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The Personal Characteristics and Pedagogical Styles of
Effective Abstinence Education Instructors

Karen D. Hill

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

Carol Ward, Chair
Cardell Jacobson
Laura Walker

Department of Sociology
Brigham Young University
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Abstract

The Personal Characteristics and Pedagogical Styles of Effective Abstinence Education Instructors

Karen D. Hill
Department of Sociology, BYU
Master of Science

The purpose of this study was to explore the personal characteristics and pedagogical style of effective abstinence instructors. Abstinence instructors receive regular training and evaluation and tend to remain in the abstinence education field for multiple years. Abstinence education programs are offered throughout the United States and present a pool of participants in which to sociologically examine the dynamics of the relationship of adolescents and instructors in a youth prevention program. This qualitative study is based on in-depth personal interviews of eight abstinence instructors who shared insights into their own teaching experiences, expressed their thoughts about who they are as a person and their experiences that impacted their teaching, what they know about teaching methods and relating to students, and how what they care about informed their instructional delivery. Three abstinence program administrators also presented their insights into effective abstinence instruction. Effective abstinence educators embody personal characteristics and pedagogical styles common to effective teachers in public schools and other positive youth development programs. Supporting the concept of teacher immediacy (Mehrabian, 1969, 1981), interview data indicate that abstinence instructors perceive that integrating who they are, what they know and what they care about into their teaching style and classroom persona increases their effectiveness. Findings from this study may inform recruitment, training, evaluation and retention of prevention program instructors for youth.

Keywords: abstinence educators, teacher immediacy

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Among the most prevalent adolescent issues facing contemporary youth is the development of unhealthy lifestyles. Included in the array of unhealthy lifestyles is early sexual initiation (Shek, 2006), which has been linked to cases of sexually transmitted disease (Weinstock, Berman, & Cates, 2004), number of teen pregnancies (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010) and low-birth rates of infants (Martin et al., 2003). It is estimated that teen mothers and their offspring add \$10.9 billion to public health costs each year due to their high health risks (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012). Parental involvement in teaching sexuality to children is minimal (Diiorio, Pluhar, & Belcher, 2003) and public organizations have now accepted the role of educating young people. Abstinence education programs provide information for adolescents about the consequences of early sexual initiation and activity and provide skills training on healthy relationship formation. Instructors present value-based curricula in public and private schools.

No systematic academic research has examined the practices of abstinence instructors. Therefore, this exploratory, qualitative case study addresses a gap in the literature concerning this singular type of instruction. The purpose of this case study was to identify and interview effective abstinence educators and qualitatively explore their common or unique personal characteristics and pedagogical styles. Thus, the research project provided the opportunity for abstinence instructors to speak directly about their experiences, the meaning they give to their work and their insights into effectively teaching adolescents their abstinence message.

Abstinence education programs differ from instruction provided on comprehensive sex and character education programs. Classroom teachers often deliver comprehensive sex curricula in conjunction with academic classes, such as health, driver's education or physical education.

Character education programs are often infused into school culture through school assemblies, within classroom instruction and in other settings by school staff. In contrast, abstinence education curriculum is made available through independent outside agencies that are invited into the school to present their workshops. The teachers are specially trained to present age-appropriate content, using specific types of delivery and activities designed for each age group. The agencies are invited to present their curricula in schools where parents and school boards support the message. Abstinence program instructors are well trained, regularly evaluated, and typically teach multiple years.

One of the most salient variables that affect program effectiveness in any adolescent program is the instructor (Shek & Wai, 2008; Stronge & Tucker, 2000). Positive youth development (PYD) programs seek to employ and retain teachers who are motivated, knowledgeable and effectual (Shek & Wai, 2008). The successful delivery of sexuality and relationship curricula requires instructors with the ability to meet the needs and interests of young people (Allen, 2009). Critical to abstinence education success, for both the teacher and ultimately the program, is the quality of interactions and relationships established between instructor and student. While curriculum content is based on the premise that the healthiest choice for teens is abstinence until marriage, the factor that mediates effectiveness of this message is the trust that students have in the instructor. Once trust is established the students are more likely to seriously consider the message, weigh their own choices about sexual activity and gain skills that would allow them to avoid many risky behaviors. This process allows adolescents to understand the importance of their decisions as well as to build respect for themselves and for those who choose abstinence.

The ability of abstinence educators to form relationships of trust with the students is central to the findings of this study, which support the concept of “teacher immediacy.” Mehrabian’s (1969, 1981) research, which defined immediacy as “a set of behaviors creating a perception of physical or psychological closeness between communicators,” spurred theoretical research in educational settings (Allen et al., 2006; Christophel & Gorham, 1995). This work is relevant to research in sociology and anthropology of education that addresses factors associated with student school success, ranging from individual student traits to classroom interactions and experiences and school context. In relation to the role of teachers and classroom interaction, for example, Frederickson’s (1987) research indicates that the ability of the teacher to establish trust and relate to the students is a key factor in effective teaching and student success. Findings from studies on immediacy suggest that teacher behaviors that use certain cues to increase teacher immediacy positively impact student learning, particularly in affective learning outcomes (Allen, 2006). Other research supporting the importance of effective teacher classroom communication for student success identified the relationship between perceived immediacy and level of enthusiasm or commitment to the learning task (Frymier, 1994; Christophel & Gorham, 1995).

Furthermore, Allen (2006) asserts that an instructor can increase these behaviors through training. Instructor training in PYD programs, however, varies widely and research on program effectiveness mainly focuses on program content and outcomes rather than the characteristics or contributions of effective teachers (Allen, Witt, & Wheelless, 2006) or other aspects of teacher characteristics that are integral to teacher effectiveness and program success (Allen, et al., 2006). Research on best practices for training prevention professionals is scant at best (Dusenbury, 1995), and even less research is available on effective training specifically for abstinence instructors.

Similarly, evaluations of and research on abstinence programs have occurred for over twenty years and addressed primarily program content and outcomes. Contrary to some earlier studies reporting the ineffectiveness of abstinence programs (Kirby, 2007), recent studies have shown positive effects on youth particularly when the programs are theory-based and rigorously evaluated (Jemmott, Jemmott, Fong, 2010; Lieberman & Su, 2012). Importantly, the difference in these findings may be due, in part, to a Type III error, which is correctly concluding the prevention program is ineffective for the wrong reason (Basch, 1985; Helitzer, 2000; Schwartz, 1999; Wade, 2001). Evaluations of instructors within abstinence education programs generally measured student intentions concerning abstinence and findings indicated varying degrees of teacher effectiveness (P. Birch, personal communication, 2010). Therefore, program effectiveness may be a function of teacher effectiveness. Researchers may have mistakenly incriminated curricula when poor teacher performance was the culprit (Tortu, 1989).

Since abstinence instructors present their programs in school classroom settings, a beginning point for exploring their personal characteristics and pedagogical styles began with considering the aspects of effective public school teachers. Stronge and Hindman (2006) synthesized a range of subjective measures of teacher effectiveness into six dimensions: prerequisites of effective teachers; the teacher as a person; classroom management and organization; planning and organizing for instruction; implementing instruction; and monitoring student progress and potential. For the study presented here, supervisors nominated abstinence educators, and nominations were based on criteria similar to those included in the six dimensions. Findings from this research suggest that effectively teaching abstinence education relates to the six dimensions. However, analysis of the nuances and details of their experiences suggested a re-grouping and extension of the six dimensions. Thus, the findings presented

support and extend Stronge and Hindman's (2006) work, offering a conceptual model of effective abstinence education instruction that includes three categories of relevant factors: who the teachers are, what they know and what they care about.

This paper begins with a review of the literature relevant to abstinence education and educators and then details the research methods utilized in this study, including an introduction to and analysis of individual cases. The next section presents findings gleaned from data analysis across cases, integrating the central themes with the six dimensions of effective teaching and finally proposes an abstract model of abstinence instructor effectiveness. The final section includes the discussion, conclusions and implications of this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A discussion of relevant literature begins by reviewing the social impacts of early sexual debut, exploring the sources of adolescent information on sexuality followed by a short history of sexuality education in the public arena and the controversy between abstinence and comprehensive sex education. The review then discusses the principles of related adolescent programs and different measures of teacher effectiveness. The final sections review research on teachers in fields closely associated with abstinence education such as sex education teachers and those who work with at-risk students.

Social Impact of Early Sexual Debut

Addressing the issue of teen sexual activity continues to be a focus of health reform, as it remains a key social problem in the United States. Although teenage pregnancy rates have fluctuated over the past 20 years and a general pattern of decline was noted (Martin et al., 2010), the United States still has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in developed countries (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). In 2009, nearly half (46%) of 15-19 year olds had sex at least once (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). On average, approximately 750,000 women aged 15-19 become pregnant yearly (Kost, Henshaw, & Carlin, 2010). In 2010, the National Center for Health Statistics reports 71% of females and 61% of males surveyed indicated they “agree” or “strongly agree” that “it is okay for an unmarried female to have a child” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010).

Survey responses from adolescents saying it is “okay” to have a child out of wedlock may indicate the lack of a more mature perspective of the possible consequences and social costs of early sexual activity. Although some pregnancies result in marriage, research indicates these marriages are highly likely to be rocky and short-lived (Dahl, 2010). In 2008, twenty-six percent

of pregnancies among 15–19-year-olds ended in abortion (Kost et al., 2010). The reasons teens give most frequently for having an abortion are concern about how having a baby would change their lives, inability to afford a baby now and feeling insufficiently mature to raise a child (Finer, Frohworth, Dauphinee, Singh, & Moore, 2005). Girls who choose to continue the pregnancy and become a single parent face challenges in completing education and lower income levels (Dahl, 2010). Although, educational opportunities for young mothers have improved as more teen mothers complete high school or obtain a GED, they are still less likely to go on to college than are women who delay childbearing (Hofferth, Reid, & Mott, 2001).

Sexual activity also exposes teenagers to multiple risk factors including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and possible mental and emotional stress. Nearly half (48%) of all new cases of STIs each year occur among 15-24 year olds although this population represents only one-quarter of those who are sexually active (Weinstock, Berman, & Cates, 2004).

Psychological consequences of teen sex are less documented but may include depression and suicide attempts (Hallfors, Waller, Ford, Halpern, & Brodish, 2004), loss of self-esteem, shaken trust, damaged relationships and negative effects on marriage (Lickona, 1994). Not all sexually active teens experience detrimental effects; however, the overall impact on society is costly.

Teen pregnancy also may have detrimental effects on the unborn child. Although ninety-three percent of teen mothers receive adequate pre-natal care, a baby born to a teen is more likely to have a lower birth weight than an infant of a 20 or 30 year-old mother (Martin et al., 2003). Federal, state, and local tax expenditures cover costs of needed health care, foster care, and incarceration expenses, all services that have been associated with children of teen mothers (Hoffman, 2006).

Sources of Adolescent Sexuality Information

Public education has experienced a shift in objectives through the years. One of the original goals was to develop an allegiance to a government. Later efforts were intended to develop morality and character in young people and presently, a main objective is to prepare a workforce (Brint, 2006). Brint suggests that while schooling for adolescents includes teaching dominant cultural norms, parents and other adults have the largest influence on the long-term plans of adolescents. Therefore, when considering the education of young people concerning sexuality and healthy relationships, parental instruction seems paramount. A review of relevant research, however, reveals that parents tend to avoid or have limited communication with their children about sexuality topics (Diiorio et al., 2003). Recent polls indicate that a majority of parents desire that schools take a major role in the process of educating adolescents about sexuality and relationship education (Sex Education in America, 2003). Accordingly, many schools across the United States offer some sort of sexuality or relationship curriculum that is age appropriate.

Other sources of information available to adolescents about their physical and emotional development include community-based organizations such as churches, synagogues or clubs. The programs offered through these venues often take a moral stance on teen sexual activity. The most available source, however, is through conversations with peers and through the use of media. With the introduction of mobile electronic devices, teens are increasingly turning to the resources found on the Internet and to cyber acquaintances in chat rooms to satisfy their inquisitiveness and to “try out” their emerging sexuality (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, & Tynes, 2004). The information about reproduction and sexuality that is conveyed by peers may be distorted and incorrect. Understanding that peers have the largest influence on immediate life

experiences and styles of expression of adolescents (Brint, 2006), teen behavior may be errantly influenced by inaccurate information gained from unreliable but believed sources.

Along with receiving possibly skewed knowledge from peers, the influence of TV, movies, music, and other social media on adolescents rarely depicts socially responsible examples (Brown et al., 2006). Research on the impact of modern technologies on adolescent behavior is in its infancy but cursorily suggests it has significant influence on their actions. Sources on the Internet can offer accurate information but deciphering factual and age appropriate information may be challenging for youth. Considering the context and available sources of information, teens have a high likelihood of developing uninformed, misinformed and confusing ideologies concerning healthy sexuality and relationship formation. Programs offered in public and private schools and in other community organizations seek to augment parental efforts in bringing accurate and age appropriate information to today's adolescents. These efforts, however, are often met with conflicting ideologies.

Evolution of Sexuality and Relationship Education

An examination of the emergence of formal instruction concerning sex education for adolescents in the United States reveals continuing debate between opposing philosophical stands (Brint, 2006; Lord, 2010). In the mid-twentieth century, some argued for exclusively home-based instruction while others advocated for public schools to have a role. During the 1970s and 1980s, concerns heightened as the rates of teenage pregnancy and later sexually transmitted disease increased. Public sentiment swayed more in favor of public school involvement of sexual education and a number of states enacted policies requiring or encouraging sex education programs.

