in classrooms. I will discuss the responses to the questions with you to find out how you think your adolescent sexual experiences influence your teaching of sexuality and HIV/AIDS education. This questionnaire is anonymous and I will not disclose your particular responses to anyone without your consent. You are free to stop filling in the questionnaire at anytime if you feel uncomfortable. I will respect your wishes and not capture your partial responses for use in the study. The information you supply will be treated with confidentiality and will only be used for research purposes in this study.

If you agree to fill in the **questionnaire**, please indicate that you are informed about the study and understand its intention by giving your consent in the form of a signature below.

I understand the purpose of the study and hereby give my consent to participate.

Names _____

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Yours faithfully

Mathabo Motalingoane-Khau (Ms)

073 1926 038

khaum@webmail.co.za

Proff. Robert Morrell

031- 260 1127

morrell@ukzn.ac.za

Task: Please respond to the following questions on the spaces provided. If your response needs more space, please feel free to use the back of the page and indicate the question number. There is no right or wrong answer, so feel free to express yourself.

Questions

1. I am a 16 year old girl and have been masturbating regularly for a couple of years now. I like masturbating a lot, but I think I want to stop. Should I stop?
2. I am 16 year old girl, and I don't actually know what oral sex is. What falls under that category? My boyfriend asked me if I will have oral sex with him, but I don't know, how or what it is! Can I get HIV from oral sex?
3. I am an 18 year old, attractive African woman, and many guys are dying to go out with me. The problem is that I am gay. I've been living a lie in fear of being rejected by my family, but now I feel it's time to come out of the closet. I've dated some boys in order to cover up the truth, but I have never enjoyed it, and the relationships didn't last. How do I break the news to my family?
4. I'm 15 years old and have been going out with my boyfriend for six months. We love each other very much and he says he doesn't mind waiting until I'm ready to have sex. But often when we're making out he wants to take things a lot further. I don't know if I'm ready to go there yet, because I'm still a virgin. I don't like saying 'no' to him, but I'm not sure if I want to or not. Please tell me how I can handle this!
5. I am 18 years old and I am ready for sex. I've talked to my partner. We are very open about when the time is right and birth control. The only thing I am afraid of is the pain. I'm afraid it will hurt too much. When he has touched me it hurt a bit, but it was a good pain. Also, we are both virgins, so how will we know where to

place the penis? How will we be able to tell the urethra opening from the vaginal opening?

6. My boyfriend went to work in Johannesburg three months ago and since his return, he has told me that my vagina is not the same anymore. He suspects that I cheated on him. He said something has changed and it feels as if my vagina is very loose, without any elasticity when he penetrates me. I have used ice cubes in it to make it smaller. I am just not happy with the way my boyfriend looks at me after we have had sex. What can I do?
7. I am curious to know. If I have vaginal intercourse in a pool, Jacuzzi or bathtub, will the sperm die when it comes into contact with water? Am I safe from HIV and pregnancy when having unprotected sex 'underwater'?
8. My ex-boyfriend and I are sexually active and he uses the withdrawal method because we don't use condoms. I am also not on the pill or any form of birth control. The last time we had sex, he didn't pull out his penis. What are the chances of me being pregnant? When must I take a pregnancy test?
9. How common is this phenomenon of female 'wet dreams'? My boyfriend says he's never heard of it, but I'm sure I've talked to a couple of my girlfriends about it over the years, and they've said they have experienced them too. Any statistics on this?

Appendix 4: Guide for memory writing exercise

**Understanding adolescent sexuality in the memories of four female
Basotho teachers: An auto/biographical study**

Memory guide

- Looking back at your life as an adolescent school girl, can you please recall any particular episodes or events pertaining to your sexuality that caused a shift or change in your life?
- Please write about one such incidence which you consider a life changing experience for you, in as much detail as possible. Do not worry about spelling and grammatical mistakes. Just write what comes to mind as it comes. Write your story in the first person. When you feel you have written all there is, then re-write your story in the third person using your name or a pseudonym.
- What impact do you think this particular experience has had on your life and on your teacher self?

Appendix 5: Guide for focus group discussions with female Basotho teachers

Understanding adolescent sexuality in the memories of four female Basotho teachers: An auto/biographical study

Focus group discussion guide *(for three different meetings)*

Session 1 (First meeting)

Greet the participants and use an icebreaker to initiate conversation. Then say:

Let us talk about our experiences of growing as Basotho girls. Specifically, I would like us to talk about our adolescent sexual experiences generally such as:

- Menstruation
- Body changes including pulling of the inner labia
- Boyfriends and sexual debut
- Expectations from the society and the church

Start the discussion by revealing your memories.

