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# READY OR NOT?

A CASE STUDY OF BRAZILIAN TEACHERS  
TRAINED IN SEXUALITY EDUCATION

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# Abstract

Research indicates that sexuality education may lower the rate of STIs and unplanned pregnancies among youth. Experts also agree that schools are the ideal place to implement sexuality education and that teachers should play a central role in school-based sexuality education. The purpose of this study is therefore to generate new perspectives on teachers' implementation of sexuality education by exploring what factors influence Brazilian teachers' implementation of sexuality education and how, with a particular eye to teacher training. Specifically, this study will look at teachers' perceptions of sexuality education, the school context and their self-efficacy in sexuality education. These dimensions will be explored through a case study featuring in-depth interviews with eight Brazilian teachers that have participated in teacher training on sexuality education. The results indicate that Brazilian teachers have a limited scope for sexuality education, largely due to dominant formal and informal norms on sexuality in the country. The results of this study also constitute a strong argument for the importance of widespread teacher training. Namely, teacher training was found to challenge repressive and restrictive attitudes and beliefs about sexuality and sexuality education and to raise teachers' sense of self-efficacy, thereby facilitating the provision of such initiatives in schools.

Key words: Sexuality, Sexuality Education, Teacher Training, Self-Efficacy, Norms

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# Abbreviations

AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

EJA – Educação de Jovens e Adultos (Education of Youth and Adults)

GDE – Gênero e Diversidade nas Escolas (Gender and Diversity in Schools Course, Brazil)

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

PBC – Perceived Behavioral Control

PCN – Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais (National Curricular Parameters, Brazil)

PEGE – Portal de Equidade de Gênero nas Escolas (Gender Equity in Schools Portal, Brazil)

SPE – Saúde e Prevenção nas Escolas (Health and Prevention in Schools Project, Brazil)

SRH – Sexual and Reproductive Health

TPB – Theory of Planned Behavior

UERJ – Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro State University)

# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Purpose and Research Question .....	2
1.2	Defining Key Concepts .....	4
1.3	Disposition .....	5
1.4	Methodology .....	6
1.4.1	Research Design .....	6
1.4.2	Primary and Secondary Data Collection .....	7
1.4.3	Sampling and Recruitment Strategy.....	9
1.4.4	Transcription and Data Analysis .....	10
1.4.5	Validity and Reliability .....	11
1.4.6	Limitations .....	12
1.4.7	Ethical Considerations.....	12
<b>2</b>	<b>Background .....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1	Brazil: Country Overview .....	14
2.2	Attitudes toward Sexuality and Sexuality Education in Brazil .....	15
2.3	Sexuality Education in Brazil.....	15
<b>3</b>	<b>Literature Review and Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1	Factors Associated with Teachers' Implementation of Sexuality Education 18	
3.1.1	Attitudes .....	18
3.1.2	Comfort Level .....	20
3.1.3	Self-Efficacy and Personality Characteristics .....	21
3.1.4	School Context .....	22
3.1.5	Teacher Training .....	23
3.1.6	The Theory of Planned Behavior .....	24
<b>4</b>	<b>Analysis of Empirical Findings.....</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1	Teachers' Beliefs about Sexuality Education.....	27
4.2	Teachers' Perceptions of Others' Beliefs about Sexuality Education.....	30
4.2.1	Resistance and Curiosity in the School Context .....	30
4.2.2	Formal and Informal Norms: Delineating What Is Acceptable .....	33
4.3	Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy.....	35
4.3.1	Teacher Training .....	35
4.3.2	Teachers' Personal Characteristics.....	38
4.3.3	Teachers' Relationship with Students and Approach to SE.....	40

4.3.4	Natural Openings and Bridges to Sexuality Education .....	42
4.3.5	Time Constraints and Workload .....	43
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding Discussion.....</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1.1	Brazilian Teachers' Limited Scope for Sexuality Education .....	45
5.1.2	Teacher Training as a Game-Changer.....	46
<b>6</b>	<b>References.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>54</b>
7.1	Appendix I: Record of Informants .....	54
7.1.1	Teachers .....	54
7.1.1	Key Informants.....	55
7.2	Appendix II: Teacher Interview Guide .....	56
7.3	Appendix III: Key Informant Interview Guide .....	58

# 1 Introduction

A lack of preparation for sexual life increases young people's risk of experiencing sexual coercion or violence, unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV (UNESCO 2009: 2). Research-based evidence indicates that youth that have taken part in sexuality education initiatives that meet various criteria experience a lower rate of STIs and unplanned pregnancies and first engage in sexual intercourse at a later age (Baldo et al. 1993; Kirby 1997; UNAIDS 1997). Schools have repeatedly been recognized as an ideal place to implement sexuality education and teachers are therefore often considered central to the implementation of sexuality education (Iyer and Aggleton 2012; James-Traore et al. 2009; UNESCO 2009). Indeed, alongside parents, teachers are considered primary adult providers of information and guidance on matters related to sexuality (Lokanc-Diluzio et al. 2007; Mangwaya and Ndlovu 2013). Moreover, a UNESCO review of 87 studies of sexuality education programs around the world concluded that teacher's ability to implement sexuality education can influence or even "make the difference between successful programmatic interventions and those that falter" (UNESCO 2009: 11). While previous research has gathered substantial evidence as to what characterizes an effective sexuality education program, it also indicates that a number of different factors may influence how motivated or willing teachers are to implement sexuality education at all (Mathews et al. 2006; Paulussen et al. 1994). Hence, there is a well-grounded need to explore, in any given setting where school-based sexuality education may be implemented, what factors facilitate and hinder teachers' delivery of sexuality education, how and why. Such an understanding would allow opportunities to be capitalized upon and challenges to be overcome.

This study's focus on Brazil is grounded in three considerations. Primarily, there is a strong case for expanding and strengthening sexuality education in the Latin American nation. Although 15-24 year olds constitute the age group in Brazil that most frequently uses prophylactics during their first sexual encounter with a new

partner, only 30.7 percent of these youth use prophylactics with steady partners (UNICEF 2011). This means that Brazilian youth are at a high risk of having unplanned pregnancies and contracting STIs and HIV. Indeed, the number of new cases of HIV infection detected annually among Brazilians aged 13-24 has risen markedly in the last decade. The number of pregnancies among girls aged 10-14 also rose between 1998 and 2008 (UNICEF 2011). In fact, one in ten Brazilian students became pregnant before the age of 15 and the majority of teenage mothers dropped out of school, according to a 2008 study (Silva 2013). Notably, sexual intercourse with a person younger than 14 years of age is considered “rape of a vulnerable person” and criminalized in Brazil. Furthermore, Brazil has for several years ranked among those countries with the highest rates of homicide motivated by homophobia in the world (Ministry of Health, Brazil 2008), and educating youth about respect for sexual diversity is integral to sexuality education.

Additionally, Brazil is of particular interest in this study as Brazilian schools are not legally obliged to integrate sexuality education into their curricula (Furlani 2007). In other words, the degree to which students are engaged in sexuality education – if at all – depends in large part upon teachers’ willingness and capacity to implement such activities or programs. Moreover, there has been a concerted effort by both the Brazilian government and civil society in recent years to expand and improve school-based sexuality education in order to address the problems described above (Ação Educativa and Carreira 2011). Notably, a major focus of this effort has been on training teachers in issues integral to sexuality, such as gender equality and sexual diversity (Kamel and Pimenta 2008; Ação Educativa 2011). Teacher training has also been lauded by both Brazilian and international scholars as an important determinant of teachers’ delivery of sexuality education (Vianna and Unbehau 2006; Wight and Buston 2003) and will therefore be afforded particular attention in this study.

## 1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The overarching purpose of this study is to offer a holistic and simultaneously complex understanding of the factors that influence teachers’ implementation of



sexuality education, with a particular eye to the role of teacher training. As such, this thesis seeks to build upon previous international research on teachers' attitudes and beliefs about sexuality education. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to generate new perspectives on teachers' implementation of sexuality education that can inform the future development of school-based sexuality education and teacher training programs in this field. Given the significance of sexuality education and the growing role of teacher training in Brazil, this study will constitute a case study of Brazilian teachers that have participated in at least one training course on sexuality and related issues. The study will seek to answer the following three research questions:

- How do Brazilian teachers perceive school-based sexuality education?
- What opportunities and challenges to implementing sexuality education do Brazilian teachers perceive in the school context?
- How do Brazilian teachers perceive their own ability to implement sexuality education?

These questions were developed in light of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen 1985, 1991, 2005), which will also be used to guide and inform the data analysis. The TPB stipulates that an individual's motivation and willingness to perform a behavior – in this case, sexuality education – is determined by three sets of beliefs: 1) beliefs about the outcomes of the behavior and how valuable these are; 2) beliefs about others peoples' attitudes toward the behavior; and 3) self-efficacy beliefs, meaning how capable an individual believes she is of performing the behavior given the opportunities and challenges that she perceives to doing so. The empirical data will also be evaluated in relation to previous research on teachers' attitudes and beliefs about sexuality education, teacher training in sexuality education and other factors that influence teachers' implementation of sexuality education.

## 1.2 Defining Key Concepts

Before proceeding any further it is useful to define two concepts that are key to this study. First, sexuality may be seen to encompass five overlapping dimensions: sensuality, intimacy, sexual identity, sexual health and reproduction, and sexualization (Hunter-Geboy 1995). Sensuality refers to a person's feelings about their own and other peoples' bodies and includes the ability to experience desire and pleasure in relation both to sexual and non-sexual physical contact. Intimacy, meanwhile, is the ability and the desire to share an emotional connection with another person. Sexual identity is a person's understanding of their gender identity and gender roles and their understanding of their sexual orientation. Sexual health and reproduction entail the ability to reproduce and the behaviors, attitudes and knowledge that ensure the physical and emotional well-being of sexually active individuals. Finally, sexualization refers to the use of one or more of these aspects of sexuality "to influence, manipulate or control other people" (Hunter-Geboy 1995: 126). These expressions of "sexual power over others", as it is labelled in some literature (CARE and ICRW 2007), range from the harmless, such as flirting, to the violent and illegal, such as sexual abuse and rape (Hunter-Geboy 1995). Evidently, not all individuals experience all of these elements of sexuality and the ways in which individuals experience their sexuality vary greatly. It is also important to note that, "Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors" (WHO 2004: 5).

In light of this comprehensive definition, however, it is important to note that, "'Sexuality' is a discursively specific term" (Jones 2011: 133). In other words, the meaning of sexuality in any given context may differ according to the dominant discourse on the topic at the time in question. Hence, there is a multitude of different understandings of the term sexuality education, according to which the purpose, content, target group and other aspects of such programs, projects and activities may vary. Jones (2011), for example, argues that as many as 28 distinct sexuality education discourses can be identified in relation to school-based sexuality education worldwide. Each of these discourses entails a particular set of beliefs

about sexuality and sexuality education; children and youth; homosexual, bisexual, intersex, transgender and queer people; and who ultimately determines what is appropriate with regards to sexuality and sexuality education (Jones 2011: 135-136). Broadly speaking, each approach can also be considered to have either a conservative, liberal, critical or postmodern orientation (Jones 2011).