As public schools began to incorporate sex education curricula, further conflicts arose concerning whose morals to teach (Brint, 2006). A conservative movement emerged calling for alternative instruction featuring abstinence programs. Legislative support followed these concerns and in 1981, the first grants were awarded under the Adolescent Family Life Act. Hundreds of pregnancy prevention, pregnancy and parenting teen programs were developed and implemented through public schools as well as through community-based organizations. Support for programs addressing teen sex education and behavior received further backing in 1996 when legislation for welfare reform included continued authorization for these programs. Later, Title V of the Social Security Act offered \$50 million annually to states for such programs and, in 2000, the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) program provided major funding to abstinence-based programs. CBAE funding supported programs serving youth and parents, many who are included in the 1.5 million members of the National Abstinence Education Association (National Abstinence Education Association, 2010). Continued controversy over program effectiveness favored comprehensive sex education and CBAE funding ended in September 2010 when it was not renewed by legislation (Federal Grants Wire). While many CBAE funded programs ended, other abstinence-based programs with independent funding continued.

In the recent past, federal funds were awarded to both comprehensive sex and abstinence-based programs although each program had distinct criteria to meet in order to receive funding. Several variant points are the acknowledgment of teens as sexual beings, teaching safe sex techniques, and taking a moral position. The terms “risk avoidance” and “risk reduction” emerged to clarify the philosophical base of each approach. “Risk avoidance” refers to curriculum emphasizing abstinence until marriage and strong character development. “Risk reduction” provides skills for abstinence as well as instruction on condom and other

contraceptive use. Schools generally give parents and students an “opt out” option of whether to attend instructional classes of either persuasion. Moral, cultural, as well as public health viewpoints inform particular allegiances to one curriculum or the other (Santelli et al., 2006). Further, scientific research has only fueled the debate by providing mixed support for the effectiveness of each curriculum type (Markham et al., 2012).

A wave of studies over the past decade has challenged the effectiveness of abstinence programs arguing that student sexual behavior and rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease are not affected positively by participation in the programs and in some cases, may even increase negative behaviors and outcomes (Santelli et al., 2006). Still, other more recent research points to the effectiveness of theory-driven abstinence programs, which tend to have more rigorous and substantive curricula. In a two-year study of 86 community-based organizations, Jemmott found nearly 10% fewer students in theory-driven abstinence-only programs than control group students reported having coitus in the last three months. (Jemmott et al., 2010). And most recently, a study of over 1,100 Georgia students who completed an abstinence program found they were 1.5 times more likely to delay sex than a control group (Lieberman & Su, 2012). As more rigorous and specialized data collection methods are utilized, more comparable findings may emerge and inform the debate over best practices in sexuality education.

While the political and scientific debates rage, public opinion also appears to reflect inconsistent desires of parents to offer one curriculum over another or even a combination of curricula, which is termed “abstinence-plus.” A 2001 nationwide poll of parents of middle and high school students indicated that instruction including abstinence as well as information about contraception is not a mixed message and is desirable (Dallard, 2001). In addition, a more liberal

cultural climate advocates for the normalcy of teenage sexual activity and for a suitable comprehensive sex curriculum, which allows for the teaching of birth control and other safe sex techniques (Santelli et al., 2006). Another national poll of over 1700 parents of adolescents, however, indicates parents believe that teens should not become sexually active (National Public Radio, 2004). Weed argues that a mixed approach to course content and focus poses additional problems and concerns by diluting the strong abstinence message, by opposing the wishes of most parents, by withholding accurate information concerning condom use limitations, and by presenting explicit information to teens that is objectionable to parents (Domestic Abstinence-Only Programs: Assessing the Evidence, 2008). The common goal of both camps, however, is advocating for the best teen outcomes whether the path is risk avoidance through abstinence education or risk reduction through comprehensive sex education.

Evaluations of sex and abstinence education programs generally analyze data pertaining to behavioral changes as outcomes such as delay of sexual initiation or abstinence intentions, condom use, rates of teen pregnancy, or cases of sexually transmitted disease (Smith, Steen, Spaulding-Givens, & Schwendinger, 2003). Exact comparisons of findings, however, are hindered by differences in definitions of abstinence, measurement instruments and research design. In a 2008 hearing before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, testimony provided arguments that measurement and research design caused errant conclusions on the effectiveness of comprehensive sex programs and the ineffectiveness of abstinence programs (Domestic Abstinence-Only Programs: Assessing the Evidence, 2008). The recommendation from this testimony was continuance and support of the programs that protect teens from negative consequences of teen sexual activity. Data was offered substantiating the desires of parents for programs that help teens avoid sexual activity as well as

expressing the regrets most sexually active teens felt. The recommendations, however, were unheeded as funding was drastically reduced for abstinence programs in 2010. Federal funding for comprehensive sex education programs remains while debates continue at the federal level as well as in many states for funding of abstinence-only programs.

Principles of Effective Prevention Programs

Abstinence education is considered a “risk avoidance” or prevention program and shares some commonalities with other programs seeking to positively influence adolescent behavior. In 2003, a group of seven researchers from across the country conducted a meta-analysis that examined 252 characteristics of effective prevention programs identified from 35 review articles (Nation et al., 2003). Among the prevention programs included in the review were those addressing risky sexual behavior. For inclusion in the review, key characteristics signifying successful programs were determined as follows:

- The provision of intense individualized attention
- The intervention in several domains of the child’s life
- Early identification of and intervention in the development of problem behaviors
- Training in social skills
- Engagement of peers and parents in the intervention (Nation et al., 2003)

Three broad categories of commonalities were identified from the reviews and are listed in Table 1. Many of the details of each category are directly related to the performance of the instructor.

(Table 1 about here)

In particular, these findings indicate that effective prevention programs that focus on unwanted pregnancies provided information and awareness, promoted skill development,

provided reproductive health services and matched content with developmental stage. All prevention program implementation was boosted when staff members exhibited sensitivity and competence as well as received sufficient training, support and supervision. It was also noted that the effectiveness of sufficiently competent staff members might be marginalized by high turnover rates, low morale, or a lack of “buy-in” to the program objectives.

Measuring Teacher Effectiveness

Public schools. Examining measures used to evaluate public school teacher effectiveness is instructive in forming a basis for determining effectiveness of instructors in other settings. Among the variables that affect school improvement and student achievement, few have been as constant as the influence of the teacher. As early as 1925, Kohnstamm claimed the personality of the teacher had the greatest influence on a pupil (Kohnstamm, Groenewegen, & de Graaff, 1925). In recent times Stronge and Hindman (2003, p. 48) reiterate this stance claiming, “The single most school-based factor (in student success) is the teacher.” The teacher is no less instrumental in program success of value-based education (Mellanby, Newcombe, Rees, & Tripp, 2001; Buston, Wight, & Scott, 2001). Little consensus, however, exists when attempting to define or measure an “effective” teacher or a “good” teacher in any setting.

Efforts to design definitive ways to measure the effectiveness of teachers have been related to a measure of student achievements or outcomes, performance ratings from supervisors, as well as comments from students, administrators, and others (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). For example, using a measure of student achievements or outcomes is illustrated in a study where the impact of teacher involvement of 14 teachers on 144 students predicted student motivation across the school year. Teachers who supported student autonomy and offered optimal structure were found most effective (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). A study in San Diego of over 16,000

students and over 1,000 teachers found scores in math and reading increased incrementally with one standard deviation change in teacher quality. Teacher quality was defined in terms of “value-added” to test scores (Koedel & Betts, 2007).

The more subjective measures of using performance ratings and comments, however, seem to be the most commonly used methods of gauging teacher effectiveness. Ratings of qualities such as being ideal, analytical, dutiful, competent, expert, reflective, or respected have been used (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001). Other ratings include prior academic performance, communication skills, creativity, professionalism and pedagogical knowledge (Polk, 2006). A 1993 survey of 196 Teachers of the Year identified common traits of winners as caring about others, hard work, organizational ability, ability to get things done, risk taking and common sense (Jensen & Templeton, 1993). Examining a variety of rating systems to determine good teachers, Stronge and Hindman (2003) synthesized the dimensions into six broad domains:

- 1) Prerequisites of effective teachers
- 2) The teacher as a person
- 3) Classroom management and organization
- 4) Planning and organizing for instruction
- 5) Implementing instruction
- 6) Monitoring student progress and potential.

Although this comprehensive list of dimensions is useful in considering the content component of educational programs, it underrates the affective characteristics inherent in value-based education. One qualitative study of “uncommonly good teachers of at-risk students” presents a description of public school teachers who are dedicated to intentionally instilling values in students. These teachers’ qualities are discussed in terms of having balance with a

strong academic program and a true student-centered approach. The teachers in the study tended to lend directness, support and communicativeness with students on an academic level as well as follow through on matters with students' personal lives (Peterson, Bennet, & Sherman, 1991). Examining instructors of abstinence education can draw from a combination of measures used with public school teachers.

Sexuality education. Similar to gauging effective public school teachers in the United States, many studies of sex educators depend on subjective measures often using qualitative methods. The sexuality education programs studied involved teachers using comprehensive sex education curricula rather than abstinence programs. Evaluations of sex educators, which mainly occurred outside the United States, have been based on interviews, field notes, focus groups and observations of students and teachers. To illustrate, a Dutch study of 20 teachers used Shulman's (Timmerman, 2009) notion of pedagogical content knowledge in which in-depth interviews with teachers were used to assess teacher strategies and style and also teacher knowledge of student conceptions and learning difficulties. In a study in New Zealand in which more than 1100 students completed questionnaires and participated in focus groups asking how the sexuality education received so far could be improved, much of the research findings focused on the role of the teacher (Allen, 2009). Field notes and in-depth interviews with 58 teachers in 25 schools in Scotland provided data that addressed delivery of sex education and the personal values of teachers (Buston et al., 2001). In the United Kingdom, Kehily used participant observation, group discussion and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers to discover the sexuality of sex educators and how it relates to instruction and policy (Kehily, 2002). Findings from these studies are discussed later but the general conclusion suggests effective sexuality

education is achieved when the instructor has a sufficient knowledge base, is comfortable with the content and is relatable.

Assessments using qualitative methods for studies of sex educators differ somewhat from the research methods used to evaluate abstinence educators. Although no academic studies on the characteristics of abstinence instructors were located, abstinence programs funded by federal money were mandated to provide annual program assessments that included an evaluation of student outcomes that were oftentimes associated with particular teachers. Pre and post surveys were administered to students to gauge attitudes toward sexual intentions and many included a measure of sexual initiation over 3, 6 and 12 months. Survey data were commonly analyzed with structural equation modeling resulting in path analysis to determine effect size. Other types of evaluations that abstinence instructors may undergo are periodic observations and evaluations by a direct supervisor, classroom teacher evaluations after a presentation is complete and subjective student comments and co-presenter evaluations. The formal research findings indicate *that* an abstinence teacher was effective but not *how* a teacher achieved that level of effectiveness.

Characteristics of Agents of Delivery

Regardless of the methods used to assess effective teachers, some commonalities have been identified. Effective teachers of at-risk students integrate similar methodological traits as general public school teachers, but they tend to add a more relational dimension to their teaching style. The personality of the teacher in terms of caring, bringing meaning into student relationships, respecting students, and having high expectations and trust in students to find solutions are exemplary of these teachers (Calabrese, Goodvin, & Niles, 2005). They also use logical consequences and direct students to learn appropriate behaviors as well as make learning relevant (Calabrese et al., 2005).

Just as superior teachers can assist students to achieve greater success, non-supportive teachers can have the opposite effect. In a school with at-risk students, teachers who exhibited non-support to students saw an increase in blaming and racism, bureaucratic rigidity, co-dependency, inflexibility and frustration (Calabrese et al., 2005). The presence of these traits can negatively affect school success and behavior.

While no academic research on the traits of effective abstinence instructors was located, studies have focused on agents of delivery in other programs directed toward positive adolescent development. School-based interventions as well as community-based programs have utilized a variety of agents of delivery for sex education programs as have substance abuse programs. Instructors include those trained in the health professions, public school teachers, researchers, and peers (Poobalan et al., 2009). School-based interventions were most likely to employ classroom teachers. A New Zealand study examined thirty reviews of programs. Of the sex education programs in the review, public school classroom teachers were often perceived as incompetent and tended to rush through the sex education curriculum (Poobalan et al., 2009). School-based teachers were also conceptualized as being inadequate, moralistic, embarrassed, ill prepared, and unable to control undesirable student behavior (Allen, 2009).

In contrast, other arguments support using classroom teachers to teach sex education because of the close daily contact of classroom teachers with students. This time may allow teachers to form relationships with students that may impact student perceptions that high-risk behaviors are incongruent with their desired lifestyle (McNeal, Hansen, Harrington, & Giles, 2004). Additionally professionally trained teachers exhibit expert teaching skills and have the ability to incorporate concepts more completely (McNeal et al., 2004). Positive relationships with teachers may also provide students with a trusted adult in whom to confide (Allen, 2009). In

the All Stars substance-abuse program, teachers were more effective than specialists as they were better able to affect the related mediating variables (McNeal et al., 2004).

Peer-led sexuality education was preferred in a number of studies when the comparison was made with adult-led programs (Buston et al., 2001; Hilton, 2003). Having an instructor of a similar age and status allowed the transmission of information in a way that was more interesting and realistic to adolescents (Allen, 2009). Using peer-led instructors, however, raised concerns of confidentiality and consequently their desirability as teachers (Allen, 2009). Nonetheless, peer-led instruction was suggested in several studies to be more effective than adult facilitators (Allen, 2009; Poobalan et al., 2009). These studies were based mainly on student perceptions and subjective measures.