Session 2 (Second meeting)

Use the memory accounts written in the third person to guide discussion during this session. Participants should have read the different accounts so that they can talk about the different experiences recorded in the memory accounts. Start with your reflection on these experiences.

Session 3 (Third meeting)

Use the responses from the questionnaire to guide discussions around how the participants feel their adolescent sexual experiences have influenced the way they have responded to the questions. Lead the discussion to how participants would react if the same questions were raised in their classrooms.

Appendix 6: Sample transcript

- R: You can start at any point of your adolescence; any memory is fine by me.
- P: I had my first menstrual period when I was thirteen. I was at home when it happened and I got very excited because my friends at school already had it. I told my mother “Mom, I am bleeding...” My mother bought me some pads and then said to me “Now that you are bleeding you will have a child if you sleep with boys...” That is all she said. You know I had wanted to get my periods long before. When we were at school we would ask a friend who was having a period to smear our panties with her blood so that we could also show others that we were doing it.
- R: Really? You did that?
- P: Yes! We wanted to be grown up too. At school we were never told about menstruation and what it implied to us as girls. It was only when we got to form C that we were taught about puberty and secondary sexual characteristics. I remember that we used to do our washing at the river. This where I learnt about pulling the things, you know! One older girl would show the younger ones how to do it. She asked us to sit in pairs, while we waited for our washing to dry, so that we could pull each other. I hated having to pull somebody down there. It was yucky and I decided that I would always run away from the river after the washing. I did not understand why we had to pull those things, and even now I am not sure what the real importance is. I stopped going to the river when I went to high school and I never pulled after that, but my husband has never complained. People say that the pulling gives a man pleasure but is it true? The ‘bean’ (clitoris) gets smaller when you do the pulling.
- R: That is really interesting! I never heard of people pulling each other!

P: That is what we did. Maybe it helped because when you pull each other you apply a lot of force and make them grow longer. When I was in high school that is when I had my first boyfriend. I had a crush on him. I loved seeing him and greeting him. Maybe he proposed me because he saw that I loved him. I was happy when he eventually proposed. I remember the day he kissed me. That was my first kiss. I was so happy that day. I do not remember whether I enjoyed it or not, but I was very happy and excited that I had kissed a boy.

R: Did you have any mummies or babies? I know that I had a very crazy mummy who wanted to kiss me all the time.

P: The high school I went to was a boarding school, so there were many of those. The mummies would be the older girls who already knew about the rules of the school and they would choose some younger girls who just arrived to be their babies. This helped the young girls because they could get protection from bullying through their mummies. The payment for the protection was that the babies had to do some chore and run errands for the mummies. Sometimes you would find that the mummies and babies sleep together. I am not sure how far the sleeping together went. I never slept with my mummy, but we kissed a lot. Sometimes she would touch me all over and I would be scared. In my mind, such kind of touching was only permissible between a boy and a girl.

R: What kind of clothing was in fashion then?

P: Trousers were not in fashion then. If one wore pants or short skirts they were labelled as a whore who wants to impress boys. Only a few individuals wore tight pants or short skirts. We would sit around in groups and start talking about other girls and their boyfriends, those who were having sex, those who have started menstruating and those who were still virgins. I learnt a lot from these discussions. I always pretended that I knew what they were talking about because I was afraid of letting them know that I was still a virgin. I remember that in form D we were taught about sexually transmitted diseases, but not much was said about HIV and AIDS. Even the media then did not cover a lot on HIV and AIDS. I read

the *Sister Dolly* column in Bona magazine and I enjoyed the question that people asked regarding their sexuality. That is the place where I also learnt a lot about sexual matters. I liked that column very much. It is funny now that we are expected to teach these young children all the things we were not able to talk about.

R: Yes! How do you feel about that?

P: What we are expected to do is very difficult, but the more we practice, we might end up being able to talk about it and give our students the information they need. We think that know about sex but they know nothing. Getting close to them you find that they are blank. If we had the opportunity to talk to these children from high school till university, a lot of the mishaps that befall them would not happen. They do stuff with no knowledge of the consequences. We have to tell them the truth, even though it is shameful to talk about it because we grew up with sex as a secret...