

# Sexual socialisation in Life Orientation manuals versus popular music: Responsibilisation versus pleasure, tension and complexity

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*This paper compares two forms of sexual socialisation to which learners are exposed: the sexuality education components of the Life Orientation (LO) manuals and the lyrical content and videos of popular songs. We performed a textual analysis of the sexual subject positions made available in, first, the LO manuals used in Grade 10 classes and, second, the two songs voted most popular by the Grade 10 learners of two diverse schools in the Eastern Cape. Of interest in this paper is whether and how these two forms of sexual socialisation – one representing state-sanctioned sexual socialisation and the other learners' chosen cultural expression that represents informal sexual socialisation – dovetail or diverge. Against a backdrop of heterosexuality and an assumption of the 'adolescent-in-transition' discourse, the main sexual subject positions featured in the LO manuals are the responsible sexual subject and the sexual victim. A number of sexualised subject positions are portrayed in the songs, with these subject positions depicting sex as a site of pleasure, tension and complexity. Although these two modes of sexual socialisation use different genres of communication, we argue that learners' choice of songs that depict fluid sexual subject positions can help to inform LO sexuality education in ways that takes learners' preferred cultural expression seriously and that moves away from the imperative of responsabilisation.*

**Key words:** sexuality education; popular music; sexual socialisation; Life Orientation

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## **1. Introduction**

Within the context of multiple sexual and reproductive health challenges in South Africa, the sexual socialisation of young people has become a key area of intervention and investigation, including school-based sex education (Francis, 2010), parental communication (Wilbraham, 2008), youth-friendly services (Ashton, Dickson & Pleaner, 2009), peer education (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002), and the mass media (Katz, 2006). In this paper, we conduct a comparative textual analysis of two forms of sexual socialisation to which Grade 10 learners in two schools in the Eastern Cape are exposed: the Life Orientation (LO) manuals used by their teachers, and the songs voted most popular by the learners. We understand sexual socialisation as the multiple social processes through which norms, customs, understandings and practices surrounding sexuality are simultaneously enabled and constrained (Vincent, 2008). These social processes take on a number of forms, including formal teaching, social rites of passage, informal interactions, public health messaging, parental communication, personal experiences, and peer interactions. The aspect of sexual socialisation on which we concentrate in this paper is the textual construction of sexual subject positions that young people might occupy.

Our comparison of these two forms of sexual socialisation (LO manuals and popular songs) serves the purpose of juxtaposing a medium of state-sanctioned sexual socialisation with examples of sexual socialisation in commercialised popular music. The former represents formal, approved curriculum, while the latter gives us insight into learners' preferred cultural expression. The questions we pose are whether and how these two forms of sexual socialisation dovetail or diverge and what might be learnt from these similarities or divergences.

Drawing on discursive psychology, we understand sexual subject positions as recognisable identity spaces that are constructed, maintained and negotiated in a range of interactive spaces (Davies & Harré, 1990). These subject positions are never neutral, but speak to/draw on underpinning social power relations, discourses and social practices that define these sexual subject positions in particular ways. In this paper, we analyse the sexual subject positions made available to learners in two texts that they are exposed to: LO manuals and the lyrics and videos of their most popular songs.

We concentrate on these two forms of media in recognition of the key role they play in sexual socialisation. Life Orientation sexuality education manuals follow a pre-defined curriculum and are authorised for use in schools by the Department of Basic Education. As such, these manuals offer an official version of acceptable and non-acceptable sexual subject positions. Popular music, on the other hand, speaks to commercialised forms of social, gendered and sexual enactments. The success of particular tracks has to do with the extent to which they articulate the psychological and social tensions experienced by young people (Frith & McRobbie, 2007).

## Life Orientation sexuality education

An increasing amount of research has focused on Life Orientation sexuality education in South African schools, much of it exploring how teachers approach the topic (Beyers, 2011; Francis, 2012; Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mukoma & Klepp, 2011). While teachers clearly form a key part of the sexual socialisation that occurs in sexuality education, the manuals used are fundamental in providing not only the learners, but also the teachers, with reference points concerning how the lessons should proceed. As such, they function as the approved Department of Basic Education framework for how the sexual socialisation of learners within the classroom should proceed.