After peer-instructors and teachers, one study suggested the third ranked “best” sexual educators were public health nurses (Allen, 2009). Along with specialists and others, these educators may have less of an impact on adolescents due to the part-time and thus limited contact they have with students (McNeal et al., 2004). Classroom teachers expressed concerns with external instructors coming into the classroom. They were leery of visitors with unproven experience working with students and dealing with sensitive and possibly controversial topics (Buckley & White, 2007). Part-time teachers may also have other responsibilities that may hinder their ability to keep their curriculum current (Edmundson, Gallon, & Porter, 2007). Other research, however, suggests that students have no preference whether their instructor is known or unknown to them (Allen, 2009), and many New Zealand students actually preferred an educator from outside the classroom (Allen, 2005). Few studies have examined a program’s impact after being implemented by two different instructors (Gottfredson & Wilson, 2003). Abstinence education programs often employ full-time staff to deliver the curriculum. However, they might

be categorized as part-time in the classroom as the program dosage allows for one session per day over a period of multiple days. It is common for an instructor to visit the same school multiple years and have repeat students from year to year. This continuity yields a familiarity with the students and may impact teacher effectiveness.

Gender and age of the teacher also affect sex education experiences. Kehily (2002) suggests a teacher's gendered location impacts the pedagogical approach used in sex education classrooms. Classes with same gender teacher and students may impact the tone of classroom discussions (Ashley, 2003). Boys' education advocates suggest that lack of male teachers may contribute to negative responses, disruptive behavior and disinterest in education (Measor, Tiffin, & Miller, 2000). One study included student recommendations that sex education teachers have more control in the classroom when dealing with immature, thoughtless, and disruptive behaviors (Allen, 2005). Allen found female students preferred teachers rather than peer instructors or other professionals as instructors and that health and physical education teachers generally taught sexuality education, but no specification was made about the gender of the teacher (Allen, 2009). Allen's study suggested older sex education teachers were less interested in teaching the subject or in being involved in training and young people felt instructors closer to their age made the best educators (Allen, 2009). The age, gender and ethnicities of abstinence education instructors are extremely varied. Classroom presentations are often delivered to mixed gender classes and in some instances, single gender. When a class is comprised of a single gender, generally the same gender instructor presents.

Along with gender and age, a number of studies have suggested that the personality of the teacher as well as past experiences impact the student perception of sex education teacher. Personality traits that are valued by students include sensitivity and competence (Nation et al.,

2003), openness and candidness, congeniality and empathy (Timmerman, 2009), and being willing to comfortably talk about anything (Allen, 2005). Teachers who are comfortable with the sensitive nature of sex education as well as their own sexuality also contribute to having success with students (Alldred, David, & Smith, 2003). Interestingly, the teacher's past experience as a pupil (Timmerman, 2009) and life history impacts pedagogical approach (Kehily, 2002). For sexuality educators, the manner in which the instructor was taught about sexual matters and the influence of their mothers may influence teaching style (Timmerman, 2009). Students as well valued the personal experiences of teachers. Some students ranked personal experiences of the teacher as more valuable than knowledge because they added more credibility (Allen, 2009).

Students valued a level of professionalism of sexuality teachers. Three rationales for choosing an instructor as "best" emerged from New Zealand focus groups: "being knowledgeable," "able to relate to young people," and "professionalism" (Allen, 2009). A part of professionalism included being affectively neutral. Likewise in Scotland, current educational theory and practice advocates the affective neutrality of teacher presentations of sexual education (Buston et al., 2001). In keeping affective neutrality, teachers with strong opinions and values about moral questions, such as pre-marital sex and abortion, are forced to make professional decisions concerning how much of their personal views will emerge in the presentation of material (Buston et al., 2001). Some teachers are better at presenting neutrality in the classroom than others (Buston et al., 2001). In contrast, abstinence instruction is moral by design and demands that instructors deliver a straightforward message that abstinence until marriage is the best choice for healthy teenage development. Instructors are required to refrain from sharing personal religious beliefs but freely share a moralistic view of sexuality and character building.

Pedagogical Styles of Agents of Delivery

Agents of delivery in sexuality education in countries outside the United States often blend their personal and professional experiences with their content knowledge to enrich their classroom instruction. Teachers who were asked to teach sexuality education and had more classroom experience were better able to tailor their style and strategies to meet student needs (Timmerman, 2009). Experienced teachers were better able to gauge and address students' conceptions as well as deal with any learning difficulties present in their students (Timmerman, 2009). Dutch teachers were able to adapt teaching strategies and styles based on perceived student developmental stages, needs, and questions on sexual development although they found difficulty in relating appropriate lesson materials to the variety of student developmental stages (Timmerman, 2009). Positive outcomes, however, were more likely when the message presented was matched to the developmental stage of the participants (Nation et al., 2003). Teachers also took into account their present relationships with their pupils in shaping their approach to sex education (Timmerman, 2009).

Generally sex education teaching styles are categorized as open, interactive and informal or distant and formal. Teaching style has been associated with personality styles, such that open teaching style, typically corresponds with an open personality style while distant, business-like teaching style corresponds with that type of personality (Timmerman, 2009). An informal teaching style facilitates a more relaxed classroom atmosphere for sexuality education, encouraging students to be more candid with their questions and comments (Allen, 2005). In a Dutch study, 28 teachers were divided about evenly between open, distant, and a combination of the two styles.

When teachers have no strict curriculum to follow, teacher prerogative determines content order and teaching techniques used. Some teachers choose to begin with cognitive factual knowledge while others begin with what they feel is most salient to student curiosity, or socio-emotional and relational aspects. In her study of Dutch teachers, Timmerman (2009) indicated that teachers of both genders preferred teaching cognitive rather than affective content first. Teachers assessed beginning knowledge of students by administering surveys and then used methods such as taking improvised questions from the students, using “Dear Abbey” type questions to initiate class content or forming “expert” panels of students who make classroom presentations. Also, humor was interjected into the first lesson to dispel the tension often felt by students over the sensitive topic (Timmerman, 2009). Students in Britain and Australia indicated that interactive classroom techniques such as group discussions and personal stories were effective (Strange, Oakley, & Forrest, 2003).

Not only were teacher characteristics relevant in student evaluations, the message portrayed impacted how the students perceived the teacher. In drug abuse programs, it was found that even if the instructor was credible, a message that was poorly designed likely had no intended effect or even had a negative effect (Stephens et al., 2009). For example, some anti-drug campaign public service announcements were viewed as negative by teenagers because the information portrayed contradicted their perceptions and understanding of drug use danger (Crano & Burgoon, 2002). This negative perception of the antidrug campaign resulted in poorly evaluated instruction regardless of the competence of the instructor. Repetitive and scientific program content bored New Zealand students. They repeatedly called attention to the underestimation of what they already knew and the desire for more detail in issues besides sexually transmitted diseases (Allen, 2005). They also wanted more breadth of topics in all parts

of sexuality. Dutch students noted that sex education teachers focused more closely on the technical and biological aspects of sexuality rather than socio-emotional aspects (Timmerman, 2009). And in the abstinence field, Santelli (2006) found a poor abstinence message may have a negative effect on sexual behavior.

Regardless of the identity and personality of the instructor, students valued a heightened level of teacher training and expertise (Poobalan et al., 2009). In the academic study of persuasive communication, Wilson and Sherrell's (1993) meta-analyses found that source expertise exceeds trustworthiness, ideological similarity, credibility, and physical attractiveness in audience preference (Stephens et al., 2009). Sex education, character education, and prevention programs all emphasize the importance of teacher development in achieving the best program outcomes (Allen, 2005; Nation et al., 2003). Training increased the likelihood of a teacher having accurate, relational, and empathetic responses to young people's concerns in a New Zealand study (Allen, 2009). Teachers also acknowledged the importance of receiving training as it added to their comfort level in delivering sex education curriculum. However, a common response to the actual experience of teaching sex education was to feel discomfort (Buston et al., 2001).

Public school teachers have mandated licensing procedures and ongoing teacher development. Training for other adolescent programs, however, appears to be non-regulated and unique to each organization or school. Examples of training disparity include an unwanted pregnancy prevention program in which training time ranges from six hours to three days (Kirby, 1997), and in some Life Skills Training substance abuse programs, training is presented by a commercial enterprise (Vicary et al., 2006). One program challenge is to retain trained and effective teachers as training quality can be limited by high turnover rates, morale issues, and

dedication to the program (U.S. Department of Justice, 1995). Training for abstinence education professionals often includes multiple day classes, observations of experienced instructors, practicing in mock classrooms and attending annual conferences.

Table 2 recaps the types of agents of delivery reviewed, personal characteristics of sex education teachers considered and effective pedagogical styles.

(Table 2 about here)

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Adolescent developmental issues facing today's youth include substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, mental health problems, family problems, economic disadvantages, unemployment, non-engagement, and unhealthy lifestyles (Shek, 2006). One category of unhealthy lifestyles challenging teens is early sexual initiation, which can compound a number of the other developmental and social issues. One of the objectives of abstinence education is to present adolescents with accurate information about how early sexual initiation may affect their social, psychological and physical health. It also attempts to arm adolescents who desire abstinence with skills to remain so or to re-commit to abstinence until marriage. One purpose of this study is to begin to identify the personal characteristics and traits of effective abstinence instructors. This information would be useful for better understanding effective teaching in relation to this instructional context as well as for practical uses related to recruitment and training of teachers who can more successfully implement prevention programs and influence teens to develop risk avoidance behaviors.

A number of components contribute to program effectiveness. One of the most important is that of agent of delivery. Research on the design of training programs for positive youth development, however, indicates gaps in data concerning affective characteristics of effective teachers and how to more fully develop these less tangible but critical instructor traits. Shek (2008) suggests training may increase a teacher's personal motivation as well as the ability to be more relational and interactive, thus increasing overall program effectiveness.

Using qualitative methods allows an exploration of the data to discover patterns and themes from the perspective of the instructor and have been used in other similar studies. Qualitative methods have yielded similar data and analysis when studying sex education in New

Zealand (Allen, 2009). For example, Allen found students valued the qualities rather than the identity of the teacher. Calabrese et al. (2005) used embedded case studies to identify attitudes and traits of teachers who work with at-risk students and identified six supportive processes and four non-supportive processes through interviews of eight professionals. Fifty-eight sex educators in Scotland were interviewed to represent teachers' views and experiences from their perspectives (Buston & Wight, 2001). Qualitative research methods are a valid and viable instrument for studying effective abstinence instructors also.

Sample

Eleven abstinence education professionals were interviewed. Professionals from this field were chosen because program evaluations were regularly performed and program supervisors as well as classroom teachers where the programs were delivered regularly conducted teacher evaluations. The evaluations contained components similar to Stronge and Hindman's (2006) six dimensions of effective teaching. Participants were first solicited through an advertisement in the National Abstinence Education Association newsletter asking for nominations from agency executives for instructors who consistently showed "superior teaching and positive student outcomes." Other nominations were received from The Institute of Research and Evaluation (IRE), a program evaluation firm specializing in analysis of programs receiving CBAE funds. Nominations from IRE were based on effect size of teacher scores from pre and post student surveys on abstinence intentions.

One interview was held with each of the eight instructors and one interview was held with each of three program directors. One of the eight teachers was also an administrator and his interview reflected responses from both viewpoints. In order to have a relative comparison of levels of teaching effectiveness, six of the eight teachers invited to participate in the study were

chosen based on their nomination as a “super” teacher. Two of the participating program administrators were then asked to provide the name of another instructor they would deem a “good” instructor but not necessarily the best. Five of the eight interviewees are male, 6 are Caucasian, one is African American, and one is a Pacific Islander. The age range of the eight teachers is from 25 to 50. The average age of the six “super” teachers is 37 years of age and the average age of the two “good” teachers is 34 years old. All eight teachers are married and their educational levels span from “a little college” to a master’s degree with no discernible pattern associated with teachers in the “super” category. The six instructors who are deemed the best have taught in an abstinence education program from 2.5 years to 10 years and the two “good” teachers have taught 3 years and 6 years. On average the “super” teachers were in their 7th year of teaching. Five of the instructors were currently employed in the abstinence education field.

Four administrators shared their insights about the characteristics of the most effective abstinence instructors. The administrators are located in the Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and Pacific Northwest regions of the United States. One administrator was also interviewed as an instructor. Two administrators have teachers who were interviewed for this research. Two had no teacher included. The administrators had a total of 77 years’ experience of either teaching, training instructors or directing abstinence programs and had collectively evaluated over 500 teachers in items such as how well the teachers knew the curriculum, how they presented it, their classroom persona, if they were prompt and prepared. Individually, the administrators’ years of experience are 31, 25, 13 and 8.

In addition to demographic information, background details of teachers’ experiences prior to becoming abstinence education teachers are important to consider as they may affect relational aspects of the teacher-student dyad. Feeling concern for teens and comfort with the

topic of sexuality requires personal teacher traits that facilitate candidness, kindheartedness and decorum in accordance with the particular grade level to which they are presenting at the time. The teachers presented age-appropriate curriculum to grades ranging from 5-12 with either mixed or single gender classes. The teachers, who were located in South Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio, Arizona and Alaska, used five different curricula between them: Heritage Keepers, Choosing the Best, WAIT Training, Let's Talk, and Responsible Social Values. The curricula dosages varied from 4 or 5 days to two weeks and generally lasted for one class period with classes occurring throughout the school day. Five of the instructors spoke openly about their involvement in religion, being reared in a religious home or volunteering with religious-oriented youth activities such as being a mentor at a church or a youth pastor. When asked about other professions or experience working with youth, all of the teachers had some other experience whether with a religious organization, teaching or substitute teaching in a public or private school system, as an athletic coach or volunteering with another related program. Two of the teachers had worked in the health field, which they felt gave them some confidence in speaking about medical topics. Two teachers had worked at multiple abstinence programs.