Recognizing this diversity, this study will adopt a very broad definition of sexuality education that encompasses not only the many different aspects of sexuality but also the variety of sexuality education models that teachers may espouse. Namely, sexuality education will here be defined as school-based “education about all matters relating to sexuality and its expression” (IPPF 2007: 58). I believe the use of such a broad definition will enable me to gather ample evidence to fulfill the purpose of this study, to identify the factors that facilitate Brazilian teachers’ implementation of sexuality education, regardless of the approach that individual teachers take toward the subject. That said, it is also worthy to note that the majority of recent literature on sexuality education maintains that initiatives should be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of sexuality that strives to promote not only students’ sexual and reproductive health (SRH) but also their sexual and reproductive rights (e.g. IPPF 2005; Kirby 2002; Loeber et al. 2010; UNESCO 2009).

### 1.3 Disposition

Above, I have introduced the rationale behind this study as well as the purpose and research questions that have guided this study. In the following section, I will present the research design, methodological approach and strategies used to collect, analyze and interpret data, in addition to several considerations regarding the quality, ethics and limitations of this study. Subsequently, readers will be provided a short overview of the Brazilian context in which this study was conducted, followed by a review of previous research on teachers’ implementation of sexuality education and teacher training and an introduction to the TPB. The empirical findings of this research will then be presented and analyzed in light of the TPB and previous literature. Finally, the paper will conclude with a discussion of the critical

role and significant potential of teacher training with regards to teachers' implementation of sexuality education.

## 1.4 Methodology

### 1.4.1 Research Design

A researcher's selection of research design is largely determined by the research questions and purpose of the study (Mikkelsen 2005; Yin 2009). Given my interest in exploring teachers' subjective realities – their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about their social worlds – I adopted a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Namely, I have sought to interpret the factors that facilitate and hinder the implementation of school-based sexuality education through teachers eyes, in light of the understanding that reality is constantly changing, arising from and being influenced by the actions and interactions of individuals. As such, this study is grounded in an interpretivist epistemology and a constructivist ontology (Bryman 2008).

Furthermore, this research constitutes a case study in that it is an in-depth exploration and explanation of the complexities and reasons why current social phenomena occur as they do in their “real-life” setting (as opposed to in an experimental situation) (Yin 2009: 35). Furthermore, my particular interest in the relevance of training to teachers' implementation of sexuality education has led me to focus on a very specific sub-set of Brazilian teachers: those that have participated in at least one training course that addresses sexuality. Such clearly delineated boundaries are characteristic of case studies (Gomm et al. 2000). Finally, this study can be said to have taken an iterative approach, as I found myself moving back and forth between data and theory, reconsidering the latter in light of the former, over the course of the research (Bryman 2008).

## 1.4.2 Primary and Secondary Data Collection

Based on the choice of qualitative research design and the field context in which the study was carried out, the semi-structured interview was deemed the most relevant and appropriate method to use in gathering data. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were chosen for being known to serve as a tool to create an open, flexible space in which an individual informant can share her thoughts, feelings and experiences – and all the “nuances and contradictions” of these – with the researcher (Mack et al. 2005: 30). In this forum, the focus is on the informants’ understanding of the world, and their interpretations of why their personal and social realities are as they perceive them to be. It is precisely this sort of deep and intimate accounts that I have sought to elicit and present in this study, in order to elucidate the complex context in which it is assumed that teachers implement, resist or decline to implement sexuality education. Notably, the in-depth interview is also particularly apt for research on sensitive issues due to the one-on-one format (Mack et al. 2005). Furthermore, in the semi-structured interview, the researcher intervenes (albeit minimally) in the informants’ discourse with questions that encourage a deeper exploration, additional explanation or redirection of the conversation. This allows the informants to share experiences and formulate reflections in their own words, while also bringing up issues of importance to them that the researcher may not initially have considered significant or relevant (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

Focus group discussions (FGDs) may have served as an interesting complement to the in-depth interviews as informants’ interaction with one another may bring to light group norms and elicit perspectives or accounts that would not necessarily arise in individual interviews (Mack et al. 2005; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 39). However, FGDs were not conducted due to informants’ geographical spread and lack of availability. Meanwhile, ethnography or participant observation would have allowed for direct observation of the school environment and teachers’ efforts to discuss sexuality with their students or carry out sexuality education projects in their schools (Bryman 2008; Mack et al. 2005). Hence, the use of these methods could have contributed to the breadth and depth of the data collected. However,

neither of these methods were applicable to this study due to geographical and time constraints, the latter being that data collection occurred principally during a two-month period that coincided with the Christmas and summer holidays in Brazil.

Indeed, even putting the in-depth interview into practice in the context of this research required some flexibility and innovation on my behalf due to the above-named restraints. As will be further explained below, the majority of research subjects that participated in the study lived outside of Rio de Janeiro, where I was based, and therefore the majority of interviews were conducted over the telephone. According to Bryman (2008), telephone interviews are much less frequently used in qualitative research than in quantitative research (often in survey research). Nonetheless, this approach to the individual, in-depth interview “is likely to have certain benefits” (Bryman 2008: 457). In addition to the obvious time and cost advantages, groups that are hard to reach may be more easily accessible by telephone and research subjects may feel more comfortable talking about sensitive issues, such as sexuality and sexuality education, when not sitting face-to-face with the researcher. Finally, previous evidence indicates that telephone interviews are equally effective in eliciting qualitative responses to interview questions as in-person interviews (Bryman 2008). Nevertheless, toward the end of the data collection process, I had the opportunity to interview two teachers living in Rio de Janeiro, and these interviews were conducted in-person and at locations suggested by the research subjects: one at Promundo’s office and one at a local café. Whether the interviews were held in-person or over the telephone did not seem to impact informants’ responses in any way.

In total, eight teachers and four key informants were interviewed, in addition to one pilot interview with a teacher carried out prior to data collection in order to test the interview guide for teachers. I held the key informant interviews prior to the interviews with teachers in order to obtain a better understanding of the history and contemporary social and political context of Brazilian teachers’ work with sexuality education from a local perspective. All key informants are Brazilian experts in the fields of sexuality and/or education (more information on the key informants is listed in Appendix D). All interviews were conducted in Portuguese, which I speak fluently. I have also reviewed a substantial amount of secondary data consisting

principally of international and Brazilian academic research on sexuality, sexuality education and teacher training, as well as information on Brazilian public policy and programming in these fields. This contributed further to enhancing my understanding of the Brazilian context. It also helped me to interpret the empirical findings of this research in light of this context and in relation to previous academic research in the fields of sexuality education and teacher training.

### 1.4.3 Sampling and Recruitment Strategy

Given this study's interest in a very specific group, Brazilian teachers that have participated in sexuality education training, the purposive sampling method was deemed most relevant. Purposive sampling involves recruiting research subjects who meet certain predetermined criteria and are therefore believed to be able to contribute to answering the research question (Mack et al. 2005). For this study, I recruited informants that had participated in at least one of two professional development courses currently offered in Brazil that specifically target teachers and focus largely on sexuality and related issues, such as gender. The first of the courses, known as the Gender Equity in Schools course (PEGE), was launched in 2011 by Instituto Promundo, a Brazilian NGO internationally recognized for its work designing methodologies to promote gender equality, health and non-violence. While I was in the field, I also served as an intern at Instituto Promundo (from September 2012 to February 2013), a fact that facilitated the data collection process, as I will elaborate upon further below.

The second course, entitled the Gender and Diversity in Schools course (GDE), was developed by the Latin American Center on Sexuality and Human Rights, a Brazil-based research institute, and launched in 2006 in collaboration with the Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ). Both courses aim to increase participants' theoretical understanding of sexuality as well as their familiarity with practical methodologies. The PEGE and GDE entail, respectively, 90 and 200 hours of coursework featuring online lectures, readings, practical exercises as well as opportunities for participant interaction with one another and course tutors (GDE 2013; PEGE 2013).

The recruitment of both teachers and key informants was initiated with the help of two of my Promundo co-workers. Indeed, using gatekeepers is common to qualitative research (Mack et al. 2005). Specifically, I met several PEGE participants at an event held by Promundo and contacted the rest of the roughly 80 teachers that had taken the PEGE course at this point in time via e-mail. When one of the PEGE participants that I interviewed mentioned that she had also taken the GDE with a colleague of hers, I took the opportunity to ask whether the colleague might also be interested in doing an interview with me. Hence, I employed the snowball sampling method (Bryman 2008) to recruit one of the final teacher-informants. As for the key informants, my Promundo co-workers identified and gave me the contact information to four experts in sexuality, public health and education that I reached out to via e-mail. Three of these individuals agreed to participate in my study and one of them encouraged me to contact a colleague of his, who then also participated in the research. The sample size of informants was principally influenced by my sense of having reached the point of theoretical saturation, at which it appeared that additional data collection would no longer contribute substantially to answering the researcher questions (Mack et al 2005), as well as the above-mentioned constraints faced in the field. The result of these sampling and recruitment strategies with regards to teacher-informants was a sample of seven female and one male teacher who range in age from 32 to 58 and teach, respectively, Biology, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, Portuguese and Religion (see Appendix I for a detailed description of all informants).

#### 1.4.4 Transcription and Data Analysis

Qualitative research involves a significant process of interpretation and a data analysis process during which the researcher examines the information collected at many different layers and levels, drawing on the specific to understand the general (Creswell 2009). That said, all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed in full in order to not overlook any aspects of informants' testimonies that may initially have seemed irrelevant but later proven to be of interest. However, only the interview excerpts presented in the analysis section of this thesis have been translated into English. The transcriptions were subsequently coded using open, axial and selective coding. In other words, the initial process of reading the



transcripts, taking notes and marking text rendered a large number of categories that were subsequently contemplated and refined in relation to the theories and concepts that frame the study and in relation to each other (Creswell 2009). Through this process, it was possible to see a cohesive picture emerge about teachers' perceptions of what facilitates and hinders them from doing sexuality education. This story is related in my words below, in the Empirical Findings and Preliminary Analysis section, with the support of particularly demonstrative quotes from the interviews with the teacher-informants.