To our knowledge, only one South African paper analyses the sexuality education content of LO manuals. Macleod (2009) found that danger and disease featured as guiding metaphors in these texts, with a strong emphasis on the negative consequences of early reproduction and abortion, and on behaviours that lead to disease. This emphasis is probably not surprising given the Department of Education's (2008: 9) framing of sexuality education as something that should engender 'responsible behaviour':

*LO1 [Learning Outcome 1]: Personal Well-being AS 3: Explain changes associated with growing towards adulthood and describe values and strategies to make responsible decisions regarding sexuality and lifestyle choices in order to optimise personal potential.*

Responsible decision making, in this logic, requires knowing the dangers and disease to which sexual activity may expose one.

An analysis of sexuality education texts in other contexts has highlighted their role in gendered sexual socialisation. For example, Hayden (2001) analysed the texts of an abstinence only and a comprehensive sexuality education programme in the United States. Despite the very different aims of these programmes and the ostensible difference in approach, Hayden (2001) found that both programmes naturalised gender assumptions about sexuality and promoted a 'pro-life' agenda. Such research points to the importance of critically engaging with existing sexuality education texts in South African education systems in order to interrogate what is taken for granted with regard to sexuality.

## Youth, popular music, and sexuality

Although the role of popular music in racialised youth identity has received attention in South Africa (Dolby, 2001), we were unable to find literature that specifically focuses on popular music and sexuality. Work outside of South Africa shows how music genres such as pop, rock and hip-hop are a playground for reinforcing, re-working and subverting heteronormative, gendered and sexual identities (Frith & McRobbie, 2007). Furthermore, Christenson and Roberts (2001) note that 'music media' contribute to emerging youth cultures' making available personal identities that young people actively take up. Music can, therefore, be seen to play a significant

role in sexual socialisation: music communicates gendered and sexual identities, while also creating cultural practices that produce such identities.

While state-sanctioned sexuality education programmes have specific aims laid out by the authorities who underpin their roll-out (see the aims specified above), the sexual socialisation that occurs through music is contested and fluid. For example, what has been termed 'cock rock' and 'gangsta rap,' which depicts women in misogynistic ways, have been countered by female musicians through genres such as the 'riot grrrl' movement and by 'bitches' in the hip-hop industry (Gottlieb & Wald, 2010). Furthermore, while 'teenybop'-oriented pop music relies on romantic heterosexual conventions, depicting male and female sexuality as innocent, vulnerable and wholesome (Frith, 2001), these constructs have been challenged by female musicians such as Madonna who has invoked traditional representations of men and women with a sense of irony and parody (Paglia, 2007).

### **Our study: Manuals and music**

The aim of this research was to compare and contrast the sexual subject positions made available to learners in two sources of sexual socialisation that use different genres of communication. Drawing on discursive psychology, we conducted an in-depth comparative analysis of the sexual subject positions made available in (1) the LO manuals used in the Grade 10 classes and (2) the two songs voted most popular by these Grade 10 learners of two schools in the Eastern Cape. Grade 10 was selected because sex and sexuality education is given the most coverage in this year.

School A, from which the data are drawn, is situated in a small rural and farming community; the majority of learners are black African and come from impoverished homes. School B is situated in a working class area in an Eastern Cape town; formerly designated as a school for coloured learners under apartheid, there are now a range of black learners (coloured and black African) who come from working to middle-class homes.

The Life Orientation educators at both schools were consulted about the resources they use to teach the sex and sexuality components of the curriculum. Each educator relied on one primary source: Attwell, Clitheroe, Dilley, Falken, Lundell and Mieke (2011) (school A); and Doubell, Haddon, Holgate and Martinuzzi (2011) (school B). These two books formed the text for the one part of the comparative analysis.