Directors of abstinence programs and leaders of national offices were wary of my requests and invitations to be involved with this research project. A heated debate exists in the United States between proponents of comprehensive sex education and those supporting abstinence education in public schools. Directors were concerned about how the findings from this research would be utilized and interpreted as they felt past attention to their programs had resulted in biased and slanted reporting. They were particularly protective of their teachers and visited with me to ensure that this study was neutral and unbiased, and the results would be disseminated in a professional manner.

Study Design

Federal funding for abstinence programs was drastically cut over the past two years, which resulted in many abstinence programs being reduced or ended. Those program directors surviving the cuts that I was able to contact and invite to participate were extremely supportive and accommodating and hopeful that this research may aid in the effectiveness and subsequent support of their programs. They allowed their presently employed teachers to be interviewed during work hours and the other teachers who were no longer employed in the field were pleased to be able to contribute to the advancement of knowledge concerning the teaching area to which they had devoted much of their energies.

In order to formulate a more complete data analysis that included a visual component, I conducted seven of the teacher interviews utilizing the Internet tool, Skype, which allowed me to observe and electronically record facial expressions and physical demeanor alongside their language and intonations. One teacher did not have access to Skype and the interview was conducted by telephone and electronically recorded. Four administrators were interviewed, two by phone and two using Skype. One of the administrators is also included as one of the teacher interviews as he performed both roles. Interview times ranged from one to two hours and were conducted and transcribed between October 2011 and February 2012.

Questions for the interview schedule were based on the work of Stronge and Hindman (2003), who developed six dimensions of effective teaching:

- Prerequisites of effective teachers
- The teacher as a person
- Classroom management and organization
- Planning and organizing for instruction

- Implementing instruction
- Monitoring student progress and potential

Supplemental questions were formulated from previous studies of sex education instructors and were incorporated into these six categories. Specifically added were questions pertaining to the participant's own experience in learning about sexuality and how their own choices about sexuality affected their teaching quality. I also spoke with a board member of the National Abstinence Education Association, which prompted the addition of questions pertaining to curriculum fidelity. The interview schedule was presented to an experienced public school teacher for review (See Appendix A). Participants' responses to the interview questions reflected many common personal traits, elements of teaching style and concerns about interacting with and presenting abstinence curriculum to adolescents. Responses varied with demographics, personality, training, and experiences while collectively suggesting a robust set of characteristics.

Due to the drastic federal funding cuts to abstinence education programs, identifying and locating participants for this study required a variety of methods. Initially in 2010, a notice was included in the National Abstinence Education Association newsletter asking for nominations from community, private, and school programs that offer abstinence education to adolescents to recommend any instructors who have consistently shown superior teaching and positive student outcomes. Seventeen responses were received from the national invitation. Nine actual participants resulted from this effort. The remaining eight respondents could not be reached or decided not to participate after receiving the study details. The Institute of Research and Evaluation in Taylorsville, Utah, evaluated abstinence education programs and instructors for over 20 years and provided a list of 14 instructors to invite to be a part of my study. Due to funding cuts, many of the programs ended and staff members could not be reached. Of those

reached, only one participant responded and was interviewed. The final participant was the singular positive response from a recommended list of effective programs and evaluators, which was solicited from the former head of the federal Community-based Abstinence Education grant program. Of the final eleven participants, three are program administrators, one is an administrator as well as a teacher and seven are presently or have recently been full-time instructors.

My communication with program directors asked for participants whose teaching effectiveness was well above average or was in a range that might be considered “the very best.” I also asked the program directors to supply the name of an additional teacher to be interviewed who was a good teacher but not in the “best” category. Having teachers in both these ranges gave me a point of reference when analyzing the data. Two program directors permitted “good” teachers in their programs to be interviewed. I did not know the identities of the “good” or the “best” teachers in these two programs prior to the interviews and data analysis.

This research was conducted using standard ethical considerations (Berg 2001; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, Lofland, 2006). Prior to research initiation, IRB approval and informed consent from participants was obtained (see Appendix B). Individual names of participants were concealed with pseudonyms assigned in all written research records. Specific identifying records are kept in strictest confidence and will be available only in instances of legitimate inquiry for further unbiased research and with the written consent of the participant. Other demographic information presented in this thesis may reveal clues to their identities. Each participant, however, expressed their willingness to further contribute to this body of knowledge and their identities will be kept as confidential as possible.

The topic of abstinence education tends to be polarizing and the participants sought and received confirmation of the positive intent of the study as well as the constructive plans for use of the findings. Allowing participants to understand my research was not intended to attack the philosophical base of abstinence education and giving them that assurance allowed more forthrightness and transparency in their responses.

The interview schedule was framed and phrased with non-leading questions. Several interviewees commented on the neutrality of the interview questions and methods. I was continually on alert to any researcher bias during the interviews and the analysis process, avoiding as much as possible. Before the interview convened, I informed the interviewees of sensitive questions concerning their own experiences with sexuality and that I only expected responses in keeping with their comfort levels. Due to the inherent subject matter of abstinence education, the participants were extremely comfortable sharing information about many pertinent aspects of their lives while maintaining decorum and appropriateness. The character and essence of their responses is assumed to be authentic (Patton, 2002).

This research was prompted from a desire to identify personal characteristics and pedagogical styles of effective abstinence education instructors to aid in developing better training methods. By identifying elements common to superior abstinence instructors, programs may recruit teachers with identified effective characteristics and develop training methods to enhance their level of effectiveness. Conclusions may provide strategies for others to replicate to more effectively convey their individual prevention program messages. Additionally, the National Abstinence Education Association is considering a national certification program for instructors and will receive a copy of my analysis.

Research Process

The initiation of this research began with conversations as an employee of an abstinence education program evaluation firm in 2010. Through more than 20 years of research done by this firm, individual teachers were identified as being far superior than other teachers in their program in achieving positive student outcomes as exhibited through a process of statistical analysis. A question was posed about why these teachers fared so much better than others when training, curriculum and administrative support were constant within a program. It was determined that teacher insights into their own characteristics and teaching styles would provide more valuable perspectives on expressions of their personal motivations, values and identity than could merely be subjectively interpreted through observations.

The first attempt at locating participants was through an announcement in the National Abstinence Education Association newsletter inviting administrators to nominate instructors. I received 20 responses but between the time of the initial invitation and the beginning of data collection, federal funding ended which resulted in a large percentage of programs ending. Contacting many of the nominated instructors from the programs became difficult as websites and email addresses became obsolete. Some program directors and teachers were finally reached through my persistent use of social media. Other participants were gathered from referrals from The Institute of Research and Evaluation.

My initial contact with program directors was met with skepticism as some previous outside attention to abstinence education had been used to undermine the basic philosophy of the program. After providing convincing evidence of the validity of my research project, the directors and instructors were anxious to participate. I scheduled interviews at times convenient

to the participants when they could access computer equipment with a webcam. Two interviews were held over the telephone.

The interview questions were designed to engage the participants in self-reflection and evaluation of their own experiences. An abbreviated interview schedule was sent to each participant prior to the appointment with an expanded version utilized during the interview. The semi-structured nature of the questions allowed responses on similar topics from each participant with hopes to glean commonalities in each of the six interview subject areas. As the first and subsequent interviews occurred, the questions were pared down to focus on the areas that emerged as most salient to my research question.

Those interviewed for this study exhibited candidness and intensity concerning their feelings for the subject matter, for their personal goals in teaching abstinence education and for their feelings toward adolescents. Many of the questions yielded responses full of energy, passion, compassion, conviction and animation. The enthusiasm of the respondents resulted in lengthy and in-depth answers to the semi-structured interview questions. A relaxed tone permeated the interviews with much laughter and natural interactions occurring between the participants and myself. Their eager responses were free and thoughtful although a number of questions caused reflection and introspection as the participants had seldom considered some of the implications.

The instructors somewhat considered their role in the classroom as that of public speaker and entertainer. My interviews with each of them reflected dynamic personality traits that I would consider compelling and sincere, although they differed greatly from one another.

Data Analysis

For this research, I utilize the framework of teacher immediacy, which posits that the teacher can utilize certain cues and behaviors to reduce perceived physical or psychological distance with students and thereby influence student learning and other classroom outcomes (Mehrbian, 1969, 1981). Effectively presenting positive youth development curricula to adolescents requires the teacher to possess a level of relatability, believability and honesty, all of which may impact teacher immediacy. Using the framework of teacher immediacy in posing interview questions and analyzing responses allowed for the association of identified teacher characteristics, styles and classroom awareness with how teachers sense they are perceived by students. More fully understanding this dynamic from the teacher's perspective may inform methods to increase a teacher's ability to be effective.

I consider the responses of select teachers and administrators of abstinence education programs to develop a description of what each teacher is like as an individual, what training and experiences they have had, and what they care about. Reflecting on their replies allows for an investigation of commonalities of their lives and pedagogical styles, which have resulted in the participants being deemed superior abstinence educators.

Researchers use mental strategies or analytic tools when coding words or observations as part of the research. Taking raw data and raising it to a conceptual level requires thinking strategies that can stimulate the analytic process in making sense of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The use of coding requires a researcher to utilize such analytic tools as questioning and making comparisons. Questioning the data serves to guide researchers to find out what the data may be indicating; to see process, to explore variation and make connections; to provide direction and development of theoretical structure; and to guide interviews, observations,

document gathering, and analysis. Ongoing comparisons of the data as well as theoretical comparisons, when necessary, provided a further analytic tool for greater comprehension of the data. These basic components are the mainstay of analysis which may augment other analytic tools such as considering various meanings of words, flip-flopping concepts for unique perspectives, recalling applicable personal experiences, being aware of personal biases, examining language in a unique manner, and considering emotions, “time” related words and metaphors and similes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Recalling these analytic tools as I began coding the data enabled me to more intelligently and appropriately assign codes.

The data used in this study included interview transcripts from abstinence education instructors and supervisors. I strategically interacted with the data throughout the interviews, making notes and varying the interview questions to reflect salient points that emerged from participants’ responses. Using semi-structured interview questions automatically organized responses into similar categories based on Stronge and Hindman’s (2003) six dimensions of teaching. There was a single coder for this analysis. Coding the interview data according to the initial categories and making notes of other possible emerging themes, I applied rigorous analytical methods and identified the emergent themes that resulted from the initial coding of each case. The interview data was then re-coded using the second emergent themes. Subsequently, an analysis of each individual case was constructed from the second coding. Each individual case was again coded using the broader inter-related themes in order to identify commonalities across all instructor cases. The data from the administrator interviews was then coded using the same final coding as the individual cases. Further pondering and analysis of the themes reduced the data to meaningful concepts and to the formulation of an abstract model of teaching effectiveness (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Validation of the analysis of

the teacher interviews was obtained by allowing the participants to read and comment on how well the narrative captured the details and the essence of their interviews (Creswell, 2007), which resulted in a few edits. The final phase of analysis involved formulating the data into a descriptive composite of an effective abstinence instructor.

Typical analytic methods for qualitative data were used for this case study. After organizing data, analysis consisted of making a detailed initial description of each case that included cataloging demographics of the participant, describing personal physical characteristics, and identifying contextual components of their teaching experiences. Preliminary noting of concepts and themes to be explored followed this phase of research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). With each interview, within-case themes were explored and noted. As each interview was held, cross-case themes were established noting similarities and differences among the agents of delivery. The final step of analysis culminated with coding for assertions and generalizations (Creswell, 2007) and the proposal of a model of an effective abstinence instructor

Complete familiarity with the data resulted from one-on-one, face-to-face interviews using Skype. Using a program that recorded the interviews as a movie allowed me to pay full attention to the participants' words and body language and facilitated a subsequent viewing as I transcribed each interview from the recorded video. Corbin and Strauss (2008) emphasize the differences in analyses done at different times and through different lenses. The interviews took place over several months. By utilizing electronic means, however, I was better able to maintain consistency throughout the data analysis, which was done over a three-week period.

Completed transcriptions were then analyzed using NVivo version 9 data analysis software. Analytical codes were initially formed from the six dimensions of effective teachers from Stronge and Hindman (2003) that I used as the basis for the interview schedule. While

completing the first analysis of the data with the original codes, additional themes emerged. I then revised the themes to better reflect the patterns of common words, phrases and sentiments expressed during the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

A useful analytic tool that I incorporated during the interviews as well as during subsequent data analysis was making constant comparisons. The participants were located in different geographic areas of the country, were different ages and ethnicities, and had different educational levels and training and a variety of life experiences. Noting these dimensional differences during and after each interview facilitated thinking about the data more abstractly (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Responses from the participants also had many similarities as the various meanings of words were explored and the intensity in their tone and inflections were noted (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). My transcriptions included a notation whenever a participant laughed or chuckled during the interview, when they clarified their own understanding of the questions and when they paused or asked if their answer was “good enough.”

Individual Case Analyses

Participants are introduced in this section. Terms such as instructor and teacher were used to identify the participants. However, I found the most common term used by the participants to describe them was “presenter” and the term used to indicate the time period of instruction was “workshop.” The sample varies greatly in a number of areas including age, ethnicity, gender, backgrounds and location. Each presenter also exhibits unique teaching styles although similarities exist and will be discussed in Chapter 4. A complete analysis of each participant is located in Appendix C.

Presenters. Ann lives in the southeast and is a lively, recently married 32-year-old Caucasian woman. She has been teaching abstinence curriculum for 6 years in two different

programs, 4 years as a single woman. Presently, presentations are made in private and charter schools. She was reared in a conservative home and has always enjoyed working with youth, which she has done in a religious organization. Her personality is optimistic and extroverted and she was full of chuckles and laughter and thoughtful responses in the interview. Ann holds a master's degree in theological studies and often uses logic and critical thinking in her presentations. She seeks to engage the entire class in dialogue and welcomes debate and differences and opinions. When students internalize and make implications for themselves, Ann feels she has been successful. She values adolescents as individuals and lets them know that "they are too valuable to gamble with." She loves what she does and wishes she could do it the rest of her life.