#### 1.4.5 Validity and Reliability

Although various different criteria for assessing the merit of qualitative research have emerged over the years, validity and reliability continue to serve as two principle standards of quality assurance. Validity refers to whether a researcher is “observing, identifying, or ‘measuring’” what they say they are (Mason 1996: 24) and, following on from this, whether the conclusions drawn from a study are trustworthy (Bryman 2008). Several measures have been taken to ensure the validity of this study. Primarily, my internship work with Promundo's PEGE course gave me a fundamental understanding of sexuality education and teacher training in the Brazilian context. This, in addition to my Promundo manager's review of my interview guides, ensured that I initiated the research with a good understanding of what aspects of teachers' realities I wanted to explore and the confidence that the concepts I was working with were understandable and relevant to teachers. In other words, I believe that informants and I were on the same page during the interviews, and that I therefore collected the data that I meant to collect. Furthermore, the findings of the study were triangulated, as Bryman (2008) and Creswell (2009) suggest, with information gathered through a literature review of prior research and local documents regarding sexuality, sexuality education and teacher training in sexuality education. A “thick” description, characterized by an abundance of details (Bryman 2008: 378), of sexuality and sexuality education in Brazil has also been provided in order for readers to better be able to judge whether the findings and conclusions drawn could be transferred to another setting. Finally, an effort has been made here to clearly document the methodological procedures used at each step of the research to ensure the study's reliability (Bryman 2008). Hence, I believe this

study is replicable, keeping in mind, however, that a repetition of a qualitative study may not yield the exact same results because peoples' conceptions of the social world are not absolute or unchanging (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

#### 1.4.6 Limitations

The principle limitation of this study is related to the gender imbalance among teacher-informants, as only one of the eight teachers interviewed is male. Hence, it was not possible to thoroughly explore whether or how gender may relate to the factors that facilitate and hinder Brazilian teachers from implementing sexuality education. Nevertheless, the gender imbalance among informants does reflect the skewed gender ratio in the Brazilian elementary and high school teachers' corps and this study does not aim to draw specific conclusions about female vs. male teachers' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions in relation to sexuality education. Furthermore, the fact that teacher-informants live and work in three different cities located in two different states in Brazil may be seen as a limitation. This is because Brazil is an extremely large and diverse country and informants' local political, social and economic realities may therefore vary greatly and color their perceptions of themselves and their social worlds in different ways. Nonetheless, as the findings attest to, a great number of commonalities were found in teachers' accounts of their beliefs about sexuality education, their self-efficacy to do sexuality education and the school contexts in which they work. Hence, this research may still be seen as contributing a coherent perspective on the factors that facilitate and hinder Brazilian teachers' implementation of sexuality education, as these seem to coincide for teachers from diverse areas despite any differences that may be distinguishable in teachers' lives and work at the local level.

#### 1.4.7 Ethical Considerations

As Mack et al. (2005) argue, the research participants' welfare should always be the primary concern of any study that involves human subjects. In order to ensure respect for the people that participated in this study, informants were provided with information about the research via e-mail and oral informed consent was obtained from all informants before each interview was performed, as advised by Mack et

al. (2005). The latter included a request for permission to tape-record the interviews. To protect their confidentiality (Mack et al. 2005), all informants' are presented here with false names and care has been taken throughout the research process to protect informants' integrity, for example by not revealing to Promundo which PEGE course participants partook in this study.

Furthermore, I have to what I believe is a great extent reflected critically about my positionality throughout the research process, as encouraged by various scholars (e.g. England 1994; Kapoor 2004; Sultana 2007). Primarily, I kept in mind during the interviews and the data analysis process that informants knew of my connection to Promundo and that this may color their responses to some of my questions, even though I assured them that their participation in the study was completely confidential. Additionally, through reflections about my ethnicity and socioeconomic background in relation to that of my informants, and through a critical recognition of the potential for "relations of domination and control" to emerge between the researcher and research (Sultana 2007: 375), I have sought to mediate what England (1994: 86) defines as the "inherently hierarchical" aspect of field research. To this extent, I have also constantly sought to position myself as a solicitor of knowledge and communicate to my informants that they are the experts in this research. Finally, I believe that the process of doing telephone interviews and the fact that many of my research subjects have also completed graduate studies helped to reduce any sense of hierarchy that might have been produced by differences between us in ethnicity, education level or perceived social class. Indeed, the fact that I conducted all the interviews in Portuguese placed the informants, all native speakers, in an obviously superior position to me at least in terms of the language we used to communicate.

## 2 Background

Following a short country overview, this section will situate the issues of sexuality and sexuality education in Brazil. Specifically, national trends in attitudes toward sexuality will be discussed, after which national policies and research on Brazilian teachers' attitudes toward sexuality education will be reviewed.

### 2.1 Brazil: Country Overview

Located in South America and with 196 million inhabitants, Brazil is the largest country in the region both in terms of area and population. It is also the world's seventh largest economy, following impressive economic growth over the last decades. Thanks to this development and notable investments in poverty reduction over the last decade by the ruling Workers' Party (PT), the percentage of the population living on less than US\$2 per day fell from 21 percent in 2003 to 11 percent in 2009. Nonetheless, income inequality remains high and marked regional differences can still be seen in social indicators such as health, nutrition and infant mortality. Although the country has achieved universal coverage in primary education, it struggles "to improve the quality and outcome of the system, especially at the basic and secondary levels" (World Bank 2013). Indeed, the poor standard of public education – financed and regulated by the federal government – has become one of many major grievances voiced by demonstrators participating in the protests that have spread across the country since June 2013 (Phillips 2013). In terms of religious background, 65 percent of the population in the historically Catholic country identify as Catholic, while 22 percent define themselves as Evangelical (Castro and Duarte 2012).

## 2.2 Attitudes toward Sexuality and Sexuality Education in Brazil

According to a population survey of urban Brazilians' attitudes toward sexuality, nearly all respondents (97.5 percent) felt that schools should inform students aged 15-19 years about contraceptive methods, including condoms (Paiva et al. 2008). The majority of those surveyed also favored condom distribution in schools (83.6 percent) and talking about sex with youth under the age of 15. Nonetheless, more than half of interviewees thought that young people, especially young women, should wait to have sex until after marriage. Specifically, 63.9 percent favored abstinence until marriage for women while 52.4 percent did so for men. Less than one-fifth of respondents indicated that they were tolerant of homosexual sexual relations. Opinions about what is favorable and acceptable with regards to sexuality varied, in many cases, according to social and demographic characteristics. For example, Christians expressed more conservative values than adherents of Afro-Brazilian religions and atheists, while younger generations were more open to non-traditional practices. In light of these and other data collected through the survey, Paiva et al. (2008) concluded that Brazilians' attitudes toward sexuality cannot be generalized as either "liberal" or "conservative". Nonetheless, these findings do suggest that although some form of school-based sexuality education is generally favored, many urban Brazilians frown upon homosexuality and youth sexual activity and may not tolerate school-based discussions that defend and promote respect for sexual diversity and young people's right to decide themselves when they want to engage in sexual relations and with whom.

## 2.3 Sexuality Education in Brazil

At the federal level, the first call for sexuality education in Brazilian schools was made in 1920 by the feminist Berta Luz (Kamel and Pimenta 2008). Since then, public efforts to implement school-based programs and to integrate sexuality education into school curricula have gained force. In recent years, major milestones

include the launch of the government-led national Health and Prevention in Schools (SPE) project in 2003 and the 1997 introduction of the National Curricular Parameters (PCN) (Kamel and Pimenta 2008; Ação Educativa and Carreira 2011). The SPE encompasses specific initiatives to promote adolescents' sexual and reproductive health in collaboration with schools and public health services. The PCN, meanwhile, includes a federal recommendation that sexuality education be incorporated as a "cross-cutting theme" in all subjects taught in primary and secondary school curricula across the nation (Diaz et al. 2005: 590). Indeed, the PCN are not compulsory and, as noted earlier, school-based sexuality education remains optional in Brazil (Furlani 2007). Moreover, the SPE, PCN and other national developments in school-based sexuality education in Brazil have been problematized for not adopting a comprehensive perspective on sexuality education (Ação Educativa and Carreira 2011; Altmann 2007; Vianna and Unbehau 2006). For example, local scholars maintain that the PCN, while seemingly progressive, focus largely on biomedical aspects of sexuality such as disease and pregnancy prevention, thereby circumscribing sexuality to "a problem confined to the body and public health, and independent of gender relations" (Vianna and Unbehau 2006: 420). Furthermore, various sources indicate that while Brazilian laws and directives endorse sexuality education, they do not always lead to the inclusion of sexuality education in school curricula or the practice of comprehensive sexuality education in schools (Ação Educativa and Carreira 2011; Vianna and Unbehau 2006).

Brazilian research on sexuality education has also revealed that the discourse around sexuality in various primary and secondary schools around the country is largely limited to the realm of biology and health promotion (Melo et al. 2010; Quirino and Rocha 2012; Silva et al. 2013). Moreover, following interviews with 82 primary school teachers in the southern Brazilian city of Novo Hamburgo, Silva et al. (2013: 114) concluded that, "Sex education was also considered a possible means of correcting or controlling sexual identities and behaviours deemed abnormal or immoral." Similar observations about teachers' negative concern with repressing non-normative sexualities, particularly homosexuality and 'premature' sexual activity among youth, were made by Almeida et al. (2011), Avila et al.

(2011) and Quirino and Rocha (2012), who explored the perceptions and experiences with sexuality education of Brazilian primary and secondary school teachers in different parts of the country. In some cases, researchers proposed that teachers' and schools' religious affiliation – specifically whether they were Catholic or Protestant – influenced their stance and approach to sexuality education (Avila et al. 2011; Melo et al. 2010).

Moreover, the above-cited studies revealed a general disinclination among Brazilian teachers to engage in sexuality education. The teachers interviewed cited numerous reasons for their reluctance or outright unwillingness to do do sexuality education. Among these were discomfort, embarrassment, shy personality, the polemical nature of the subject, fear of “awakening” students’ sexuality, and lack of training, knowledge and technical and emotional preparation (Almeida et al. 2011; Avila et al. 2011; Quirino and Rocha 2012; Silva et al. 2013). Meanwhile, Ação Educativa and Carreira (2011) maintain that not only teachers, school coordinators and managers have qualms and objections to comprehensive sexuality education, but that such opposition is also present among students and students’ families.

## 3 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section will review past international research on factors associated with teachers' implementation of sexuality education and key conclusions and recommendations presented by scholars based on this research. While a large part of this previous research has focused on describing and analyzing teachers' attitudes and beliefs about sexuality education, sometimes in relation to their participation in training programs, a couple of studies were also undertaken to determine the existence of a statistically significant correlation between various factors and teachers' implementation of sexuality education programs; both of these strains of research will be reviewed. Finally, I will present the Theory of Planned Behavior, elucidating its applicability to this research in light of the focus of this study and the determinants of sexuality education implementation referred to in previous research.

### 3.1 Factors Associated with Teachers' Implementation of Sexuality Education

#### 3.1.1 Attitudes

Attitudes toward sexuality and beliefs about what is morally acceptable and healthy are significant determinants of the definitions, content and forms of sexuality education that exist in any given society (Loeber et al. 2010: 171; Paiva et al. 2008: 1). Accordingly, a wealth of research from around the world has investigated teachers' attitudes toward sexuality and sexuality education. Indeed, Mathews et al. (2006) and Paulussen et al. (1994) noted a positive correlation between teachers' belief that HIV/AIDS education is important for students and their implementation of such educational programs. In this regard, Mathews et al. (2006: 395) specified



that, “Teachers were more likely to implement HIV/AIDS education if they believed it is important that students have knowledge about HIV/AIDS, confidence in coping with HIV-risk situations, and confidence in coping with sexual relationships, and if they believed that it is feasible to achieve this knowledge and confidence through education strategies.” Consequently, Mathews et al. (2006) concluded that training should emphasize the positive outcomes of HIV/AIDS education.