A short survey was administered to all the Grade 10 learners from both schools to establish the most popular music tracks. Learners were asked to list their top ten current favourite songs which they accessed through radio, television, cellphones or the internet. We selected the top two most cited songs for analysis: 'Climax' by Usher and 'Beez in the trap' by Nicki Minaj. These songs formed the visual and aural text of the second part of the comparative analysis.

We coded the material using the notion of interactive sexual subject positions as a guide. We understand subject positions within the framework of discursive psychology, in which discourses, as coherent sets of meanings, allow space for a certain type of self. In the words of Davies and Harré (1990: 66): '[T]he constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions. A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire.'

As Taylor and Littleton (2006) point out, subjects are 'complex composites of, on the one hand, who they create themselves as and present to the world, as a way of "acting upon" it, and on the other, who that world makes them and constrains them to be' (p. 23, emphasis added). These two facets have been termed reflexive and interactive subject positioning respectively by Davies and Harré (1990). In this study we concentrate on the interactive sexual subject positions invoked in the sexuality education components of LO manuals and popular music tracks. In other words, we analysed the kinds of sexual subjects that are constructed in these texts – the sexual identity spaces that the texts discursively make available for young people. We understand these sexual identity spaces as enabling and constraining particular norms, customs, understandings and practices surrounding sexuality that, in turn, constitute sexual socialisation.

In order to code the visual components of the music data, we relied on Machin (2010). Machin (2010) suggests exploring the meanings connoted through music video by analysing poses, gaze, objects and setting. These four features, in addition to the written text of the lyrics, served as the foundation from which we explored the subject positions related to representations of sexuality that were made available.

In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the research, we engaged in debriefing sessions and multiple readings between the three researchers. In addition, the credibility of the research is enhanced through the use of a well-established method of research (Shenton 2004), viz. discursive psychology.

### **Sexual subject positions made available in the LO manuals on sexuality education**

The most prominent sexual subject positions in the sexuality education components of the LO manuals are the responsible sexual subject and the sexual victim. Other positions that were evident, although not as prominent, are the rights-bearing agentic sexual subject, the coercive/violent sexual subject, the vigilant sexual subject and the desiring sexual subject. In the background, and as a taken-for-granted position implicit in all the above, are the heterosexual subject position and the developing sexual teenager. Each of these is discussed below.

## ***The responsible sexual subject***

The responsible sexual subject is one of the two most prominent subject positions offered in the LO manuals. Attwell et al. (2011) have an entire section devoted to 'Making responsible decisions about sexuality'. The responsible sexual subject is depicted as knowledgeable, as appreciating the gravity and consequences of sex, and as being self-reflective, as illustrated in the extracts below:

1. It is important that we all have a good understanding of the male and female reproductive systems. In this way, we can take responsibility for our behaviour and show understanding towards the opposite sex (Doubell et al., 2011: 9).
2. People should only have sex when they are ready to deal with the consequences of having sex. A pregnancy could result from sex so you should only have sex when you are ready to be a parent. You need to be mature enough, educated enough and responsible enough to care for and financially support a child (Doubell et al., 2011: 110).
3. How prepared are you for a sexual relationship? To how many questions did you answer 'no' or 'maybe'? [to a long list of questions including: Do I want to have sex because my friends are doing it? If I do have sex, will I regret it later?] If it is more than one of two, you should think twice before deciding to have sex (Attwell et al., 2011: 106).

We see in extract 1 how responsibility is paired with understanding and knowledge. The knowledge that is most emphasised is the 'negative consequences' of sex (as seen in extract 2). Such things as unwanted pregnancy, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases are repeatedly referred to in the texts, as well as more subtle messages about regret, and feeling worthless or ashamed about having sex. The responsible sexual subject, it is suggested, understands the consequences of having sex and thinks deeply about whether s/he is ready for sex, as indicated in extract 3.