George, who was interviewed as an instructor and as an administrator, also lives in the southeast and has a master's degree. He is a young-looking Caucasian 50 year-old who spent a short time overseas as a professional basketball and coach. He spent 14 years teaching in public and private schools and has a high energy level and unabashed passion for teaching adolescents about making choices that would "positively impact kids' lives." He was exuberant about the quality of the curriculum he used and about establishing foundations, boundaries and guidelines in order for teens to have an optimal learning environment. His deep care for students motivates him to deliver interactive, engaging and enthusiastic presentations. He has evaluated many instructors throughout his eight years in the abstinence education field and believes hard work, being attentive to student reactions and connecting with students are critical to success.

Robin, 25 years old and Caucasian, has taught abstinence education for one year, although she has been with an agency in the southwest for three years. She began her abstinence education career immediately out of college where she obtained a bachelor's degree. Robin

explains she looks as young as her students but believes that allows her to relate better with them. She considers herself congenial and open with a high level of caring for others. Her sincerity and commitment to the curriculum were apparent; however, her enthusiasm and dramatic delivery were somewhat less than other participants. Robin follows the curriculum closely and seeks counsel from her fellow teachers. She explains the abstinence message coincides with personal values, which are a “driving force behind why I do it.”

Mike speaks of knowing firsthand “how things can just really mess up your life” and has spent around 15 years as a youth pastor and public speaker, 11 of those years being involved as an abstinence educator. The 39 year-old Caucasian began his career in the southwest teaching, directing and training in an abstinence program, logging presentations to over 10,000 students. Presently, he volunteers part-time to teach abstinence education on a small island off the coast of Alaska. His wife is also an abstinence education presenter. Playful, optimistic and kindly describe Mike’s personality. He says, “I think I’m a pretty good guy” and adds that his teaching philosophy is, “They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” He bases his presentations on cultural norms and constantly evaluates and adds new stories or insights he gathers. His unique position of knowing almost everyone in the small community allows him “to get into their world.” He understands the power of his presence in the community and invests and involves himself in the lives of those around him.

Nate grew up in the Midwest with a mother who ran a home for troubled or pregnant teenage girls. This experience along with “putting myself in some situations” helped him develop “a heart for youth.” Nate, who is Caucasian and says he has “some college”, is not normally open, talkative or confident. He says he is a person who cares “too much” but, “you gotta just put yourself out there” in order to help students. At age 25, he has already spent 10 years as an

abstinence presenter. Nate believes training is less important than having “passion for the youth” and considers a presentation a success when classroom discussions turn into comments and rebuttals between students and the atmosphere turns to “clicking mode.” He believes his biggest asset in being relatable is his past experiences and believes that if he only has an impact on one student, then he is satisfied. He says, “that’s all the satisfaction in the world for me...getting to help those kids.”

Peter is a 74 inch tall charismatic, slender Pacific islander who taught in public schools for 7 years before tiring of school bureaucracy and turning to the non-profit sector. His initial impetus for changing careers was to increase his opportunities for impacting more youth. The abstinence message was a secondary draw but he says this job “gave me roots to a message that I believed in for many years. I had never taught it though, with this much passion, with this much drive.” He describes himself as “spunky” and has a “great desire to see people grow . . . move one step at a time towards their goals and dreams.” He weaves the curriculum into questions generated by his students and he uses stories about adolescents to maintain student interest. Peter believes “the ability to build that bridge with the audience outweighs training . . . to be committed to young people.” He describes his style as energetic, enthusiastic, humorous and “constantly changing it up.” He emphasizes the importance of connecting with individuals, whether “he or she is square or circle or triangle.” Of his satisfaction level teaching abstinence education, he says, “I love it! I love it! It’s a lifetime message for me!”

Tina, now a 32 year-old married mother of five, readily speaks about being an African American who was a single teenage mother and often homeless. For over 5 years she has been a motivational speaker and abstinence instructor and does not want any teen to be “headed on a path that I wouldn’t want anybody to go down.” Through much perseverance, Tina will graduate

with her bachelor's degree in August of 2012. She has been a public voice for abstinence in a magazine, at a female prison and on the floor of the legislature in a state in the Midwest. Strong, deliberate and caring describe her personality and she says, "I want to encourage them . . .bring them up so they can have high expectations for their life." She has fun in the classroom but uses her persona of "being real" to convey her passion and caring for all students and that she is always "looking to encourage, always looking to impact somebody's life." She adds, "if I could walk away knowing that one student's life was touched today. . . then I did my job."

Karly is currently pursuing a master's degree in education and has taught abstinence education for 6 years in a city in the Midwest. She became a young widow with a 10 month-old son and says this single parenting experience from circumstances rather than choice, allows her to make what she talks about in the classroom relevant. She describes herself as sensible and pragmatic and a realist. Karla spoke often of her family responsibilities and what they might say about her. Since she has children with similar ages of her students, she often attends events where students and other parents recognize her as the abstinence education teacher. She strives to "be a true person and live up to what I say in the classroom." She says occasionally she gets caught in a "little bit of a confidence issue" in the classroom, but now she has the curriculum "down to a science." Karly tries to develop a learning environment where students feel she has "their best interest at heart, that I'm giving them actual information . . . so they can make healthier choices for themselves or better choices for themselves."

The participants in this study have many comparable characteristics, including philosophies on teaching styles. A brief recap of their pedagogical styles follows.

Ann's style is more of an activist and somewhat jokingly says, "It's always nice when I have little fifth grade girls come up, ready to storm the Playboy mansion with torches and pitch

forks. That's what I like to see." She also uses the logic of "speaking in big ideas and drawing connections and carrying ideas out to their logical conclusions." George's style is more like a coach. "You not only have to teach it, but you have to allow them to work through, model it, and then let them practice it some as well." Mike utilizes a shepherding style and tries to "lead them to the water and let them drink." Nate is more of a confidante and likes to get the students to "open up" and "talk and get it out." Peter is a charismatic cheerleader. He tries to "encourage them" and "prod them a little bit with some enthusiasm." Tina's style is more of an empathizer and says her goal in teaching abstinence education is to "know my audience...know what their needs are" and "key in on those students who may be struggling or the students I know who got the message." Karly is more of a "realist" and mother-type that says, "Organization is the key to everything" and describes her style as "fun and easy-going with a purpose." Robin is a rookie who monitors how closely she follows the curriculum and says that an effective instructor is "willing to take criticism from other instructors and to ask for advice."

A summary of participant demographics is found in Table 3. In addition to the above eight participants, three program directors were asked to contribute to the research by summarizing their thoughts about effective abstinence instructors. Select information about Carol, Lola and Lena are also listed. A more complete account of their comments is included in Appendix C.

(Table 3 about here)

Cross Case Analyses

After carefully transcribing, coding and analyzing the interview data from the individual participants, I then re-considered and analyzed the concepts and themes across the individual cases in this study. Many demographic differences were noted among the participants, however

three broad themes emerged while considering the six dimensions and the interview data. The broad themes are not distinct from one another but are interwoven in their nuances, connections and complexities. The analyses suggest the most effective teachers: (1) integrate who they are as individuals with (2) what they know about themselves, about the topic and classroom equipoise and (3) how much they care about the message and their depth of concern for their students. An amalgamation of these traits then, results in a level of teacher immediacy, which may impact student internalization of the message (Allen, 2006).

Figure 1 illustrates the association of six dimensions of effective teaching and findings on effective abstinence instructors. Stronge and Hindman's (2003) six dimensions of effective teaching have been used to evaluate public school teachers and were the basis for the interview data for this study. The six dimensions can be grouped and categorized into the three constituent parts of the effective abstinence education instructor model: *who they are*, *what they know*, and *what they care about*. The first two of the six dimension, prerequisites of effective teaching and the teacher as a person, are included in *who they are*. As part of *who they are*, abstinence educators also incorporate their mastery experiences and their conviction about the message to inform effective teaching. The next three dimensions, classroom management and organization, planning and organizing for instruction and implementing instruction are part of *what they know*. Abstinence educators also reflect *what they know* through their curricular expertise and passionate delivery. Abstinence instructors manifested the last of the six dimensions, monitoring student progress and potential, somewhat differently than public school teachers. Rather than objective measurements of learning, they observed student impact of their message and their personal satisfaction in making a difference. These ideas are categorized as *what they care about*.

(Figure 1 about here)

Differentiation of Presenter Effectiveness

When considering the elements that may differentiate teacher effectiveness, the “best” teachers and the “good” teachers shared traits. The distinctiveness of the “best” teachers was a matter of degree in all the categories. The “best” teachers expressed more passion for the message, seemed to have more intense personal drive, embodied deeper care for students and seemed to connect more meaningfully with students. This cross-case analysis, then, examined the characteristics identified in all eight of the participants, the “good” teachers along with the “best” teachers. Administrator comments lend support to this premise. Evidence to support my findings concerning the intensity of the characteristics of the “best” and the “good” teachers is presented throughout the analysis. Additionally, findings are discussed in relation to teachers of other youth programs.

According to administrators, the persona of the best presenters is replete with relational skills that result in part from experience and a strong knowledge base. “They have done it so much it doesn’t take as much preparation” and the “best teachers internalize the material” or “make it their own.” For example, Lola states that they begin class by telling students:

This will be the best class you have ever taken (and then proceed to keep) students engaged, laughing, upbeat feeling, keep students involved, participating in activities. All students want to be the person volunteering, students are paying attention, good classroom management, keeping control when comments and questions (are asked).

They are able to direct classroom discussions to “reiterate the message and bring the class back to it.” My findings augment these sentiments by suggesting that the most effective teachers devote their whole being, which includes personality, history, knowledge, interpersonal skills,

mastery experiences, caring and passion, into the personal goal of making a difference in the lives of students.

Demographics

In considering the demographics across cases, no identifiable patterns emerged. Age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, location and past work experience varied widely (See Table 2). Ages of the eight participants ranged from 25 to 50, genders were equally divided, and three ethnicities were represented. The educational levels of the instructors included some college to master's degrees. The participants were located from South Carolina to Alaska, in metropolitan areas to a small native village. Previous work experience of the participants included seasoned public school teachers, a radiologist, a public speaker, a medical assistant and those just out of college. The number of years teaching abstinence education ranged from 2.5 to 10 years and five different curricula were represented. Two participants had been public or private school teachers, one for 8 years and one for 14 years. One other participant was currently pursuing a teaching degree and the others had no professional training as teachers aside from their abstinence education training. Only two participants were involved in the abstinence field beyond their own communities.

Other important traits. While few generalities can be formed about demographics, the participants shared many general characteristics. The mention of religion or a religious upbringing occurred in six of the eight teachers. Previous to becoming abstinence education instructors, all the participants had worked or volunteered at least for a short while with youth, many involved with religious organizations, others with community groups. The presenters often spoke with a team mentality, referring to “we” often when speaking of their agencies. The curricula content and curricula dosages were somewhat similar. Generally the curriculum focus

was on making healthy choices, particularly in the area of sexuality. Workshops or presentations were held one class period per day over multiple days ranging from one to two weeks and were presented to mixed as well as single gendered classes. The instructors were invited into public or private schools and primarily presented the workshop in a health or science class. All of the participants received formal and ongoing training in their particular curriculum and described using similar teaching styles and methods such as being friendly and using humor often, being optimistic and enthusiastic, having highly interactive activities and discussions, constantly changing the delivery method. There was variability in fidelity to curriculum. Some “best” instructors rarely strayed from the curriculum; others used it as a “skeleton” or “launching pad.” All of the instructors, however, retained fidelity to the principles of the message. Most of the participants had extroverted personalities to varying degrees; however one of the “best” presenters was quiet and reserved during the interview but says he is more animated “in front of those kids.” All of the teachers greatly emphasized the critical element of having the ability to connect or relate to the students in some way. Each of the instructors expressed how comfortable they were with their own sexuality. And they all had a story and they all felt a degree of passion about the abstinence message and desire to empower their students to make healthy choices for themselves.

Central Themes

Having noted similarities and dissimilarities among interviewees, I will next examine the themes related to who these people are and what they are like; what they know and how they relate to teens; what they care about and how they want to impact teens; and how these relate to teaching effectiveness. Direct quotes from both “best” and “good” participants are included.

Although similar sentiments are illustrated, a careful reading indicates degrees of intensity in the themes.

Who they are: mastery experiences. Each of the teachers deemed “best” by their supervisors and one of the “good” teachers had life experiences that significantly impact their motivation to teach abstinence. One supervisor explains a teacher’s effectiveness in part by “how well they have processed their own life events.” In self-efficacy theory, Bandura refers to this as *mastery experience* (Bandura, 1994). Of the females in this study, one was a teenage mother, one became a single parent through widowhood, and one was single into her 30’s and has a husband who re-committed to abstinence a number of years before they were married. One of the “good” teachers did not allude to any personal sexual matters. The four males all made reference to sexual promiscuity before marriage. One of the participants blatantly spoke about not wanting others to go through what she did. Another was joyful in her “success” at remaining abstinent until marriage and her husband re-committing to an abstinent-until-marriage lifestyle. One “good” teacher used no personal information.

Best.

Tina: My own personal experience was that I was a teenage mother. I got pregnant. I was 17 years old in high school and I graduated but I struggled to graduate, often ended up homeless as a teenage mom. And so a lot of different struggles I faced as a teenage mom, it helps me be even more effective in the classroom cause I can see these teen guys and these teen girls headed on a path that I wouldn’t want anybody to go down.

Ann: Well it’s nice to be able to say I’m married, I made it, I crossed the finished line and it was worth waiting for. Good things are worth waiting for and it was...yeah it’s fun to teach it on the other side now. Having been teaching as a single person and now teaching it as a married

person. I obtained the goal I was aiming for. It's nice and being able to talk about marriage as a married person is good too.