Looking at past research in the field, it is evident that teachers’ attitudes toward sexuality education vary around the world. In Canada, for example, the great majority of the 336 teachers surveyed by Cohen et al. (2004) supported school-based sexuality education. This was also the case in Spain, according to a recent national survey of teachers (Martínez et al. 2012), Tanzania, where 198 teachers from different parts of the country were surveyed (Mkumbo 2012), Ethiopia, based on a survey and interviews with 94 teachers (Fentahun et al. 2012), and among 24 teachers interviewed in Zimbabwe (Mangwaya and Ndlovu 2013). Meanwhile, Smith and Harrison (2012) found that South African teachers’ judgmental perspectives on youth sexuality, especially girls’ sexuality and teenage pregnancy, may have hampered their implementation of schools’ sexuality education and HIV prevention curricula by circumscribing what topics teachers felt were appropriate and comfortable to discuss with students. This harks back to the earlier discussion of Brazilian teachers’ and school managers’ attitudes toward sexuality education. Similarly, Iyer and Aggleton (2012: 40) found that Ugandan secondary school teachers’ “conservative attitudes to young people’s sexual activity and an adherence to gender stereotypes can limit students’ access to SRH information and services.” Namely, teachers focused exclusively on abstinence as a means to prevent STIs and unintended pregnancy, problematized and perpetuated negative beliefs about girls’ sexuality (i.e. by saying that girls are “the weaker sex”) and neglected boys’ sexual health. This is captured in a statement by one of the teachers interviewed: “sex education should be taught, fine, but we ensure that we supervise, we keep around, to help them control their feelings” (Iyer and Aggleton 2012: 47). In light of these results, Iyer and Aggleton (2012: 51) emphasized that teacher training must entail

effective “myth-busting” to ensure that potential misinformation and stereotypical beliefs among teachers are replaced with scientific facts.

### 3.1.2 Comfort Level

In addition to teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about sexuality education, teachers’ level of comfort in discussing issues related to sexuality has been highlighted as a strong determinant of teachers’ sexuality education implementation. Teachers’ level of comfort with sexuality education appears to be largely related to sociocultural factors. Notably, while teachers surveyed and interviewed in Canada, Tanzania and Zimbabwe largely expressed support for sexuality education, few felt very comfortable teaching about the subject, limiting their delivery of sexuality education (Cohen et al. 2004; Mkumbo 2012; Mangwaya and Ndlovu 2013). In Zimbabwe, secondary school teachers related their unwillingness to discuss sexuality with students to traditional cultural norms, which discourage adults from speaking to children about sex (Mangwaya and Ndlovu 2013). Indeed, as Iyer and Aggleton (2012) argue, the taboo nature of sexuality in most cultures, in addition to teachers’ fear of parents’ objections on the grounds that sexuality education may promote sexual activity among young people, can lead to a reluctance to discuss sexual matters with young people beyond providing biological information in strongly prohibitive terms” (Iyer and Aggleton 2012: 41).

Research from Canada, Australia and Tanzania confirms this point, as it indicates that teachers in all three countries find it particularly difficult to talk about many of the same topics, including condom use, sexual pleasure, masturbation, sexual orientation, abortion and contraception (Cohen et al. 2004; Milton et al. 2001; Mkumbo 2012). Teachers felt these topics were more difficult to broach because they were considered “controversial”, as in the case of homosexuality in Tanzania (Mkumbo 2012: 157), and because they were thought to encourage young people to be promiscuous, as in the case of condom use in South Africa (Ahmed et al. 2006). Meanwhile, teachers were found to feel much more at ease discussing sexuality education topics that entail principally factual biological information,

such as reproduction and birth, STDs and HIV, puberty, menstruation and sexual coercion and assault (Cohen et al. 2012; Mkumbo 2012). As Mkumbo (2012: 149) concluded, “This implies that declaration of positive attitudes towards teaching sexuality education alone is not enough; there is a need for facilitating teachers with knowledge, skills and confidence to teach various sexuality education topics.” As with teachers’ attitudes, however, there is variation in teachers’ level of comfort with sexuality education from country to country. Spanish pre-school, primary and secondary school teachers participating in a national survey, for example, largely stated that the subject of sexuality caused them no fear or anxiety (Martínez et al. 2012).

### 3.1.3 Self-Efficacy and Personality Characteristics

According to Bandura (1997: 3), self-efficacy “refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments.” On this note, Mathews et al. (2006) and Paulussen et al. (1994) found a strong connection between, respectively, South African and Dutch teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and their implementation of HIV/AIDS education. Mathews et al. (2006), for example, indicated that teachers were more likely to implement HIV/AIDS education if they believed they would be effective in influencing students’ attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, teachers felt success hinged to a great deal upon their ability to talk to students about sexuality in an open and straightforward way, engage their students in the content, manage the classroom situation while teaching and lead students through participatory learning activities (Mathews et al. 2006). When asked to identify what kind of teacher is most effective in delivering sexuality education, Australian high school teachers pointed out similar characteristics: “being non-judgemental; being trustworthy; being open and honest; being a good listener; having a sense of humor; establishing relationships/having rapport with the students; being comfortable with your own sexuality; respecting students’ rights to choices/decisions; being flexible” (Milton et al. 2001: 179). In other words, it may be said that teachers feel greater self-efficacy, and are accordingly more likely to implement sexuality education, when they see themselves possessing more of the above-mentioned qualities. In light of these conclusions and research showing that student-centered, participatory

approaches are indeed the most effective in changing students' attitudes and behaviors with regards to sexuality (Kirby 1999), Milton et al. (2001: 184) propose that sexuality education teachers should not only receive specific training but be selected according to research-based criteria. This, they mean, would "ensure that teachers will have the desired qualities" enabling them to effectively implement sexuality education (Milton et al. 2001: 184).

#### 3.1.4 School Context

Looking at the school context, research from Holland, Scotland and Zimbabwe linked greater cooperation and support from other teachers, school staff and senior management to higher teacher dedication and motivation to implement sexuality education (Buston et al. 2002; Mangwaya and Ndlovu 2013; Paulussen et al. 1994). In Scotland and Spain, the low prioritization of sexuality education by schools and school managers was seen to hinder teachers from implementing related programs or activities (Buston et al. 2002; Martínez et al. 2012). Additionally, Paulussen et al. (1994: 493) found that students' and parents' opinions influenced Dutch teachers' implementation of sexuality education. In particular, Dutch teachers' described "students' expectations as a powerful incentive" for them to implement HIV/AIDS education. Furthermore, the existence of a school policy was linked to teachers' sexuality education implementation in Holland and South Africa (Mathews et al. 2006; Paulussen et al. 1994; Smith and Harrison 2012).

Following on from this, various researchers found that teachers' delivery of sexuality education was constrained by a lack of time and resources (Buston et al. 2002; Mangwaya and Ndlovu 2013; Martínez et al. 2012; Smith and Harrison 2012). Teachers' experiences in this regard were here linked to schools' low prioritization of sexuality education and "schools' perceptions of sex education as unimportant" (Martínez et al. 2012: 431). To address this situation in Spain, Martínez et al. (2012) suggested the establishment of a clear and definitive legal and/or school-based mandate on sexuality education and sensitizing not only teachers but management and guidance teams. Taking into account the whole school community, they also suggested that a clearer stance be taken toward parents

on the topic of sexuality education instruction and that appropriate lines of communication with parents should be identified and established.

### 3.1.5 Teacher Training

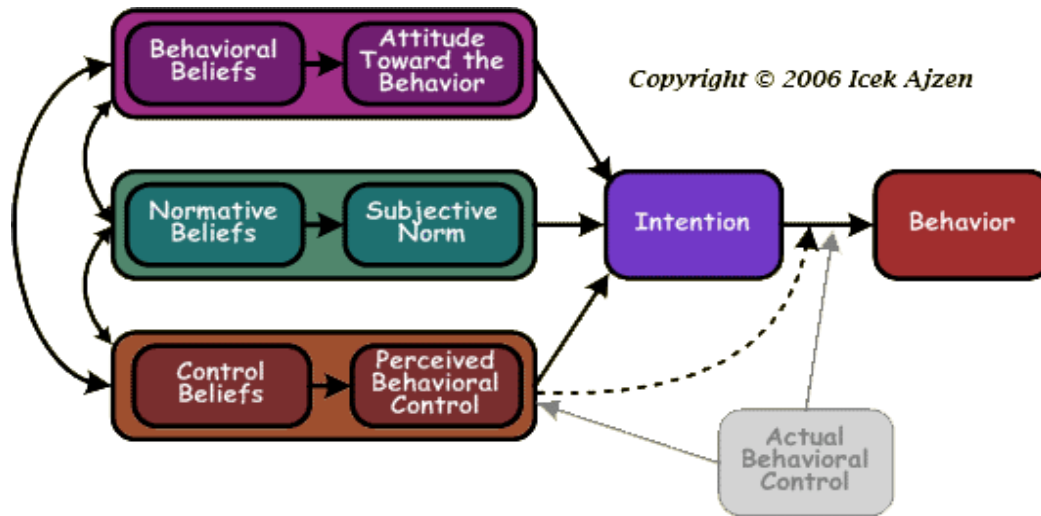
Finally, much research highlights that many teachers feel they lack the knowledge and skills necessary to implement sexuality education, few teachers have participated in any sort of sexuality education training and training is a prime determinant of teachers' implementation of sexuality education (Buston et al. 2002; Cohen et al. 2004; Eisenberg et al. 2012; Martínez et al. 2012: 429; Mathews et al. 2006; Paulussen et al. 1994). Indeed, some studies suggest that training may help teachers to overcome some of the principal obstacles to sexuality education implementation. Martínez et al. (2012: 429), for example, "found that teachers who had received training in sexuality and sex education taught more sex education than non-trained teachers." One explanation for this is that teachers' increased knowledge of sexuality education content as well as familiarization with and practice using pedagogical materials and methodological skills has been coupled to heightened confidence and comfort with sexuality education implementation (Wight and Buston 2003). In Scotland, in-service teachers participating in sexuality education training particularly appreciated the opportunity to get to know other teachers through the trainings, as this translated into a form of social support, allowed teachers to share and receive tips and reduced teachers' feeling of isolation while implementing sexuality education in the classroom. Furthermore, "learning that their fellow teachers had the same concerns seemed to boost their professional confidence" (Wight and Buston 2003: 537-538). Some of these Scottish teachers also reported that training gave them a heightened awareness of their own beliefs and prejudices. This gave them the sense that they were more able to take a non-judgmental approach to sexuality education, which in turn boosted their sense of confidence and comfort with the subject matter. There was, however, some "resistance to such self-analysis" among teachers (Wight and Buston 2003: 529). Moreover, Scottish teachers' felt more assured after their training that sexuality education was an appropriate and "legitimate" subject to teach, and they reportedly valued being able to discuss this issue with their colleagues (Wight and Buston 2003: 539). In Brazil, local gender and education scholars Vianna and Unbehau

(2006: 420) have emphasized that teacher training in sexuality education is particularly important given that “sexuality is a topic that is surrounded by taboos, cultural and moral values, and that is difficult for the majority of teachers to address.”