The responsible sexual subject is further punted through depictions of the irresponsible sexual subject:

4. If a teenager has sex with a new partner every six months, how many people will she/he have had sex with by the time she/he is 30? The chances of contracting a sexually transmitted infection such as HIV would be quite high (Doubell et al., 2011: 112).
5. Some teens who have sex know that there are ways of preventing pregnancy, but they do not use them (Attwell et al., 2011: 109).

The rhetorical nature of the question in extract 4 does more than simply draw attention to potential health consequences: it does so in a way that highlights the irresponsibility of having sex with new partners (the question neglects to address whether safe sex is practised, but instead concentrates on the irresponsibility of serial

partners). In extract 5, the irresponsibility of not acting on knowledge is highlighted, thus enjoining the responsible sexual subject to behave in particular sanctioned ways.

While the responsible sexual subject is repeatedly invoked, there is also a sense that s/he is in constant danger of slipping into irresponsible behaviour:

6. Even if you have decided that you are not ready for sex, there are some behaviours that can put you in a situation where you might have sex, even though you do not want to (Attwell et al., 2011: 107).

It is the potential for this slippage that justifies the repeated emphasis in these manuals on the negative consequences of sex, and on sanctioned behaviour, in particular how to say 'no'.

### ***The sexual victim***

Substantial space is taken up in both manuals discussing rape and sexual abuse. Given the rates of sexual violence in South Africa, this is to be expected. What is interesting to note, however, is the absence of the survivor subject position. Instead, the victim subject position is repeatedly emphasised. Not only is the word victim used ('Victims of rape can be young or old, rich or poor' (Attwell et al., 2011: 113)), but the manner in which rape is discussed stresses the victim status of those who experience sexual violation.

7. Usually, the victims of these crimes are girls and women. Girls and women who are forced into sex may have to deal with the following:
  - Emotional and physical trauma from the abuse or rape
  - Pregnancy (and the difficult decision as to what to do about it)
  - STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections)
  - HIV/Aids (Doubell et al., 2011: 11).
8. Victims of sexual abuse have to overcome these threats [from the abuser that they should keep quiet], as well as deal with the feeling that they have been contaminated in some way (Attwell et al., 2011: 116).

While the seriousness of sexual violation must not be under-stressed, researchers have grappled with the difficulty of fixing the experience of women who have suffered abuse in the language of victimhood (McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2011). This fixing suggests passivity, helplessness and the inevitability of damage, all of which fail to capture the complexity and multiplicity of subject positions (including, but not limited to the 'survivor' subject position) that women who have experienced sexual violation take up or are ascribed.

### ***The rights-bearing agentic sexual subject***

In contrast to the sexual victim subject position, the rights-bearing agentic sexual subject is one who knows his/her rights, knows his/her own mind and is

capable of taking action. This subject position did appear in the manuals, but not prominently:

9. Be open and determined about your rights. Make sure your boyfriend or girlfriend knows what you want. If you don't want sex, say so. **No one has the right to demand sex** (Doubell et al., 2011: 118).
10. You always have a right to say 'No' ... You have a right to be respected ... You have the right to set limits (Attwell et al., 2011: 114).
11. Policemen and women are required by law to help you if you are in situation of domestic violence. If you report domestic abuse to the police and they do not help you, you must report them to the station commissioner. You can also get a protection order against the abuser from the court nearest to your home (Doubell et al., 2011: 13).
12. This information [about different contraceptive methods] will help you to make the right lifestyle choices ... To make the right choice of contraceptive you need to know what options are available and the advantages and disadvantages of each method (Attwell et al., 2011: 109).

In these extracts we see how learners are positioned as being able to take action (with regard to sanctioned behaviour – in particular saying 'no', but also with regard to being assertive in reporting abuse and making the correct choices regarding contraception). While the manuals refer to power relations and coercive sex, the above (and other) injunctions to take action do little to situate the possibilities and limits of agency within context – what has been referred to as situated agency in the literature (Bevir & Richards, 2009). Thus, for example, in extract 11, the difficulties of reporting domestic violence in cases where the person is dependent upon the abuser, the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the police service, the experience and knowledge of police brutality or secondary victimisation are all occluded from the discussion. Instead the failure to continue reporting up the ladder is implicitly laid on the shoulders of the individual who failed to live up to the tenets of the rights-bearing agentic sexual subject. In extract 12, the multiple social, cultural and structural barriers to contraception use (Wood & Jewkes, 2006) are not referred to. Instead, contraceptive usage is depicted as simply related to the individual choice of the rights-bearing agentic sexual subject.