Good.

Robin: I don't...I try not to share too much personally about myself with them because it's more...it's about them and it's about what they're learning. If I get personal questions like, "Are you married? Do you have kids? When did you have kids? Were you abstinent? Were you, you know . . ." I don't really address that. I mean I'll let them know I'm married, you know, it's obvious that I have a ring on my hand but I try to kind of steer away from that.

Several presenters spoke of past work experiences, schooling and other training that enhanced their interpersonal skills, public speaking abilities and classroom management techniques. Regardless of the details, the participants seemed to have taken their life experiences and mentally and emotionally processed them in a healthy, productive and instructive manner. They are more than just comfortable with themselves. They are at a point in their life experiences where the desire to use the lessons they have learned and their desire to encourage and empower students with their wisdom are great. To further clarify, the participants from my sample use their personal experiences and the positive resolution of these experiences with a level of passion and intensity of desire to share his or his wisdom to their students. The following responses came from a question asking to what extent do personal experiences affect your teaching style. Notice the length and intensity of each response.

Best.

Nate: Like I said, with our whole team, we had different areas. Mine wasn't drugs, mine wasn't...mine was relationships. I was in a long relationship through junior high and all that good stuff. And, made some mistakes and I'm very open with that in the classroom and I think

you've got to be. I'm not saying you've got to go out there and tell them everything that you've done. I'm not saying that by any means but you know, kids know, that you're not perfect . . . So my experiences have had a lot, that was my, I would say that's my strongest teaching day, was relationships and healthy relationship versus non-healthy relationships. Because that all stems from my past relationships and I can tell them from experience, tell them some stories, and you know, this, is it love. You think you're in love versus infatuation, this and that. And tell them what I went through and what I thought and I thought the same thing. So, and they can really associate with you when you put yourself back in their shoes. That you went through the same thing. And, you know, say, "I know what you're going through" and leave it at that. Being able to be open and honest with them and so, yeah, that was the biggest thing, my past experience.

Peter: This message...it's so much more than...say no to your sexuality until marriage. It's so much more than that. It's about becoming the person you are designed to be. And so, growing up, I didn't have that freedom. I didn't have that drive to pursue my goals and dreams because I felt confined, I felt suffocated. And so these kids are looking for educators for they are looking for advocates, surrogate dads and moms to say, "Hey, you can be...you CAN pursue healthy choices. You CAN make healthy decisions." And it can have an impact on who you are.

Good.

Karly: I think it makes me, I would think it would make me more credible. Because it's, it's not doing one thing and then doing another. It's that I'm trying to be a role model about it. I think that helps. It lends me honest credibility.

All but one of the teachers uses the power of these mastery experiences to "connect" with their students. One program was prohibited by their agency guidelines from revealing any depth of personal information or experiences but the presenters still use the power of their past to

garner passion. Many presenters readily share, in a professional manner, suitable stories of re-committing to the abstinence-until-marriage message after “putting myself in some situations” or “being on both sides” or not wanting teens to head “on a path that I wouldn’t want anybody (else) to go down.” One of the “best” teachers not permitted to share personal stories, captures his students’ attention with stories about teens and explains, “Then they start listening. They listen all five days as the stories have to do about them.” From my observations of the recorded Skype interviews and noting the levels of animation, drama and energy or the quiet sincerity and thoughtful concern of individual teachers, they would all have a compelling story delivery, albeit in varying degrees of impact. The number of stories used may also affect teacher effectiveness, however, my research did not collect that data. The “best” presenters use stories that are personal and open them up to be “vulnerable.”

Best.

Ann: I do use personal stories for sure. That’s a very valuable tool...just talking about life experience. To speak of someone who was abstinent and stories obviously used with permission, I’m able to tell them my husband is someone who re-committed to abstinence. When I met him, he had been abstinent for 10 years and how great that was. Yeah, I’m able to pull in stories with permission and make them relatable, things that I have gleaned through my 32 years of experience. (laughter)

Nate: Like I said, experience is, life from my experience, that’s the quickest way to get those kids. Open up yourself. How can you expect a teenager to open up to you if you’re not willing to open up to them, you know what I mean. So that’s one of the biggest, you gotta be, I don’t like using the word vulnerable, but, I mean that’s almost the right word, you almost have to be. You have to put yourself out there if you’re going to expect them to.

Good.

Robin: I'd say the only time I show...I address personal stories are in a very general way. So like if I'm saying something about, you know, making decisions or dealing with the family or talking to your parents, I'll say, you know, when I was your age, it was kinda hard for me to talk to my parents about such and such. But, so I understand where you guys are at. But, you know they really want to know and maybe share like a little personal thing with that. But as far as, like, abstinence or specific questions like, did I do this, should I do this because you did kind of thing, I don't address.

Karly: I tie it into the real life example. It's usually, I don't say it every class but when I have to make the connection when I feel like I'm losing them, I try to make some kind of personal example to bring them back.

Who they are: personal conviction about the message. In addition to connecting with students through sharing the story form of their mastery experiences, effective abstinence instructors have a strong conviction about the abstinence message. The "good" instructors believe in the importance of the message, but for the "best" instructors the abstinence-before-marriage message has become some part of their identity. Several male instructors referenced being known as "the sex guy." Others spoke of how pleasing it was to be recognized by students in the grocery store or at a ballgame as the one "who taught them." The "good" instructors expressed somewhat similar feelings but not nearly so often during the interview and with less energy and feeling in their voices. The "best" teachers seemed to connect this ideology with a higher number of interview questions, bringing up their personal conviction as it related to the curriculum or to training or to teaching style. Many instructors expressed this sentiment in their interviews in these ways:

Best.

Peter: I think my passion for this audience and my desire to see them excel and really pursue their destiny and their future goals and dreams--it's really what thrusts me forward in doing this. This is a lifetime message for me cause kids are hungry for this kind of information because they are being . . . the message out there is skewed.

Ann: It's not just a job. I am operating on core beliefs and think that comes through in the delivery.

George: Everything that's in abstinence values I wholeheartedly live out and teach and encourage and am sold out to it.

Nate: Got to have the heart. Got to have the passion. And that's what I had and I don't have to force it out.

Tina: Everywhere I go, I take the value of abstinence in any conversation outside of the school, outside of work, that's still my moral stand. . . is abstinence education, abstinence until marriage.

Good.

Robin: I'd say that it's kind of the driving force behind why I do it. As far as how much it affects what I teach, I'd say, as long as it stays with the curriculum, I don't let what I believe or think outside, you know, the facts about abstinence really translate into the classroom.

What they know: curricular expertise. A full understanding of the curriculum content is "a powerful thing to give teachers" and the level of training received by the teachers was not measurably different from one another. They all believed they had been well trained either through formal and continuing trainings or through observations and practice. None of the participants fail to keep current on teen sexuality trends. They all expressed that they felt

comfortable and confident with their curriculum. However, the “best” teachers noted how well they knew the curriculum.

Best.

Ann: Honestly, this is my sixth year and I could probably do my lectures in my sleep by now . . . over the years they just keep getting honed and honed, tweaking here and there and so I think I found out some good systems that are working for me.

Nate: And I think that’s one of the reasons we were successful is because we each had our own way of presenting and relating to the kids rather than by going line by line and number by number, you know, and just handing them over the book.

Peter: If they have lot of questions up front, I kind of weave the curriculum into the questions they ask me . . . cause at this point, you know, I’ve memorized (much of the curriculum). So they’re all in my head. So they just come out. So if they ask me a question, I weave the curriculum into their answer.

Good.

Robin: I like to have everything in place before I go into the classroom because sometimes if I go blank, I know, OK, well I wrote it down, so I’ll read it off my list . . . And sometimes I do get embarrassed about some of the questions, they’ll like, “Oh, you’re turning red”, and, you know. And I’ll say, “Yeah, this is kind of embarrassing but I’m going to address it.

Karly: I don’t have a lot of insecurities because I have been well trained and I am very knowledgeable of the subject so I do a lot of reviewing and background information so I feel like I know everything I can and if I don’t know it, yeah I can get caught in a little bit of a confidence issue sometimes in the classroom.

What they know: passionate delivery. All the teachers agreed that proper training was crucial however, it was not the most critical element identified for being an effective presenter. Presenters and directors alike shared the sentiment that passion and drive for working with the teens was paramount. One “good” teacher scarcely mentioned “passion” in the interview, although as illustrated in earlier quotes, each “good” instructor felt a strong commitment to their teaching.

Best.

Nate: Without passion for the youth, you can have all the training you want and it’s not going to be effective. So I think that is really the number one thing, just having a passion for it.

Peter: As a public speaker, as a trainer, as a facilitator, there has to be transference of the information and the education you have to your audience. So I would say the ability to build that bridge with the audience outweighs training.

Ann: I guess I like to get on my soapbox and get fired up about things and I think that can be catching, that enthusiasm and passion.

George: The thing that lured me back was the idea of teaching, coaching young people, especially young men, on character, values, and in particular, how this...what impacts young men. And I became very passionate about it. So that’s, you know, what kind of drove me and led me to that and so having been on both sides, it’s a no brainer, a no brainer.

Good.

Robin: I’m pretty passionate.

The “best” teachers take the basic curriculum, add their passion to it, and “make it their own,” as one administrator termed it. This process takes place over time.

Mike: Some just don't stick around with it and they might start to really get a hold of the material and then now you got it in your head, now you just need to add in your own self and you may not stick around, for whatever reason, maybe they move, maybe they have other challenges. But experience, the more you do it, the better you get, the more effective you get, I think.

Being able to perceive student classroom engagement and "bring them back" was mentioned by many of the presenters. Their acute attentiveness to the dynamics of class discussions, comments, participation and body language were clues to immediately adjust the classroom activities so more students would attend. They acknowledged that being a presenter was somewhat like being a "performer" or "entertainer" of sorts and they were keenly aware of the capacity they possess to control the attention of the students in order to maintain optimum class engagement.

Best.

Nate: Cause every classroom is different and it's not a set guideline on how to handle, what to do, what to say because I think that's the biggest thing, because you can call the numbers but I think being . . . seeing at the least, the classroom and what you're up against and how to handle that or diffuse the situation.

But then also, like I mentioned, the willingness to be open with these kids, the willingness to be vulnerable. You know, you can't expect them to be vulnerable if you, if can't do it with them. I think that, that right there, they can see that and I think that tears down a lot of walls. And I think that's the only difference between any presenter, great or horrible, it's the fact that some of them couldn't get those walls down. Once you get those walls down, easy going, it's easy.

Tina: It's just (chuckle) . . . when I come in, it's just their responses or just anything that they say, I try to pick up on and see.

Ann: In teaching style, I like to be animated, enthusiastic, dramatic. It's a performance to some degree. And I think that they find it entertaining. But all the way down to little things, like a, we're dealing with teenagers so, it's nice if they come up to you and say, "We love your outfit" and they just think that you are cool. And that works in my favor I think.

Good.

Karly: Teaching method, would again, be being an entertainer. Making sure that, I don't know, it feels like you are always on stage. You know there is no down time when you are a teacher. It's like boom boom boom boom boom. So that would be it probably, entertaining, educational.

There seems to be a dynamic interaction as well as a balanced state or equipoise that the "best" teachers are able to negotiate with their students. To illustrate, the progression of a classroom presentation might look like this, as constructed from the "best" participants comments: a professionally dressed presenter greets students as they enter the classroom, is conversational and tries "get into their world," wherein the students "are just watching you. Seeing if you're honest, if you're truthful. They're seeing your mannerisms." The presenter confidently conducts the opening remarks of the workshop, perhaps setting a relaxed tone with some humor, all the while surveying the students and beginning an "assessment of the physical, physiological, hormonal, mental and emotional development of students." The instructor embarks on the lesson plan and tries to establish a safe, respectful and relatable atmosphere by using his own personal strengths and style because "they can tell if you are just filling them full of crap or if you are really there for them. Kids can read you a mile away." The teacher

continually observes “body language, facial expressions and verbal cues.” He watches for “furrowed brows and glazed-over looks,” or senses “eye contact, nod their head, throw up their hand to chime in something they just thought of.” The teacher has an ability to read the cues of the classroom and adjust accordingly. Maybe he will ask questions or move around a lot or use markers as a visual aid to represent a boy and a girl. Maybe he will share a personal story or correct crass language or present the latest statistics on STDs and information on teen brain research. All the while, students are weighing the teacher’s honesty, transparency, and level of caring, asking themselves if the message is “worth listening to,” if they are being validated and valued. The teacher continues this performance as an “entertainer” per se, hoping for the class energy to fall into a “clicking mode.” If the teacher convincingly forms a relational atmosphere with the students and “build(s) that bridge” that allows at least “one student’s life (to be) touched today or one student changed their mind about saving sex before marriage,” the teacher gratefully says, “Then I did my job.”

When the bell rings, the presenter evaluates, “tweaks” the “performance” and repeats the process again in the next class and again for the next four to nine school days. With each subsequent day, the presenter builds the opportunity to increase the rapport and connection and impact on the students. Only one “good” participant mentioned how grueling this routine is.

What they care about: personal satisfaction. Having a strong conviction about the message allows the teachers to be perceived as “real” or “honest” and shows the students that the presenter is sincere, which results in a greater likelihood that students will increase their connectedness with the instructor and the message, which ultimately brings a feeling of teacher satisfaction. The “best” presenters displayed more emotional and verbal intensity when they referred to being “real” and “believable.”

Best.

Tina: I actually believe in what I am teaching. I think that is the most effective thing—to believe in abstinence education. When the students recognize I actually believe in what I’m saying, that I’m not just there teaching a message that I don’t fully believe in, I think that helps me be effective.