### 3.1.6 The Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), initially developed in the 1970s by Ajzen and Fishbein and later extended by Ajzen, is one of the most prominent reasoned action approaches used to predict human behavior (Ajzen 2012). It was selected to structure and guide the analysis of empirical findings in this study because it establishes a causal connection between various groupings of beliefs that a person may hold in relation to a behavior and the person’s performance of that behavior. Naturally, the behavior of interest in this study is teachers’ implementation of school-based sexuality education. Teachers’ implementation of sexuality education can be equated to a behavior as defined by the TPB because teachers implement sexuality education on a voluntary and intentional basis and their decision to do so is guided by their thoughts and beliefs (Ajzen 2012). Because the model differentiates between the different beliefs that determine teachers’ implementation of sexuality education while also highlighting the interconnections between these beliefs, I believe it will contribute to this research in two ways. First, it will give credence to the causal connection between the determinants of sexuality education implementation highlighted by informants. Second, it will bring to light a more profound understanding of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about sexuality education and how these relate to one another.

**Figure 1. Model of the Theory of Planned Behavior**



As Figure 1 illustrates, the TPB proposes that behavioral performance depends on intention, or a person’s motivation and determination to perform a behavior. Intention, in turn, is determined by a person’s attitude toward the behavior, perception of social norms about the behavior (“subjective norm”) and perception of their own capacity to perform the behavior (“perceived behavioral control” or perceived self-efficacy, as discussed earlier) (Ajzen 2012). More specifically, an individual’s attitude toward a behavior is grounded in their beliefs about the possible consequences of a behavior and how favorable or unfavorable these consequences are (“behavioral beliefs”). Naturally, a person’s intention to perform a behavior increases with an increasingly positive attitude toward a behavior, while it decreases with an increasingly negative attitude toward a behavior.

Following on from this, a person’s intention to perform a behavior also depends on their beliefs about what people important to them think about the behavior (“normative beliefs”). Hence, the more positive a person believes others are to a behavior, the greater is their intention and likelihood to perform the behavior. Finally, intention is influenced by a person’s sense of how capable they are of performing a behavior. This, in turn, is grounded in a person’s understanding of what abilities and resources they possess, and what opportunities and obstacles are present that can “facilitate or interfere with performance of a given behavior” (Ajzen 2012). In other words, the more a person believes in their ability to perform

a behavior in their given context, the greater their intention and likelihood to do so will be. Furthermore, studies have shown that perceived behavioral control also has a direct impact on behavioral performance. This, Ajzen (2012: 447) explains, is because “the more people believe they have the capacity to perform an intended behavior, the more likely they are to persevere and, therefore, to succeed”. Notably, Ajzen’s concept of perceived behavioral control is rooted to a great extent in Bandura’s (1997) concept of self-efficacy (Ajzen 2012), and the term “perceived self-efficacy” will therefore be used from here on to denote what Ajzen refers to as perceived behavioral control.

Beyond attitudes, perceived norms and perceived self-efficacy, it is important to note that behavioral performance also depends upon the *actual* degree to which a person possesses the opportunities and resources necessary to perform a behavior (Ajzen 1991). In other words, a person may fully intend to perform a behavior, but remain unable to do so because of a real lack of opportunities. However, this study’s focus on teachers’ subjective beliefs precludes an investigation of their actual behavioral control.



## 4 Analysis of Empirical Findings

As presented above, this study has been guided by three questions:

- How do Brazilian teachers perceive school-based sexuality education?
- What opportunities and challenges to implementing sexuality education do Brazilian teachers perceive in the school context?
- How do Brazilian teachers perceive their own ability to implement sexuality education?

In this section, the empirical data collected to help answer these questions will be presented in light of the Theory of Planned Behavior and in relation to previous literature on various factors associated with teachers' implementation of sexuality education. Specifically, the presentation of data is structured according to the TPB and the following sub-sections will accordingly consider teachers' beliefs toward sexuality and sexuality education, teachers' perceptions of important others' beliefs about sexuality education and teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy. First, however, it is interesting to note that only one of the teachers, Julia, delivers sexuality education systematically, through an ongoing, school-wide program. The rest of the teachers have, to various degrees, held discussions and/or implemented pedagogical activities in their capacity as teachers of other disciplines. All such efforts, including the program that Julia works with, are executed exclusively upon the teachers' own incentive, as sexuality education is not obligatory or officially integrated into the curriculum of any of the teachers' schools.

### 4.1 Teachers' Beliefs about Sexuality Education

We need to have this type of analysis, orientation and discussion [about sexuality]. And that's an educator's number one role... I'm not only a Portuguese teacher, I'm an educator, I'm educating people, citizens. [...] Teaching about sexuality is

also preparing students for college entrance exams, it's preparing them for life, helping them to develop maturity, confidence, self-esteem, the ability to make choices, decisions. If I ignored these issues, I would be forming insecure students, scared students, marginalized students, embarrassed, shy students, that maybe, even if they know everything there is to know, wouldn't be able to capitalize in any way upon this knowledge because they'd be insecure, they wouldn't be able to take action, express themselves, have a social voice, because they'd be ashamed of themselves. - Flávia (Portuguese)<sup>1</sup>

In the statement above, Flávia evokes her strong belief in the importance of sexuality education. Like most of the teacher-informants, she sees sexuality as an integral aspect of all human beings and sexuality education as an essential part of teachers' work in schools. Generally speaking, the informants indicated that sexuality education is about clarifying doubts and providing students with important information and guidance with regards to their sexual and reproductive health, rights and responsibilities. Indeed, as the following quote elucidates, the informants largely voiced concerns that young people lack the awareness and skills to ensure their well-being.

What strikes me the most is their ignorance in relation to this subject [sexuality], how they're entering life so unprepared. [...] I often notice that they're very immature and very ignorant in relation to this subject. And that worries me a lot, it worries me a lot. - Maria (Portuguese)

Daniele (Philosophy) reemphasized the perception among informants that sexuality education could fill this knowledge-and-skills gap among students: "If this topic [sexuality] was incorporated in various disciplines, students would feel more responsible with regards to those issues." Furthermore, several informants, including João (Mathematics), Daniele and Flávia, maintained that sexuality education is important because many students may harbor prejudices related to women and girls that are sexually active and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The following example from Daniele reflects her and other informants' conviction that sexuality education may challenge and even transform such discriminatory attitudes and beliefs among students.

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<sup>1</sup> The discipline that each informant teaches is listed following the first mention of their name. This and additional information on the informants is also listed in Appendix I.

So, for example, a girl gets pregnant, and they [other students] call her names, really bad names and say things like, “it’s her fault, it’s all her responsibility”. So when you begin to ask, “And why is it not the boy’s responsibility? Didn’t they do this together?” When you ask those kinds of questions, and you allow them to answer, they themselves begin arriving at new conclusions, realizing that they sometimes say and do things that they don’t always realize that they do. Because when you talk about prejudice, everyone always says, “I’m not prejudiced!” But when they themselves start to speak, and the conversation begins to flow, they realize this about themselves as they speak, and sometimes it gives them a bit of a fright.

In sum, informants share quite positive attitudes toward sexuality education. They all believe that it is important for students to learn about different aspects of sexuality, particularly as it relates to identity, gender equality and respect for diversity – so important, in fact, that it should be integral to all children’s education. What’s more, they believe that sexuality education is an effective way to equip students with such knowledge and that this entails favorable outcomes for young people. As illustrated by the TPB and previous research by Mathews et al. (2006) and Paulussen et al. (1994), such positive beliefs about sexuality education correlate with a heightened motivation or willingness among teachers to deliver sexuality education. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that these informants also chose to participate in a course on SE, which is not common in Brazil, and their beliefs about SE may not be assumed to represent those of their colleagues in general.

Nevertheless, it appeared that some of the informants’ attitudes toward sexuality, particularly male homosexuality and young women’s sexual activity and pregnancy, were not always equitable or unbiased. Gabriela (Religion), for example, seemed to problematize homosexuality among her male students while Célia (Biology) felt that young girls should be taught to have few sexual partners because, at the end of the day, “men aren’t going to marry someone that’s been with everyone in town.” Furthermore, through statements such as, “they’ve got very little information and a lot of curiosity, and a lot of hormones”, some informants evoked a negative perception of youth sexuality and a belief that youth are irresponsible and unable to act ‘properly’ or control their sexuality. In contrast to the positive perceptions of sexuality education among informants first presented in this section, these beliefs coincide more closely with earlier findings regarding Brazilians’ and particularly Brazilian teachers’ attitudes toward sexuality education. Furthermore,

as indicated by previous research from South Africa and Uganda (Iyer and Aggleton 2012; Mangwaya and Ndlovu 2013), such gender-biased and negative attitudes toward youth sexuality may hamper teachers' provision of sexuality education.

## 4.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Others' Beliefs about Sexuality Education

### 4.2.1 Resistance and Curiosity in the School Context

Throughout the interviews, teachers spoke of a widespread "resistance" to sexuality education within the school community, including among other teachers, students, students' parents and school management. Based on informants' accounts, this resistance may be denoted as an unwillingness or refusal by an individual or group to implement or allow the implementation of sexuality education. Julia (Mathematics), for example, recalled that a former director of her school had vowed to "hide" from teachers a set of pedagogical materials to combat homophobia in the case that these were distributed to her school.<sup>2</sup> Elaborating upon this situation, Julia noted that the director was Evangelical and had taken to heart the Evangelical media's propaganda against this so-called Anti-Homophobia Kit. Also referencing the role of religion in peoples' attitudes towards sexuality education, Débora (History) drew a telling distinction between the respective school management of the two schools where she works. In one of the schools, she said,

[...] the management is totally secular. The principal, this principal, was a spiritual person, but wasn't religious in that sense of the word. So I think that helped a lot, because these topics [related to sexuality] have always been seen as natural subjects, that are integral to education. There was never any of that, "Oh, no, not that, God forbid, we can't talk about that".

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2 The Anti-Homophobia Kit is a set of pedagogical materials to combat homophobia that was on the verge of being distributed to schools nation-wide in 2011. The distribution of the Kit was ultimately vetoed by President Dilma Rousseff, reportedly due to pressure by politically influential and powerful Evangelical groups, even though it was her Labor Party's initiative to develop the materials (Sassine 2013).

Meanwhile, Débora explained, in the other school, “the management is Evangelical, there’s [religious] praise in school, so it’s completely different”. This, she said, restricted her scope for sexuality education – although she still felt that she could speak about issues related to sexuality with her own students, Débora said that it would not be possible, for example, to implement a project on sexuality involving other students or teachers in the school.

Several other informants also referred to the importance of having formal or even just unspoken support or permission for sexuality education from school management, saying this was important in terms of gaining access to financial and other resources needed to run a project; to have backing ‘from above’ in the face of widespread opposition from others in the school community; to encourage other teachers to accept or even get involved in a sexuality education project; to receive support in the form of pedagogical instruction and direction. Furthermore, some informants shared that an openness on behalf of school management regarding teachers’ participation in training – both generally speaking and specifically with regards to sexuality education – increased the likelihood that teachers take a sexuality education course.