### ***The coercive/violent sexual subject***

Given the emphasis on saying 'no' and the coverage of sexual abuse and rape in the manuals, the coercive/violent sexual subject position inevitably emerges, as indicated in the extracts below.

13. Listed below are some common excuses made by people trying to pressurise their partner into sex (Doubell et al., 2011: 117).



14. A male teen may think he has to 'score' as much as possible with girls so that he can be popular with his peers (Attwell et al., 2011: 113).

15. Boys who believe these myths are at risk of becoming rapists because they will not listen when a girl says 'no'. They may find themselves feeling guilty because they had sex just to say they had 'scored' (Attwell et al., 2011: 114).

The coercive/violent sexual subject is, at times, not explicitly gendered (as in extract 13), but at other times is associated with boys and men (as in extracts 14 and 15). Coercion is depicted as easily sliding into rape, with bragging to peers being given as a primary motivation behind coercive sexual behaviour. Once again the complexities of masculinities and the political economy of transactional sex (Hunter, 2007) are occluded.

### ***The vigilant sexual subject***

The flip side of the coercive/violent sexual subject is the vigilant sexual subject who engages in steps to safeguard her/himself against sexual violation. S/he knows the 'steps which a person can take to reduce the risk of rape' (Doubell et al., 2011: 117) and is aware that 'victims of rape can be young or old, rich or poor' (Attwell et al., 2011: 113). A number of pages are devoted in the manuals to advising learners on the ways in which they can avoid being the victims of sexual violence ('Be aware of yourself and your surroundings to prepare yourself for any possibility of attack. Imagine ways that an attack could happen and practise what you would do' (Attwell et al., 2011: 114)). The vigilant sexual subject thus becomes responsible for the prevention of such violence. The implicit message is that, should they experience abuse, they were deficient in implementing the guidelines provided. Such positioning in no way allows for any storylines about coerced consensual sex and/or rape in dating relationships, which are both believed to be common (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

### ***The desiring sexual subject***

The absence of what has been called a 'discourse of desire' has been commented on extensively in the literature, both internationally and in South Africa (Macleod & Vincent, 2014). Sexual desire is alluded to, but in passing, in the manuals.

16. Sexual desire and curiosity can become very important in these [dating] relationships (Attwell et al., 2011: 04).

17. It is normal to spend time thinking about sexual issues and your sexuality. It is an important part of your development into a healthy, sexually responsible adult (Doubell et al., 2011: 10).

18. You have a right to enjoy sex when you feel ready for it. Sex should be a natural, beautiful experience. You shouldn't associate sex with fear and disgust (Attwell et al., 2011: 114).

These extracts serve to normalise sexual desire: it is seen as 'important,' 'normal' and part of 'healthy' development. However, caveats are attached: desire should lead to the sexually responsible adult, and timing ('when you are ready') is seen as crucial.

### ***The heterosexual subject position***

Heterosexuality is implicit throughout the sections analysed. Same-sex sexual relations are not explicitly mentioned, and while partners are often spoken of generically, the accompanying diagrams, illustrative examples and exercises implicitly or explicitly assume opposite-sex partnerships.

19. Same-sex friends are a great source of comfort and security. But one of the most important social changes to happen in adolescence is dating (Attwell et al., 2011: 104).

20. [B]rainstorm ideas about the things that you think: (a) attract the opposite sex to you ... (c) the opposite sex finds attractive in you (Attwell et al., 2011: 105).