Ann: I’m standing in a position of sincere conviction. So it’s not just a matter getting through the program, it’s something I truly do believe in and think that it comes out in the classroom.

Good.

Karly: I don’t try to lie about anything in the classroom. If I’m giving an example from my life, then it’s an honest example. It’s not something I kind of make up. So I you know that creates a connection with the kids. They are more likely to remember.

Not only do teachers feel satisfaction from being perceived as “believable,” they also feel personal satisfaction in the delivery and response to the message and recognize, respect and utilize the power to make an impact on students. The “best” teachers either got an excited tone in their voice and body language or got pensive and reflective in expressing their feelings about making a difference in students’ lives. Some of the “best” teachers had success stories they shared like a girl who, after the class, abandoned her plans for suicide when her boyfriend was pressuring her into having sex and other notes that “bring tears to your eyes” or boys, who unexpectedly came up to show gratitude to the teacher by asking her for a hug. Notice the difference in language and depth of feeling as the “best” teachers took joy in the impact on their students whereas the “good” teachers focused on what *they* felt in delivering the message.

Best.

Nate: There's always at least one kid that will let you know that you made a difference or even that you even gave them something to think about. And that's all the satisfaction in the world for me and I was plenty satisfied with that job, getting to help those kids.

Tina: [Teaching abstinence curriculum] gives you a satisfying feeling to know that you are empowering, educating our youth for tomorrow. You are empowered to know that you are helping make a difference in their lives.

Mike: It's a passion of mine and it is essential knowledge for kids...to have for a healthy and productive future and not only future, but a present as well."

Peter: And, once again, it's this message--has a confidence level to it. You know that it works and so you just walk away knowing that someone's life is going to be altered because of the difference you made that week. So there's kind of a confidence level that you hold on to as you walk away from that class.

Good.

Robin: I enjoy the topic. I know it's important and relevant and I get excited because I know that the information is necessary...I like teaching something new to them and see how they react to it.

Karly: I feel like I'm making a difference and not in just one or two lives but in a whole lot of people.

Closely associated with feeling personal satisfaction, the presenters also feel high job satisfaction. When I posed the question, "How satisfied are you with your job?" every participant said they were very satisfied. However, the "best" teachers spoke at unsolicited times about their level of job satisfaction and expounded at different points in the interview.

Best.

Mike: I enjoy it. It is a passion of mine. You know, a part of me wishes I could do it all the time, if it made money for me.

Nate: I looked forward to going to work every day, most every day.

Tina: I know the kids are looking forward to seeing me and getting there and so there are times when you have to go to work when you are sick or don't go sick. But when I'm in a classroom, there's just something about those kids that make me feel glad that I came today. You know, even when I have a little cold or a little sniffle, just something about those kids that make me feel glad that I came.

Ann: On a scale of 1 to 10, it would be a 10. I absolutely love my job. I wish I could keep it up until I am old and gray but that's not realistic.

Peter: And they need to know that it is exciting to be an adult. That I enjoy, that I get paid to deliver this message. And I can't believe I do that. I wake up and I have the opportunity to invest in families and youth.

Good.

Karly: I'm very satisfied.

Robin: I feel very satisfied as abstinence instructor . . . I would say probably a 7 out of 10, 7 or 8 out of 10.

An underlying foundation of satisfaction and effectiveness may result from the depth of feeling the teachers have for teens. The "best" teachers took multiple opportunities to bring in their desire to improve the lives of teenagers. The comments from the "best" teachers reflect their exuberant feelings. Differences between the "best" and "good" presenters are reflected in

the nuances of their responses concerning the intent of the instruction. The “best” instructors focused on the intensity of impact on students.

Best.

Nate: I have a heart for youth and want to work with somebody and teach them self-respect...which is what it all boils down to.

Tina: I’m going to encourage them. I’m going to bring them up so they can have high expectations for their life.

Ann: I let them truly know that they are too valuable to gamble with.

Mike: I’m just here to let you know that I care about you.

Peter: I think my passion for this audience and my desire to see them excel and really pursue their destiny and their future goals and dreams . . . it’s really what thrusts me forward to do this.

Good.

Robin: I get excited because I know that the information is necessary...I like teaching something new to them and see how they react to it. (I want them to) realize something and maybe change some of their behavior in the future.”

Karly: (I feel I) have their best interest at heart, that I’m giving them actual information. It’s with their best intentions...that they can use this information.

For those teachers who continue teaching from year to year, they may also have the opportunity to return to the school in subsequent years or see students at the grocery store or ballgame and to be a role model in the community. By “sticking around long enough,” effective teachers are able to be a presence in the school and community. Multiple years teaching also

allows a presenter to “tweak” their skills and “find some good systems that are working” for them.

Best.

Tina: I see my students all the time. When I go back and teach in 7th grade, “I remember you. Do you remember me? You had me last year in 6th grade.” I have them every year or I see them at the store and they’re like, “Hey.” I guess you become a part of the community and the kids see me over and over again.

Mike: I think I’m very caring. I mean, I’m as empathetic as I need to be but very caring, especially when it comes it...not just in the classroom but in a small community, you can see them outside their home, in fact you do all the time (chuckle). And so you know a lot of family situations and you can see how that definitely affects their decision-making and so forth. Your heart goes out to people.

Good.

Karly: It’s not just the students you run into outside the classroom. Sometimes there are parents working in the school or you know you are at a spring event or something. Yeah, my son or daughter pointed out that you’re the person that taught them about this.

What they care about: student impact. All of the teachers indicated that they respected a student’s choice to disagree with their message, but the “best” presenters emphasized the importance of reaching “a” student and considered their instruction effective if they affected just one student and “walk away that week knowing that someone’s life is going to be altered.” The “good” instructors mentioned students in a less personal manner.

Best.

Tina: One thing I learned when I first started teaching abstinence, I told myself is that I'm not here to reach to whole entire classroom, if I do then that's great. But if I could walk away knowing that one student's life was touched today or one student changed their mind about saving sex for marriage, then I did my job.

Peter: My goal is to connect with every student in that classroom regardless of whether they are square or circle or triangle.

Good.

Robin: I think I'm a pretty good, I don't know what it's called, but like feeling out if someone feels comfortable or not. Like in reading--where they're at. And so it's a little bit more difficult to do in a large classroom. But if I can get kinda one-on-one with each of them at some point during the week, I can kinda feel like, Ok, you don't want to really answer or you don't want to read, so I'm not gonna make you.

In summary, the abstinence presenters in this study have diverse demographics but they share a common drive to connect to their students and empower them to better avoid the consequences of early sexual initiation. They use the influence of their mastery stories, the strong conviction they feel toward the message and the sincerity of their desires to positively impact teens and individuals. Their efforts are all done with passion and finesse in order to establish rapport with the students, maximize teacher immediacy, and engage the students in the message of the workshops using their refined teaching expertise. The teachers, no matter the number of teens who benefit from their presentations, feel a level of joyful satisfaction in their efforts. They seem to feel gratification from making a difference, contributing to their sense of community and being a role model for the abstinence message.

Effective Abstinence Education Instructor Model

Effective abstinence instructors combine all that *they are* and much of what *they know* with how much *they care* about the students to facilitate learning in their classes. They take their life's experiences and wisdom, mix it with their conviction about the message and caring desire to positively impact teens and then use all the passion, methods and knowledge they have to reach those students who are willing to listen. Each participant in this study has a unique style and uses his or her particular style and strengths to accomplish this goal.

Teacher styles are likely to be as numerable as there are teachers and when administrators say “people either have it or they don't” and “that it can't be taught”, perhaps they are referring to a lack of proper integration of the constituent parts of being an effective teacher. The key to effectiveness seems to be the degree to which a teacher has assimilated the components parts of who they are, what they know and what they care about. Six of the participants in this study were recommended as being the “best” and two being “good.” As I analyzed the data, I became convinced that having only two levels of effectiveness was inconsistent with what the data indicated. On nearly all points, I struggled to draw a clear line between those who were “best” and those who were “good.” With further research identifying more precise measures, some of the “best” and some “good” participants in this study would perhaps fall somewhere in between the two levels.

As stated earlier, all of the teachers share many similar personal characteristics, knowledge and depth of feeling for youth. Judging who might have more of one characteristic over another would require further research. However, based on the data collected for this study I am proposing a conceptual model of effective abstinence instruction. Three constituent parts exist in the model: 1) What the person is like, who he/she is, his/her personal characteristics and

persona (Who they are); 2) What the person knows, his/her content knowledge and mastery experiences, his/her teaching techniques and interpersonal skills (What they know); and 3) What the person cares about, how passionate he/she is about the message, his/her level of concern for teens, his/her willingness to invest in others (What they care about).

Figure 2 conceptualizes the inter-relatedness of *who they are*, *what they know*, and *what they care about*. The model indicates a progression in effectiveness. As a novice presenter, the three parts may be distinct from one another and perhaps have one area more developed than another. Although the three elements exist to a degree, the result may be low level of effective instruction. A teacher then gains experience over time, incrementally refines the three elements *and* more closely integrates the elements to make the curriculum more “her own,” which increases effectiveness. Finally as the three elements approach unity and parity, the teacher’s effectiveness increases even more (see Figure 2).

(Figure 2 about here)

Chapter 4: Discussion

The purpose of this collective case study was to interview effective abstinence educators and explore common or unique personal characteristics and pedagogical styles they may share. Interview responses yielded a variety of traits with comparable components and insights into the details of being an abstinence educator. The analyses in this study offer some distinctive attributes as well as some commonalities of abstinence instructors with those who deliver positive youth development programs and sexuality education instruction. Looking beyond measures of program outcomes, this study delved into the intricacies of abstinence instruction and insights that may facilitate teacher immediacy.

Initial interview questions were drawn from the work of Stronge and Hindman (2003) who developed a synthesis of six dimensions of effective teaching. The first participant interview followed the questions I had generated under each of the dimensions. It was immediately apparent that abstinence instruction would require a departure from the initial assumptions the six dimensions inferred. The prerequisites of effective teaching, of course, included questions on training in the curriculum, which is a part of most youth programs, including abstinence education. Indeed, studies on sex educators as well as findings from my study indicate training improved the confidence and comfort level of the teacher in the classroom (Buston et al., 2001). But the participant responses indicated a much richer interpretation of “prerequisites” of effective teaching. Abstinence instructor prerequisites encompassed the teacher’s mastery experiences, their personal core values, and their desire to empower teens to make choices they felt were in the students’ best interest. Sex educators may be influenced by how they learned about sex (Timmerman, 2009), but abstinence educators are often driven by their own life experiences concerning sexual activity with no regard to whether that activity was promiscuity or

abstinence. Their mastery experiences had an impact on their personal core values, which in turn, affected their desire to pass on the wisdom they had gained from their experiences. This trend reflects the generativity stage of Erikson's (1968) stages of development in which those in middle age seek to contribute something to society that makes a difference.

Another unique prerequisite was the teacher's own moral stand that sexual activity before marriage was the best choice for adolescents and offered a future absent of STI's or unwanted pregnancy and its related consequences, a risk avoidance approach. In contrast, sex educators present academic sex education curricula directed by federal guidelines by teachers who are encouraged to be amoral in their delivery, a risk reduction approach. Although sex educators may show a deep level of care and concern for the students, remaining affectively neutral is expected (Sex in America, 2003). Effective abstinence educators in this study bring the components of deep passion for positively impacting teens and sincerely caring for their wellbeing. A large part of their effectiveness can be attributed to the passion they have developed for helping youth and to the deep conviction they hold about the abstinence-until-marriage message. That they are invited to convey their particular persuasions to the students is unique in public classroom settings.

The second dimension, "the teacher as a person," was a vital component of this study, however it was not distinct from some of the elements in "prerequisites of effective teaching." Along with the components mentioned above, abstinence educators, just as educators in other youth programs, generally bring a certain amount of "who they are" into the classroom. Age and gender, for instance, affect both sex education and abstinence education effectiveness. Teachers often prefer classrooms with students of their same gender because it allows for more open discussion and a simpler classroom dynamic (Measor, Tiffin, & Miller, 2000). Studies have

indicated, however, that sex educators who are older may be less desired by the students and that older teachers may lose interest in teaching or being involved in training (Allen, 2009). In contrast, several effective abstinence educators indicated they would like to continue teaching for a long period of time. The average age of my participants was 37 with the oldest instructor 50 years old. The abstinence instructors, however, acknowledged that age might eventually be a barrier to their effectiveness but only because of student perceptions not because of their lack of desire to teach. Teacher interest, regardless of age, remained high among my participants, although they each worked hard to avoid becoming stagnant in their deliveries.

Considering another aspect of “who they are,” effective abstinence educators’ personalities differed little from those of sex education or prevention programs. Being sensitive, open, candid, comfortable, congenial, empathetic, professional, competent, credible, humorous are a few of the descriptors used for the “best” instructors in all programs and were evident in the abstinence instructors in this study. Perhaps the characteristic that sets apart the best instructors in any program is the ability of the teacher to utilize their strengths to relate to the students or the ability to decrease the perceived psychological barriers between the teacher and the student so the full impact of learning can occur (Mehrabian, 1969, 1981). In the case of abstinence education, the presenter is allowed to use the near totality of “who they are,” including all their “prerequisites” and their personal characteristics to build relationships with their students. Their age and gender, personality and inter-personal skills, comfort level with their own sexuality and feelings about adolescents and the message assimilate into “who they are” and are wholeheartedly utilized to relate to the students.