Meanwhile, one of Flávia’s students had simply walked out of class because, he said, he did not agree with and felt he could not be present during a classroom discussion on homosexuality, equality and respect. Speaking about parents’ resistance to sexuality education, Daniele stated:

Look, once a teacher showed a movie in class – a movie that was actually on the list of suggestions of what he could use – only it was about sex. And shortly thereafter a family came saying that that was encouraging the boys and girls to have sex. That’s one of the justifications used. If you talk about using condoms, in class, the families get very concerned and come saying, “oh, they talked about condoms, they want to encourage sex, they’re encouraging, motivating the students to have sex”. We still get a lot of that. So, it’s a reality. [...] So I’m telling you this now, I don’t discuss [sexuality], I don’t discuss it because of that.

As these accounts indicate, informants perceived that resistance is grounded in the widespread belief that sexuality, especially homosexuality and youth sexual

activity, is a “delicate”, “taboo” subject that is inappropriate to be discussed with children and adolescents. This coincides with previous research, according to which teachers recognize that many aspects of sexuality education are broadly considered “controversial” (Iyer and Aggleton 2012; Mkumbo 2012). It is also notable that several teachers drew a connection between resistance to sexuality education and faith, as Paiva et al. (2008) did in their national survey of Brazilians’ attitudes toward sexuality, particularly as the great majority of Brazilians declare themselves to be either Catholic or Evangelical.

Although most teachers in this study did not suggest outright that the taboo nature of sexuality makes them feel uncomfortable or less motivated to discuss the subject with students, previous research does suggest that this may be the case. Furthermore, as the TPB (Ajzen 2012) proposes, teachers will be less motivated or willing to implement sexuality education when they perceive that important others are against it. Indeed, in the statement above, Daniele is very clear that she refrains from sexuality education specifically due to her perception that parents are vehemently opposed to it. This also accords with previous findings (Paulussen et al. 1994) that parents’ disapproval reduces teachers’ motivation to implement sexuality education. With regards to other teachers’ resistance to sexuality education, Flávia also makes the practical point that without other like-minded teachers who are willing to join forces to implement sexuality education projects, the few teachers that are open to sexuality education will end up working alone and therefore reaching fewer students.

However, teachers did not only see obstacles in their interactions with others in the school community. Many of the informants emphasized that students, even those that show some resistance to sexuality education, are generally very curious about all matters related to sexuality. As Débora said, “Sexuality is a topic that seduces. Even [sexual] diversity, which is sometimes marked by strong prejudice, even that intrigues them.” In other words, informants indicated that when the topic of sexuality was on the table, students were more eager than usual to listen to lessons and engage in learning activities, thus facilitating informants’ delivery of sexuality

education. In light of Paulussen et al.'s (1994) finding that Dutch teachers were greatly influenced by students' expectations, students' curiosity about sexuality is an important facilitating factor that school-based, teacher-led sexuality education programs in Brazil should seek to capitalize upon.

#### 4.2.2 Formal and Informal Norms: Delineating What Is Acceptable

When the informants further elaborated upon resistance to sexuality education in the school community, they painted a more nuanced picture.

I think sexuality education is really restricted to the prevention of STIs in the discipline Biology and in a specific grade-level. And preventing STIs, that's a very biological, very organic, very physiological subject. And aside from that, nobody talks about sexuality, nobody talks about gender, nobody talks about equality, nobody talks about anything that could be considered audacious or controversial or risky. – Flávia

Similarly, Débora noted that the belief that sexuality is exclusively related to biology, to the body, "Among teachers, adults, this [belief] is very, very solidified, definitive."

Indeed, just as teachers in Australia, Canada and Tanzania (Cohen et al. 2004; Milton et al. 2001; Mkumbo 2012), informants perceived that some issues within the realm of sexuality – such as disease prevention, reproduction and human anatomy – were generally considered acceptable to discuss in schools while others – including homosexuality, youth sexual activity and gender – were not. Although they did not say so explicitly, this suggests that informants may have felt less comfortable teaching students about non-biological or health-related aspects of sexuality and thereby experienced a limited scope for their implementation of sexuality education. This harks back to the critique, discussed earlier, that national sexuality education initiatives in Brazil have not been comprehensive enough (Ação Educativa and Carreira 2011; Altmann 2007; Vianna and Unbehaum 2006). Furthermore, informants perceived that many people in the school community believe that even these sanctioned sexuality education subjects should only be

discussed in Biology or Science classes with teenage or older students. Although informants largely espoused a more comprehensive vision of sexuality education, the TPB and previous research suggest that the perception that important others only condone a purely biological form of sexuality education likely decreases teachers' willingness to address non-biological aspects of sexuality with their students (Ajzen 2012; Paulussen et al. 1994).

When talking about these informal norms and social pressures, some informants also indirectly referenced formal norms, such as federal legislation and school-specific decrees. Namely, they pointed out the absence of a specific sexuality education discipline and the fact that only Biology teachers are required, by federal legislation on school curricula, to touch upon sexuality in any way (in classes on human anatomy and reproduction). As Gabriela put it, she would need “an indication, authorization” to implement a school-wide sexuality education project or to discuss sexuality at length in her Religion classes. This, she said, was because, “In my capacity as a state employee, I don't teach sexuality education. My role as a state employee is to teach Religion, so I have to limit myself to what they want.” Furthermore, informants indicated a general disinterest or lack of motivation among schools and other teachers to apply the PCN, the federal Brazilian directive that urges schools to integrate sexuality education in all grade levels and all disciplines. As Maria said, “It's a shame... I think it [the PCN] should maybe enter as an actual law, not just a suggestion; ‘suggestion’ is very open.” In other words, a suggestion does not fully motivate teachers to ensure that sexuality education is implemented. As other informants affirmed, this is especially the case when the teachers and school managers do not see a place for sexuality education in schools beyond the discipline of Biology or at all. Indeed, these perspectives closely coincide with previous findings that low prioritization of sexuality education in school policy or by school management constitutes an obstacle to teachers' implementation of sexuality education (Buston et al. 2002; Martínez et al. 2012; Mathews et al. 2006; Paulussen 1994; Smith and Harrison 2012).



As this section of findings reveals, resistance to sexuality education appears to be one of the principle, overarching obstacles that holds teachers back from implementing sexuality education. This sections also indicates that the slightly judgmental beliefs about homosexuality and young peoples' sexual activity that a small number of informants seemed to harbour are indeed quite strong and widespread through the school communities where they work. In light of the background research on Brazil presented earlier, these findings suggest such beliefs coincide with both informal, social norms and formal, institutional norms on gender, sexuality and sexuality education at the national level. Indeed, previous literature has referenced the central role that normative attitudes and beliefs, or dominant discourses, play in shaping sexuality education policies and programs (Jones et al. 2011; Loeber et al. 2010; Paiva et al. 2008). Previous research from countries such as Canada, Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Cohen et al. 2004; Mkumbo 2012; Ahmed et al. 2006; Mwangaya and Ndlovu 2013), referred to earlier, also suggests that cultural and social norms hamper teachers' implementation of sexuality education by restricting what is considered acceptable to discuss and what teachers feel comfortable discussing, in part by molding how people in the school context perceive and act with regards to sexuality education. Meanwhile, it is worthy to note that, although far less prevalent, open-mindedness and acceptance of gender equity, sexual diversity and sexuality education among people within the school community are important facilitating factors for teachers' implementation of sexuality education.

## 4.3 Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy

### 4.3.1 Teacher Training

The principal factor that informants saw as influencing their own and other teachers' self-efficacy in implementing sexuality education was teacher training. Namely, informants noted that training equipped them with the knowledge they felt they needed to engage students in sexuality education. As Flávia said, before taking a course on sexuality education she felt that her efforts to discuss sexuality with her students were "not very scientific", "not very technical" and just scratched the

surface of the subject; she needed “new tools, new approaches”. Along the same lines, Maria said that before taking sexuality education training, “I also had a lot of doubts that I wasn’t able to respond to, I didn’t feel at ease, I was afraid that I’d be talking nonsense.” Informants’ concerns about not being sufficiently prepared to delivery sexuality education coincide with qualms expressed by teachers in many other parts of the world, including in Brazil (Almeida et al. 2011; Buston et al. 2002; Cohen et al. 2004; Eisenberg et al. 2012; Martínez et al. 2012: 429).

Furthermore, the informants felt that the “theoretical foundation” they gained from teacher training assured them of the accuracy and legitimacy of the information and perspectives they presented to students when doing sexuality education. This, in turn, made them feel more at ease and comfortable when teaching about sexuality, despite the “delicate” and “controversial” nature of the topic. In the same vein, Daniele, Gabriela and Maria indicated, the texts, research and like-minded individuals they came in contact with through sexuality education training not only informed them about issues that they were not previously familiar with but also gave them a sense that they were not the only ones speaking about sexuality with young people. As Daniele said:

Because I met people with a less biased perspective, people wanting to make change in relation to these issues. It helped me feel more secure, even to talk about things that I believe in because sometimes we think that we’re talking alone, so when we see that there are others that speak in the same or in a similar way, we feel more secure to talk about these things.

These perceived benefits of training – increased knowledge and confidence teaching sexuality education, greater sense of comfort and legitimacy with the subject, reduced sense of isolation as a teacher doing sexuality education – have also been identified by other teachers in previous research (Wight and Buston 2003). Furthermore, these statements elucidate how teacher training augments teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and thereby increases their willingness to implement sexuality education. As Flávia indicated, however, this was not always the case:

[...] when I took it [the PEGE course] there wasn't any other colleague from any of the schools I work in. [...] but I wanted there to be an intervention in my school, I wanted all the teachers in my school to be sensitized. Because if an effort to raise awareness is done in a collective way, not isolated, I believe we'd be able to implement projects with a much greater scope. In terms of my intervention in my community, it wasn't good, because I ended up alone, different from my other colleagues, wanting to implement something that nobody understood or saw the importance of implementing.

This statement reveals the interaction between different factors that influence teachers' willingness to implement sexuality education, namely, other teachers' stance on sexuality education (in Flávia's case, other teachers' disinterest in sexuality education) and teachers' sense of self-efficacy. It also emphasizes the importance of reaching more teachers with training, to ensure that, once trained, teachers do not face additional obstacles to sexuality education implementation in the form of widespread disinterest or opposition within their school community.

Following on from this, Gabriela emphasized that the knowledge teachers gained through training "opens our minds". Similarly, Débora discussed the importance of stimulating a "deconstruction of a series of beliefs and values that everybody learns," as these are often grounded in incorrect or biased information. Indeed, both Débora and Maria admitted that the courses they have taken on sexuality have spurred them to reconsider what they themselves described as more close-minded, prejudiced stances on issues such as teenage pregnancy and homosexuality. These accounts reinforce this study's finding that many people in school communities where informants work have negative and regressive attitudes toward sexuality. This has also been seen to be the case in several other countries (Iyer and Aggleton 2012; Smith and Harrison 2012). As suggested by the TPB, such attitudes hamper teachers' willingness to do sexuality education. However, based on the results of this study, it is possible to confirm that training has the potential to make teachers aware of such prejudices, heightening their sense of self-efficacy. Indeed, this point has also been lifted in previous research. This is evident in that some informants said that, thanks to the sexuality education courses they've taken, they feel more secure that they are not promoting inequitable, disrespectful or intolerant attitudes among students during their discussions or lessons on sexuality. Altogether, this

evidence speaks highly to the importance of training for teachers to overcome obstacles to sexuality education implementation.