**Figure 1 - [Source: Doubell, Haddon, Holgate & Martinuzzi, 2011: 110; reproduced with permission]**

In extract 19 the implication is that dating will occur with the opposite sex, while extract 20 suggests that sexual attraction to the opposite sex is the only option. Figure 1 represents a caricature of the attractive young woman for whom a young man has fallen hopelessly in love.

### ***The developing sexual teenager***

The 'adolescence-in-transition' discourse (cf. Macleod, 2011) is a common cultural trope in which teen-aged people are viewed as moving from childhood to adulthood through the development of a range of physical, social, emotional characteristics. The transition to adulthood is located within the individual with the development of adult characteristics being persistently in flux and constantly in jeopardy.

The developing sexual teenager is presented in the LO manuals as in a stage of change:

21. The same hormones that cause the physical changes of puberty also cause emotional changes. These changes make us think and feel differently (Attwell et al., 2011: 101).

A key element of this change is the movement from an ignorant, ill-informed position to an enlightened one, which is accomplished with the assistance of an adult:

22. [Some] sexually active teens do not know about the different methods to prevent pregnancy (Attwell et al., 2011: 109).

23. It is very important to get advice from qualified counsellors (Attwell et al., 2011: 111).

It is expected, however, that this development will not be easy and that certain levels of vulnerability and confusion will emerge (the classic 'storm and stress' of adolescence):

24. Wanting to have sex, not wanting to have sex, and being confused or scared about it are all normal (Attwell et al., 2011: 106).

25. Changing hormone levels can cause irritability, tearfulness and euphoria (Doubell et al., 2011: 108).

In these extracts confusion and mood swings are depicted as normal (extract 24) and natural (extract 25).

## **Sexual subject positions made available in the two music videos**

### ***'Climax' by Usher***

The video for 'Climax' features Usher, an African American singer, ruminating in his car about a young woman with whom he was previously in a relationship. Visuals consist of repeated imaginings of his driving over to her house: he barges into the house and has intercourse with her; he drives over to find her and the new boyfriend together; he drives away with her as the current boyfriend returns; he is overwhelmed by jealousy and shoots the boyfriend. However, the video ends with no resolution as he is left sitting alone and continues to ruminate in his car.

The key of the music (minor key), as well as Usher's performance of the song, is strongly suggestive of a sensitive man subject position. This is a man who yearns for love and intimacy ('Where are you now? When I need you around I'm on my knees'). He is comfortable expressing love, as well as feelings of hurt ('I've fallen somehow, feet off the ground'). He is reflective and is searching for answers about why the relationship ended ('We made a mess of what used to be love').

This position is interwoven in complex ways, however, by other sexualised subject positions. There is the possessive sexual subject position, in which the male takes over possession of the female through claiming sexual space, fleeing with the woman or eliminating the rival. An aggressive/violent subject position is both performed through angry actions at a particular point of the song (coinciding with the lyrics, 'I gave it my best, it wasn't enough, You get upset, we argue too much') and enacted in the various scenarios. A virile sexual subject position is performed in the sexual scenes played out in the video.

The title, 'Climax', and the lyrics, 'We've reached the climax, climax,' play on a double meaning of the word 'climax,' which is indicative of the tensions performed in the video. On the one hand, 'climax' is used to indicate a painful breaking point of a relationship: it peaks and ends thereafter. On the other hand, the association with the resolution of the sexual act is a reminder of the coexistence of sexual and intimate relations. This double meaning captures the conflicting and contradictory sexualised subject positions Usher takes up in the video: simultaneously sensitive, aggressive/violent, possessive and virile.

While the man is centre stage in the video, his positioning is obviously in relation to the woman. The images of her are, however, brief and partial (mostly with her wearing lacy lingerie). The lyrics suggest a certain heartlessness ('You say it's better if we love each other separately').