Daniele, Débora, Julia and Flávia, meanwhile, indicated that the sexuality education trainings they have done have given them knowledge and information that they have been able to use to confront prejudice among others around them. This highlights yet another benefit of teacher training, which has not been captured by previous research. Namely, teacher training may not only strengthen teachers' self-efficacy but may also enable them to influence others' beliefs about sexuality and sexuality education, thus possibly fostering a school context that is more accepting of sexuality education.

Finally, informants also felt that one of the major gains of training is that teachers acquire pedagogical skills in sexuality education and access to specific activities that can be implemented with students. As Débora said, "the more I equipped myself, the easier it got." Adding on to this, Débora recounted that training motivated her to do sexuality education more systematically, to truly integrate the discussions and activities into her lesson plans as opposed to simply discussing issues related to sexuality when they arose spontaneously. Once again, these findings reinforce the fact that training has the potential to augment teachers' sense of self-efficacy, which has been proven to play an important role in teachers' motivation and determination to implement sexuality education (Mathews et al. 2006; Paulussen et al. 1994). Moreover, they coincide with Wight and Buston's (2003) conclusion that training allows for teachers to acquire important practical skills in sexuality education.

#### 4.3.2 Teachers' Personal Characteristics

For me, [sexuality education] is really not a problem, because I have, I always had, before I became a teacher, a perspective that's very... a certain way of facing things in that I'm interested in the subject [sexuality] and I'm not afraid to take it on; it's easy for me to deal with this subject, which I think is a problem for some people because, first of all, some people, some teachers have some really strong prejudices, and sometimes they're

embarrassed, or they feel that it's an uncomfortable issue. [...] But I think I have, a priori, a more open perspective, and that also helps. - Débora

Here, Débora juxtaposes the obstacles to implementing sexuality education – prejudice and discomfort – with the advantage she feels she has in implementing sexuality education due to her inherently more liberal mindset. This was affirmed by other informants, including Célia, who defined herself as a natural extrovert, Gabriela and Maria.

[I know] teachers that say things like, “I don't know how you do it, I just can't. For me it's very difficult.” They're more shy. It's part of my nature, I'll talk about almost anything. – Maria

In other words, informants felt that their frank and open-minded personalities facilitated their implementation of sexuality education, as was also seen to be the case among Australian teachers (Milton et al. 2001). Moreover, informants' perception of themselves as naturally capable of discussing sexuality education both evokes a sense of self-efficacy and recalls the direct connection between perceived self-efficacy and behavioral performance. Namely, in light of the TPB, it may be said that informants' self-confidence in their ability to deliver sexuality education means that they are more likely to “persevere and, therefore, to succeed” (Ajzen 2012: 447). The following statement from Julia suggests a similar connection between personality traits that facilitate sexuality education implementation for teachers, the self-awareness of such characteristics and teachers' actual ability to implement sexuality education.

We [Julia and her two colleagues that together implement an sexuality education project in their school] insist, persist and sometimes we're annoying or obnoxious because I can be obnoxious ... When I want something, I run after it, I go for it, you see? So I'll be there, waiting, until the person gets me what I want. Our printer disappeared. Nobody knows anything, nobody saw anything. So the new director promised to give us a new one. But until she did, “where is it, where is it, where is it?” You understand? We have to know how to search, and also how to ask for things, negotiate.

Indeed, Julia emphasized her and her colleagues' "persistence" as crucial to the survival of their sexuality education project, which they have fought to uphold in the face of opposition from two different school managers and an absence of funding. That said, the above accounts once again highlight the resistance or reluctance among both teachers and school managers to implement or support the implementation of sexuality education in schools, and how this resistance complicates sexuality education implementation even for those teachers that believe sexuality education is important and are motivated to teach it. Finally, informants drew a clear connection between open-mindedness and teachers' participation in sexuality education training, with many saying that their interest in sexuality education and their belief in the importance of sexuality education was what drove them to take a course in this area. This raises the question of how teachers that are not innately more open-minded, extroverted or confident can be encouraged to teach sexuality education. Given the importance of such qualities to effective sexuality education, it also raises the question of whether such teachers should be encouraged to implement sexuality education. Although the latter question is difficult to answer based on this study, the former seemingly leads back to several conclusions drawn here as well as in previous literature (Wight and Buston 2003). That is, teacher training has the potential to transform teachers' attitudes and beliefs, and also increase their confidence in their ability to perform sexuality education. This final point will be further considered in the concluding discussion of this thesis.

#### 4.3.3 Teachers' Relationship with Students and Approach to SE

Beyond sexuality education training, informants pointed out a number of other factors that influenced their sense of self-efficacy and thereby facilitated or impeded their implementation of sexuality education. Primarily, many informants said that having a "rapport" or "an affinity" with students and taking a respectful, easy-going and dynamic or participatory approach facilitates their implementation of sexuality education. Informants argued that such approaches were helpful because students enjoy participatory activities, like pedagogical games, and because positive teacher-student relationships marked by respect fostered a comfort zone in which students "know that they can open up, air their doubts, that they won't be ridiculed or suffer

any sort of prejudice”. Notably, research-based evidence also highlight such approaches to sexuality education as the most effective in terms of changing students’ attitudes and behaviors (Kirby 1999). This harks back to the repressive norms regarding sexuality that foster pervasive resistance to sexuality education within school communities and hinder teachers from implementing sexuality education. Referencing the same issue, Célia and Gabriela underlined that teachers must also trust their students, given that others in the school community may not approve of teachers’ application of sexuality education and teachers could be reprimanded or condemned depending on what students said about classroom discussions of sexuality.

Meanwhile, on the subject of respect, Maria said:

Personally, I’m very careful with this issue of religion. I’m really afraid of... I try to make very clear what’s the Church’s point of view and what’s the scientific point of view when talking about sexuality. Generally speaking, I don’t overstep the Church. I always present how the Bible address the issue, how reality is different, and that everyone should position themselves according to their own faith, not according to mine. I respect this religious side of them. I think that is important, I think that if a teacher doesn’t respect that point of view, it’s a bit harder.

This statement once again highlights the central role that religion plays in shaping dominant social norms regarding sexuality in Brazil, as was also seen in Paiva et al.’s (2008) study of national attitudes toward sexuality. It also illustrates informants’ perception that the ability to speak openly and respectfully with students about sexuality and implement participatory learning activities greatly facilitates teachers’ implementation of sexuality education. As such, it may be said that informants, like teachers in other parts of the world, value the above-mentioned qualities and feel greater confidence or self-efficacy when they see themselves possessing such capacities (Milton et al. 2001; Mathews et al. 2006). This indicates yet again that teacher training courses would do well to not only transform teachers’ prejudices but to ensure that teachers have the necessary skills to lead students through participatory and dynamic sexuality education lessons in a respectful manner.

#### 4.3.4 Natural Openings and Bridges to Sexuality Education

Moving on, numerous informants described the regular, natural and spontaneous occurrence of openings in the classroom or school setting as opportunities for them to broach the subject of sexuality with students. As Débora explained:

Situations arise in schools, the school setting is a space that entails relationship, flirtation, dating, everything happens there. It [sexuality] is a topic that's there, alive. So, for those who are willing to address it, it's very easy if you're attentive, because you'll have various situations, it will come up and you'll be able to address it.

Following on from this, some teachers also felt that certain aspects of their respective disciplines served as natural bridges into the topic of sexuality or presented them with opportunities to integrate sexuality education into their 'regular' lessons. For example, Flávia, a Portuguese teacher, said that her discipline allows her "to work with all kinds of texts, styles, approaches, since it can be oral or written". Meanwhile, Gabriela explained that, "since I teach Religion, I take advantage of the connection with brotherhood and respect." Finally, Célia said that as a Biology teacher, she often speaks about reproduction – be it among humans, animals or plants – and this easily opens up to other issues within the realm of sexuality, as well.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these remarks. First, informants emphasized that they were able to take advantage of natural openings because they were both "attentive" and willing to discuss sexuality when such opportunities presented themselves. This reflection is likely also applicable to the opportunities for sexuality education that teachers connected to their respective disciplines. As such, these findings suggest that the quality of attentiveness is also important to teachers' implementation of sexuality education. They also point to the importance of training, as teachers must be informed about sexuality and sexuality education in order to be attentive to opportunities to implement it.



Notably, the factors here labelled ‘natural openings’ and ‘bridges’ have not seemingly been raised by teachers that participated in previous studies, although this may be because the majority of previous research has focused on teachers responsible for classes or programs that already naturally encompass the subject of sexuality, such as Sexuality Education, Health Education or Life Skills. In any case, these findings also suggest that it may be beneficial for sexuality education teacher training in Brazil, where schools typically do not feature a specific discipline on sexuality education, to support teachers in finding ways to incorporate sexuality education into their standard lesson plans.

#### 4.3.5 Time Constraints and Workload

Finally, several informants referred to a general sense among the public teachers’ corps in Brazil that they are overworked and worn out as an impediment to teachers’ implementation of sexuality education.

Take a regular teacher, for example, he wants nothing more than for them not to invent anything else for him to do in school so that he doesn’t have to take on more work. I’m serious! These guys are so worn out, they’re so, so demotivated that they’re afraid. So when someone comes up with one more thing, the teacher goes crazy. He thinks, “Holy cow! I’ve got to do this as well, when it’s not even my area. It shouldn’t be my responsibility. I just want to teach my Portuguese classes, I don’t want to teach anything other than my Portuguese classes”, you see? – Célia

As this statement indicates, teachers may lack the motivation and energy to do sexuality education because they are overloaded with work. This may especially be the case when they take into consideration the formal norms referenced earlier: sexuality should not be discussed in schools, unless it is from a purely biological or health-related standpoint. Along the same lines, Maria and Débora indicated that they have struggled, sometimes, to find the time to incorporate sexuality education into their classes. As Maria specified, this is because,

[...] our time in the classroom is so rushed and there are so many things that have been assigned to teachers, so many issues that we have to address: you have to address the environment, you have to address violence, you have to

address racism, prejudice; there are so many issues and outside of the regular content. - Maria

In sum, in light of the TPB, it may be said that the perception among informants that they lack the time to do sexuality education reduces their sense of self-efficacy and thereby their motivation or willingness to implement sexuality education. Furthermore, the challenges presented by a lack of time and excessive workloads seem to be compounded by the low prioritization of sexuality education in school policy and by school management. Indeed, this has been seen to be the case in other countries, such as Spain (Martínez et al. 2010). This underscores a final time the centrality of dominant social norms, both formal and informal, and how these directly and indirectly play a role even in teachers' self-efficacy beliefs.