## **6.2 'Beez in the Trap' by Nicki Minaj**

The video for 'Beez in the Trap' depicts Nicki Minaj, an African American rapper, partying, dancing and drinking in a club, surrounded by men and women. She is garishly and skimpily clad in sexualised attire (sequentially a blonde wig in a pink turtleneck onesie; green wig and a bikini; leopard-print body suit). The video begins with Nicki squatting, with barb wire as a foreground. She is then seen sitting in the club with exotic women dancers with whom she acts flirtatiously. 2 Chainz, a male rapper, raps a verse, while Nicki dances seductively next to him in a dark lit room. Nicki raps again. She and two other women dance sensually in the same dark lit room. The video ends with Nicki and 2 Chainz standing back to back.

Wads of money are shown in several of the scenes. The lyrics are explicit in terms of language and sexualised imagery ('A hundred muthafuckas can't tell me nuthin'; 'Hair weave killer, causing her arousal'), but the gangsta rap makes the meaning somewhat obscure. The performance and lyrics, however, point to a rivalry between Nicki and 2 Chainz in terms of success and wealth. Nicki's verses speak to her being turned down in the music industry and having to travel extensively to perform, while 2 Chainz speaks merely of prowess. Thus, even though Nicki is a powerful and successful figure, she had to work hard to achieve it ('I beez in the trap').

The video and lyrics explicitly interweave sexuality and power, particularly in the form of wealth and success. The rivalry with 2 Chainz allows Nicki to exercise

her sexual desire and pleasure in ways that are assertive and similar to a hoodlum while still retaining feminine sexiness, at times and in ways that are garish and over the top. The sexually desirable and sexually desiring subject is entwined with the assertive, self-assured subject position of a person who has made it to the top. This combination is seen as allowing a culture of raunchiness, which frees up the sexual inhibitions of women.

This raunchy sexually desiring/desirable subject is displayed not only in relation to men, but also in a number of mini-scenes in relation to women. Nicki is seen leaning intimately towards a woman sitting next to her; she momentarily places her hand on one of the woman's behind. These scenes have the feel of ease and solidarity, while when she dances with 2 Chainz, sensuality is intermixed with gestures of exasperation and anger.

Despite this, Nicki's dominance over other women is emphasised both in the lyrics ('Bitches ain't shit, and they ain't say nuthin') and in her taking centre stage in a powerful way. On the other hand, men in the video are positioned in relation to Nicki as equals, fellow gangsters or comrades involved in everyday hustling, albeit as rivals. These men are not sexualised as the women are, but they also take back stage to the image of Nicki being in charge and in control. The subject positions produced in both the video and lyrics fashion an image of Nicki as an assertive, pleasure-seeking, threatening, yet feminine, woman.

The clothes and performance in the video objectify Nicki in a range of sexually explicit ways. They exaggerate feminine stereotypes and juxtapose them with contradictory and conflicting feminine roles in ways that potentially, but necessarily, make them ironic. In general, the video is complex and the various sexual subject positions speak to complex power relations that play out in slippery and tension-filled ways. Significantly, these sexual subject positions are located within complex and shifting interpersonal relationships (heterosexual and homosexual; sexual and collegial) and within broader social contexts, specifically the music industry that emphasises the complexity of gender relations, power and money.

## **Comparison of the two sources of data**

The Life Orientation sex education manuals and materials produce a confluence of subject positions that depict sexuality primarily as an individual responsibility that the rights-bearing agentic subject should take on in order to optimise health and well-being and to avoid the dangers of early reproduction, abortion, disease and a range of negative emotions. While desire is mentioned in passing, the only other major representation is of the sexual victim and the accompanying coercive/violent sexual subject and vigilant sexual subject. The explanations, exercises and stories are all told against the backdrop of assumed heterosexuality and the reality of adolescence as a time of transition and possible turmoil. The complexities inherent in any one of the particular sexual subject positions and contextual realities that might impinge

upon agency are occluded, with clear messages being conveyed in the depiction of these subject positions. As such, responsibility for the assumption of various subject positions that the sexual subject positions invoked are located within the individual and dislocated from the complex and multitude of interpersonal and social contexts within which sexuality is negotiated.

Conversely, the lyrical content and videos of the popular music depict shifting, complex subject positions that are constantly in tension with each other. Furthermore, sexuality is shown as a site of pleasure, but also as one of personal struggle and interpersonal conflict within a broader social system. Constructions of gender are shown to be in tension, with women and men flouting traditional femininity and masculinity and shifting boundaries of heteronormativity (even if momentarily). These fluidities are, however, not performed without effort. Slippages into stereotypical masculine (the man who wants to possess the woman – Usher) and feminine (submissive sexual objects – Minaj) positions are counterpoised with performances that fracture easy readings of the sexual subject.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of these two sources of data highlights some of the sexual identity spaces made available for young people in South Africa. While the sexual subject positions construed within each are, in themselves, instructive of the kinds of normative assumptions that remain untroubled within education and popular culture, we are chiefly interested in what is brought to light by juxtaposing the two. What our research shows is that the songs that learners choose to listen to are conveying very different sexualised messages to those conveyed in the sexuality education components of LO manuals.

The LO manuals that we analysed, while acknowledging the possibility of sexual violence, engage in a process of ‘responsibilisation’, a key (neo)liberal project that uses the rhetoric of youth-at-risk to incite youth into individualised management of the self. The responsible sexual subject and the sexual victim emerged as the major subject positions offered to learners through these manuals (with the suggestion that women also have the responsibility to avoid becoming a sexual victim through the vigilant sexual subject position). As such, the LO manuals depicted a limited range of sexual subject positions that, while acknowledging some realities of young people’s lives (e.g. sexual violence), fail to take seriously questions around same sex attraction, sexual desire, resilience and survivorship, contextual power relations, complexities around masculinities and femininities, and shifting sexualities. Heterosexuality is assumed, as is the adolescent as a potentially vulnerable developing subject.

The songs, on the other hand, presented fluid, contested sexual subject positions in the context of interpersonal relationships and wider social systems, with the tensions in these positions and their meanings being visibly performed. Easy readings

of the sexual subject positions are troubled in these performances in both subtle and overt ways.

In part, of course, the stark contrast between the two has to do with the different genres of communication used in the two sources of text. While acknowledging this, we argue that the differences also show a disjuncture between state-sanctioned sexual socialisation and the cultural expressions young people turn to for informal sexual socialisation.

What are the implications of the divergence of depictions of sexual subject positions in these two forms of sexual socialisation? At a basic level, the lack of overlap means that learners will encounter a dissonance between what they encounter in the LO manuals they read and the songs they listen to. This might feel indicative of a discord between adult-centric sexuality socialisation and peer-sanctioned sexual socialisation. The fact that the songs we analysed were voted most listened to by the learners in these two schools indicates that these commercialised popular songs form part of their preferred cultural expression. Outside of the formal strictures of school, this is what they listen to (at least at the time of the research).

If we are to move away from texts that emphasise danger and disease and that engage in a simple individualised process of 'responsibilisation,' it might be useful for both policy-makers and the writers of LO manuals to listen seriously to the kinds of music (and other genres) that young people are choosing. This could be achieved by introducing the kinds of fluid, contested sexual subject positions referred to in popular music into the LO textbooks as points of discussion, dialogue and debate for learners (either through revising the LO texts themselves or through listening and discussing music videos and other genres of peer-sanctioned sexual socialisation). This will steer LO sexuality education in the direction of taking learners' preferred cultural expressions seriously and away from the imperative of 'responsibilisation'. It will also ensure that sexual subject positions are contextualised within dynamic and complex interpersonal relationships and within broader social and cultural systems, a critique that has been levelled at LO sexuality education (Francis, 2010).

Clearly, the manner in which the sexual subject positions constructed in both LO manuals and popular songs will be taken up by young people will vary considerably as they actively take up, re-work, adapt or resist the sexualised subject positions made available. This is a limitation of this study. In addition, as indicated earlier, we could locate no research conducted on sexuality in relation to popular music in South Africa. Research is needed to understand how popular music is taken up in young people's lives and how they might (or might not) use the sexual subject positions depicted in these songs to undermine or bolster dominant cultural expressions of sexuality.

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