## 5 Concluding Discussion

The purpose of this study was to map out the factors that influence Brazilian teachers' willingness to implement school-based sexuality education and thereby help to inform the development and design of initiatives to expand and improve teacher-led sexuality education in Brazilian schools. Guided by the TPB, I sought to achieve this purpose by exploring teachers' beliefs about sexuality education, their ability to implement sexuality education and the school context in which they work. The results of this research suggest that teachers' beliefs about sexuality education and their perceptions of their self-efficacy and the school context in relation to sexuality education are thoroughly interconnected, as was expected in accordance with the TPB. Nevertheless, it was possible to distinguish answers to the questions posed at the onset of this study in the data collected. After these are presented here, I will offer several conclusions about the implications that these findings have on the field of school-based sexuality education and teacher training in sexuality education.

### 5.1.1 Brazilian Teachers' Limited Scope for Sexuality Education

As this study suggests, teachers in Brazil have a limited scope for sexuality education, primarily due to the profound resistance to sexuality education among teachers, school managers, parents and students. Indeed, although teachers in this study largely look favorably upon sexuality education, this research suggests that many of their teacher-colleagues may not. Opposition to sexuality education appears to be largely rooted in social and religious norms – many aspects of sexuality are taboo or condemned in Brazil – as well as formal manifestations of such norms. For example, sexuality education is not obligatory and federal sexuality education initiatives focus principally on the biological and health dimensions of sexuality. Teachers' reluctance or resistance to deliver sexuality education also stems from their sense of being overworked and lacking time for sexuality

education. Meanwhile, this study revealed several factors that teachers perceive as facilitating their implementation of sexuality education. These included having taken sexuality education training; possessing certain personality characteristics such as extrovertedness and open-mindedness; having a friendly, open and trusting relationship with students; and taking a respectful and dynamic approach to sexuality education.

### 5.1.2 Teacher Training as a Game-Changer

In light of these conclusions as well as informants' reflections on teacher training and previous research in the field, it is evident that training is a game-changer with regards to teachers' implementation of sexuality education for two reasons. Primarily, as this study indicates, training has a transformative potential. By providing participants with new knowledge and encouraging critical reflection, teacher training in sexuality education can challenge the individual beliefs and attitudes as well as the widespread social norms that devalue sexuality education by positing sexuality as taboo, exclusively bio-medical and inappropriate for young people. Hence, the provision of training should be expanded and offered to, if not required of, all pre-service and in-service teachers. Moreover, if extended to all teachers *as well as* school managers and even other school staff, training has a great potential to foster a school context that is more supportive of teachers' implementation of sexuality education, both formally and informally.

Additionally, as informants' accounts and previous research indicates, training is key to augmenting teachers' sense of self-efficacy, which may be said to comprise educators' confidence and comfort with teaching the subject. To this extent, teacher training in sexuality education should seek to:

- Increase teachers' theoretical knowledge of sexuality;
- Augment teachers' understanding of the importance of sexuality education;
- Raise teachers' awareness that natural openings to the subject of sexuality occur frequently within the school context, encourage them to take

advantage of these opportunities and equip them with skills that can help them to do so;

- Emphasize the importance of taking a respectful, open-minded and participatory approach to sexuality education and give teachers the skills to do so;
- Give teachers the opportunity to practice using the above-mentioned skills and methodologies so that they truly feel comfortable and confident in their ability to do so;
- Give teachers many opportunities to connect and engage with one another, for example through group activities and discussions, as this may provoke new ideas, build solidarity and reduce a sense of isolation.

As was emphasized in the opening statement of this thesis, school-based sexuality education constitutes a critical opportunity to ensure that young people have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to live healthy and happy lives with regards to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. However, to ensure that this is possible, it is necessary that teachers – who are typically the primary providers of school-based sexuality education – possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes to implement comprehensive and rights-based sexuality education.

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# 7 Appendices

## 7.1 Appendix I: Record of Informants

All informants' names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

### 7.1.1 Teachers

The following table reflects the professional profile of each teacher that participated in the study. The informants live and work in a three different cities, including the small, coastal city, Rio das Ostras and the peri-urban city Niteroi, both in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and the Bahía state capital, Salvador. Six of the informants have participated in the PEGE course, one in the GDE course and one in both of these courses. Some informants have also participated in other courses that have focused or touched upon issues related to sexuality. These details are excluded from the table below in order to protect informants' identities.

**Table 1. Professional Profile of Teacher-Informants**

	<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Age Range of Students</b>	<b>Experience with Sexuality Education</b>
<b>Célia</b>	Biology	11–18	Has never planned or systematically implemented sexuality education activities, but discusses related issues when they arise. Sets aside 10 minutes at the end of every Biology class she teaches for student questions and says that students often ask questions related to sexuality at these times.
<b>Julia</b>	Mathematics	15–18	Works with an ongoing, school-wide sexuality education program. Notably, she is not remunerated for this work and implements the program on a completely voluntary

			basis, as she is not mandated by the school to do so.
<b>Daniele</b>	Philosophy	11–15	Has never planned or systematically implemented sexuality education activities. Is reluctant to discuss issues related to sexuality education when they arise in the classroom.
<b>Débora</b>	History	11–18	Has planned and implemented systematic sexuality education activities with her students previously but was not doing so at the time of the interview. Addresses issues related to sexuality when they arise in the classroom.
<b>Flávia</b>	Portuguese	15–18	Has never planned or systematically implemented sexuality education activities, but discusses issues related to sexuality when they arise in the classroom.
<b>Gabriela</b>	Religion	11–18+*	Has never planned or systematically implemented sexuality education activities, but discusses issues related to sexuality when they arise in the classroom.
<b>João</b>	Mathematics	13–20	Has implemented one project on sexuality with students in his Mathematics classes.
<b>Maria</b>	Portuguese	12–18+*	Has never planned or systematically implemented sexuality education activities, but discusses issues related to sexuality when they arise in the classroom.

\*In addition to their regular classes, attended by students up to the age of 18, Gabriela and Maria also teach EJA (Education of Youth and Adults) classes, which are specifically designed for youth and adults that did not have access to or did not conclude their primary or secondary school studies. Primary school EJA classes are available to students aged 15 years and older while secondary school EJA classes serve students aged 18 and older.

### 7.1.1 Key Informants

All of the informants are Brazilian nationals.

**Informant A** - Has worked since 1989 in the fields of gender, sexualities, reproductive health, and prevention of alcohol and other drug use, for governmental

and non-governmental organizations. Has coordinated a variety of projects for HIV and AIDS prevention in Brazil and has furnished technical consultancy services to Mozambican and Cape Verde and Guiné Bissau organizations.

**Informant B** – Psychologist, Ph.D. in Collective Health, assistant coordinator of a Brazil-based Latin American research center focused on sexuality and human rights, researcher in the areas of gender, sexuality and human rights.

**Informant C** – Sociologist, research in the fields of gender and education, and coordinator of the research department of a national Brazilian research institution focused on education.

**Informant D** – Ph.D. in Education, M.A. in Education, Human Development and Psychology, B.A. in Psychology, professional in the field of education for development with a focus on research and evaluation of education programs worldwide.

## 7.2 Appendix II: Teacher Interview Guide

This is an English translation of the interview guide, which was originally written and applied in Portuguese.

Each interview was initiated by informing the interviewee about the research proposal, who will have access to the final product of the research, and what measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the research participants. The interviewee was then asked to give her/his informed consent to participate, and was subsequently asked for permission to record the interview.

### The teacher and her/his profession

- Do you work in one or multiple schools?
- What discipline(s) do you teach?

- What level(s) of education do you work in (primary or secondary)?
- What age group(s) do you work with?
- Approximately how many years have you been working as a teacher?
- How old are you?

#### Defining sexuality and sexuality education

- How would you define sexuality?
- How would you define sexuality education?
- Do you believe there is a specific age at which students should begin to have sexuality education classes in school?
- If yes, when?
- What do you think of sexuality education in schools?

#### Teachers' perceptions and personal experiences with sexuality education

- Have you ever discussed sexuality with your students?
- If no, why not?
- If yes, please tell me more about this?
- What challenges and opportunities did you encounter throughout this process?
- Have you ever tried to implement a sexuality education project?
- If no, why not?
- If yes, please tell me more about this?
- What challenges and opportunities did you encounter throughout this process?

#### Teachers' perceptions and experiences of sexuality education in a broader context

- How is the issue of sexuality treated and addressed in the schools in which you work?
- Are you familiar with the reference made to sexuality education in the National Curricular Parameters (PCN)?
- If no, interviewer reads short statement about how sexuality education is envisioned by the PCN.
- What do you think of this directive?
- How does your school position itself toward this directive?
- Are there sexuality education projects or classes in your school?
- If no, why do you think this is the case?
- If yes, please tell me a little bit about these.
- What challenges and opportunities do you think these projects have met?
- What do you think are the major obstacles that teachers face in the field of

sexuality education?

- What do you think most facilitates teachers' work in the field of sexuality education?
- What do you think are the major obstacles that schools face in the field of sexuality education?
- What do you think most facilitates schools' work in the field of sexuality education?

#### Teacher training in sexuality education

- Please tell me about any theoretical or practical courses or training you've received in the field of sexuality education?
- How did this/these course(s)/training(s) influence you?
- How did this/these course(s)/training(s) influence your work with sexuality education in schools?
- How would you describe an ideal teacher training course in sexuality education?
- What do you think motivates teachers to participate in teacher training courses in sexuality?

#### Closing

- We have reached the end of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to say or anything you would like to ask me?

At the end of each interview, I thanked the informant, answered any questions they had and informed them that they were welcome to get in touch with me in the future if any questions arose regarding the research.

## 7.3 Appendix III: Key Informant Interview Guide

This is an English translation of the interview guide, which was originally created and applied in Portuguese.

Each interview was initiated by informing the interviewee about the research proposal, who will have access to the final product of the research, and what measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the research participants. The interviewee was then asked to give her informed consent to participate, and was



subsequently asked for permission to record the interview.

#### Informant's background

- Please tell me a little bit about your educational and professional background, and how these are related to sexuality education?

#### Sexuality education

- How would you define sexuality?
- How would you define sexuality education?

#### Teachers and sexuality education

- What do you think is necessary for teachers to implement sexuality education in the school setting?
- What factors do you believe hinder teachers' implementation of sexuality education?
- What factors do you believe facilitate teachers' implementation of sexuality education?
- What do you think could further facilitate teachers' implementation of sexuality education?
- I am aware that the National Curricular Parameters suggest that sexuality education be included in all school curricula. What implications do you think this directive has on sexuality education at the level of the teacher?

#### Teacher training in sexuality education

- What do you think of teacher training in sexuality education?
- How would you describe an ideal teacher training course in sexuality education?
- What do you think motivates teachers to participate in teacher training courses in sexuality?

#### Closing

- We have reached the end of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to say or anything you would like to ask me?

At the end of each interview, I thanked the informant, answered any questions they had and informed them that they were welcome to get in touch with me in the future if any questions arose regarding the research.