From the findings of this study, the first two of the six dimensions seem to be integrated into the idea of “who they are.” The next three dimensions, classroom management and

organization, planning and organizing for instruction and implementing instruction can be viewed as part of “what they know.” Effective abstinence instructors tend to replicate best practices of public school teachers, such as maintaining an optimal learning environment, having well-prepared lesson plans and using a variety of instructional methods. Public school teachers, nurses or peers who teach sexuality education may also possess excellent skills in classroom administration. The “best” teachers in all situations make learning relevant and adapt their instruction to fit the audience (Nation et al., 2003; Timmerman, 2009). Abstinence educators, however, understand their unique position as a guest presenter in the classroom and seek to quickly establish relationships with the students. They are somewhat like entertainers, constantly surveying the audience to gauge their attention level and varying their delivery to re-capture the attention of the students. They know they must establish their credibility with the students through having expertise and by being approachable. They realize their message may be foreign to and unwanted by some students. Their aim is to present the information and convey the level of concern and caring they have for the students and hope that the message will have a positive impact on at least one student. They know how to “read” the audience and identify those who are struggling with different levels of sexual activity. And they know the curricula so well that they give full attention to the classroom atmosphere and make adaptations as needed. “What they know” goes well beyond how to plan, organize, manage and present curriculum.

The sixth dimension, “monitoring student potential and progress,” also had divergent meanings for abstinence instructors. In a public school setting, curriculum is presented and some type of evaluation of knowledge or progress takes place. The aim of youth prevention programs, however, is behavioral change. Youth prevention programs attempt to satisfy an earlier notion of the purpose of education, which is to develop morality and character (Brint, 2006). Therefore,

what an abstinence educator cares about may be somewhat different from what a public school teacher who presents sexuality education cares about. Abstinence presenters are not required to quiz students on curriculum content, but they use measures such as student responses and classroom teacher and director evaluations. Pre- and post-tests, which measure student abstinence intentions, can also be used to gauge individual teacher effectiveness. To an abstinence instructor, effectiveness is illustrated when their students are persuaded by their message rather than students having learned content knowledge. They care if the students internalize the message because they care what happens in the lives of the students. They care if their instruction implementation and relational abilities succeed. They feel a strong sense of community and understand the impact their presence has as they serve as a role model for the abstinence message. Therefore, “monitoring student potential and progress” is subjective and much broader than what a public school teacher may consider. For the abstinence instructors in this study, student progress was measured in terms of the choices students make in their personal lives. Professional measurement using statistics may occur but for abstinence educators, immediate responses from students, recognizing when a student resonates with the message and personal communication from students give them a personal measure of student progress and potential.

Abstinence educators feel great personal satisfaction in the positive results of their efforts. The abstinence-until-marriage message discusses the documented impacts on youth and society of early sexual initiation. However, the philosophical basis of the presenters involved in abstinence education was to provide an educational component with a degree of emotional support to adolescents while they are trying to navigate through all the cultural messages they

receive about sexuality. Sex education in public schools may offer a semblance of this philosophy, but it is void of a moral stance.

Abstinence education is perhaps misnamed. Even the term, “risk avoidance” seems to fall short in describing what occurs in the workshops. The relational and supportive nature the participants in this study developed with students in a short time depicted a unique opportunity for teens to interact with a trained, knowledgeable and caring adult. The workshops were long enough for students to establish trust in the presenter but not so long that a deep familiarity was established that might prohibit student candidness. Consequently, an environment was created by the presenters in which students could express themselves, listen to their peers, and be given time to consider consequences of their sexual decisions. Presenters also filled other larger teen needs such as providing a trusted adult who is comfortable with conversing about sexual issues, an adult in whom they can confide and have their questions and concerns addressed in a safe and appropriate setting to help them sort out the cultural messages about sexuality they receive, and to have another option for behavioral choices presented to them. The abstinence instructors in my study conveyed the personal fulfillment and sincere desire they felt in providing these resources to students, which most likely influenced students to be receptive to and open with the presenters. The individual names of the curricula seem to better describe the essence of the workshops: Heritage Keepers, Choosing the Best, WAIT Training, Let’s Talk, and Responsible Social Values. The focus on making choices that have consequences for the teen as well as society, mixed with a trusted adult encouraging thoughtful consideration of individual sexual choices seems to be the underlying foundation of abstinence education as depicted in this study.

As the conceptual model of my findings about effective abstinence instructors indicates, who they are, what they know and what they care about are component parts of an effective

abstinence instructor. They are not separate and distinct elements, but they are incrementally meshed over time as a presenter gains more classroom and personal experiences and hones his or her abilities to connect and relate to their students. Teacher effectiveness increases as unity and parity increase in the component parts. My findings support the idea of teacher immediacy (Mehrabain, 1969, 1981), which suggests that teacher behaviors that use certain cues to reduce the perceived psychological distance between learner and teacher positively impact student learning, particularly in affective learning outcomes (Allen, 2006).

Conclusion

Effective abstinence educators embody personal characteristics and pedagogical styles common to effective teachers in public schools and other positive youth development programs. However, abstinence educator interview data presented in this study showed that these instructors perceive that integrating who they are, what they know and what they care about into their teaching style and classroom persona augmented their effectiveness. The instructors were embedded in their local communities and served as trusted adults and role models for their students. The teachers received ongoing training and support from their fellow teachers and supervisors at their agencies and periodically from national conventions. This research both supports previous social science research indicating the significance of the role of the teacher in teaching and learning and indicates the usefulness of the concept of teacher immediacy in the unique context of abstinence education.

The conclusions of this study are consistent with the findings of other research on instructors in related fields such as Nations et al. (2003) findings on general prevention programs that have staff that is well-trained, uses a variety of teaching methods and provides opportunities for positive relationships. Allen's (2009) study on sex educators in New Zealand titled, "It's not *who* they are it's *what they are like*" is mirrored in my findings. A statement made in 1925 seems to also hold true with abstinence educators, "A teacher may have great knowledge of many subjects and may. . .have read many books and taken many courses, but the factor that has the greatest influence on the child is the personality that *emanates* from the teacher, whether we like it or not" (Kohnstamm et al., 1925, p. 159).

This exploratory case study was based on a small sample size and is not generalizable. The designation of an instructor being "best" or "good" was based on subjective nomination

from veteran administrators. Participants expressed their insights into their own teaching. No classroom observations or student comments were collected.

This study was designed to explore the personal characteristics and pedagogical style of effective abstinence instructors. Future research on teacher effectiveness in positive youth development programs is needed in order to go beyond assessing overall program outcomes to more fully detailing the effects of teacher immediacy on student outcomes. Findings of this study demonstrate the unique position of value-based educators in public schools and the distinctive characteristics needed to be effective. Abstinence educators support adolescents in their efforts to identify their own values and make important life decisions. They offer a safe forum for discussion on sexual topics while emphasizing the best choice for teens is abstinence.

Research examining other groups such as comprehensive sex education teachers, character education instructors or other positive youth development presenters may further inform effective teaching methods in contexts that are similar to abstinence education. Findings from this and other research may benefit educators, program directors and instructors, youth, families and communities by providing better recruiting, training, evaluation and retention methods for prevention program instructors.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Prerequisites of effective teachers

- a. What training have you received that prepared you to be an abstinence program teacher?
- b. How much do you feel the training you have received contributed to your success in teaching an abstinence curriculum?
- c. How comfortable/confident do you feel in presenting abstinence curriculum to students?
- d. What do you do to keep current of new trends in teenage sexuality topics?
- e. What other teaching experience have you had?
- f. How long have you been teaching abstinence education?

2. The teacher as a person

- a. How satisfied are you as an abstinence teacher?
- b. What is your engagement level in the abstinence movement?
- c. Describe in general terms, your own personal experiences as a youth concerning sexuality education? Include who was the main teacher of your own personal education concerning sexuality (i.e. mother, father, sibling, other relative, public school teacher, religious instructor)?
- d. To what extent have your personal experiences with sexuality affected your teaching quality?
- e. What perceptions do you feel the students have of you?
- f. What is your perception of students as legitimate sexual beings?
- g. What are aspects of your personality that you are sure to withhold from your students?
- h. Which of the following best describes your personal characteristics?

Generally congenial and open	Have high expectations of others
Knowledgeable	Hard worker
Comfortable	Organizer
Empathetic	Optimistic
Sensitive	Humorous
Competent	Demanding
Candid	Fair
Comfortable with my own sexuality	Passionate
Moralistic	Encouraging
Confident	Blaming
Prepared	Racist
Good communicator	Bureaucratic
Creative	Co-dependent
Life long learner	Inflexible
Caring about others	Frustrated
Respectful	Trusting
	Confidential

3. Classroom management and organization

- a. To what extent do you show students you care about them? How do you show them?
- b. To what extent do you show students you respect them? How do you show them?
- c. How do you describe your classroom management style?
- d. What methods do you use to praise and encourage students?
- e. What level of professionalism do you incorporate into your classroom?
- f. What aspects of classroom management and organization are you lacking in?

4. Planning and organizing for instruction

- a. How well do you feel the curriculum you teach contradicts or supports your students' perceptions of teenage sexuality?
- b. How do you address differences in physical developmental stages of students?
- c. To what extent do you assess student knowledge about a topic before beginning instruction? What methods do you use?
- d. How do you meet the needs of students with learning difficulties?
- e. How often do you evaluate your teaching strategies?
- f. How much time do you spend preparing for a class?
- g. What would you like to do better in planning and organizing for instruction?
- h. How do you describe your teaching style?

Open	Learner centered
Interactive	Coaching
Distant	Enthusiastic
Formal	Active
Informal	Passive

5. Implementing instruction

- a. How much interaction do you have with students outside class?
- b. How would you describe your typical interactions with students?
- c. Describe a typical relationship you might have with a student.
- d. How much detail do you use when answering student questions? Breadth of topic?
- e. How do you take into account the cultural diversity of your class?
- f. What do you do to maintain optimal class engagement?
- g. What do you do to make your students feel safe in the classroom?
- h. How do you handle immature, thoughtless or disruptive classroom behaviors?
- i. How often do you adjust the curriculum to address student interests?
- j. What would you like to do better to implement instruction?
- k. How closely did you follow the curriculum? Why or why not?
- l. What are your most effective teaching methods? For example:

Pre-determined questions	Group discussions
Improvised questions	Personal stories
Student generated questions	Humor
Student led panel discussions	Lectures
Health professional panel discussions	Worksheets
Other panel discussions	Video
Guest speakers/guests	Other media
	Drama

Music

Peer-led activities

Parent involvement

m. Which of the following is most often presented first?

Cognitive, factual, technical, or biological information

Response to student curiosity

Socio-emotional aspects

Relational aspects

Behavioral aspects

6. Monitoring student progress and potential

a. How do you determine if you have been successful?

b. What factors do you identify as contributing to your success?

c. How important to you are pre-post survey analyses?

d. Why do you think you are effective?

Appendix B: Consent To Be An Interview Participant

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Karen D. Hill at Brigham Young University to determine the pedagogical style and personal characteristics of effective abstinence education instructors in the United States.

Procedures

You will have an in-depth interview exploring the influence on your teaching of the following: your professional training and experience, your personal characteristics and experiences, your classroom management and organization style, your planning and organizing for instruction, your implementation of instruction, and your methods of monitoring student progress and potential. The researcher will contact participants for interview times. The interview will be via Skype or by telephone. The interview will be taped or electronically saved and then transcribed.

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However, you may feel emotional discomfort when answering questions about personal experiences. The interviewer will be sensitive should you become uncomfortable.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to subjects. However, it is hoped that through your participation researchers will learn more about effective abstinence education instruction. Findings may be used to guide selection and training of teachers of other value-based program as well as abstinence education instruction.

Confidentiality

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data, including questionnaires and tapes/transcriptions from the interviews, will be kept in a secure storage cabinet and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the questionnaires and tapes will be destroyed.

Compensation

Participants will receive no compensation for completing the survey or being interviewed.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Carol Ward at 801-422-3047, carol_ward@ byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 801-422-3873, 422 SWKT, renea_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Individual Case Analyses

Case #1 Ann

Ann is a smiling and lively woman of 32 years of age. Her striking face is framed by flowing, natural-looking brown hair, which falls just below her shoulders. She appears to be of average size and has typical young, attractive white Caucasian features. She grew up in the southeastern part of the United States and has been an abstinence education instructor in two different programs in that region. Ann is currently in her sixth year of teaching, four of which as a single woman. She has now been married for a year and a half.

Ann grew up in a conservative, religious household with parents who were United Methodists. Her early schooling included being enrolled in some private school, some home schooling and then attendance at a public high school. When sex education was an option at her high school, she was opted out. She says, “It was part of my teaching at home and it was part of my religious teaching and religious upbringing also” and, she says, “It was made clear that it was something for married people. It was kind of the way that I was raised.”

Between high school and before beginning college and then again between college degrees, she was a substitute teacher at a local high school. She received her bachelor’s degree in religion with a youth ministry minor and then continued her education by completing a master’s degree in theological studies. Although the only professional teaching experience she has is with abstinence education programs, she has many years working with adolescents through her involvement with church activities that included teaching lessons and having Bible study events. “I just enjoy young people and I enjoy teenagers. I feel like we get along pretty well and so it is a pretty natural fit. I’m sort of drawn to activities such as this even before becoming an abstinence educator so I have always had an interest in working with youth.”

Ann portrays herself as an optimistic, open extrovert “for sure.” She says of her honest and forthright personality type, “I guess I like to get on my soapbox and get fired up about things and I think that can be catching, that enthusiasm and passion.” In contrast, she also sees herself as “laid back” and “flexible” and one who enjoys a good laugh. She sums up her analytical style as, “I do kind of see things in black and white, matter of fact, in logical terms. And so connecting or improvising, I guess I think in terms of problem solving and so I might come off to some people not as compassionate. I’m more of the thinking and less of the feeling type.” However, she also sees herself as caring “deeply about other people” and “about students.” Family and friends are very important to her and she makes concerted efforts to connect and communicate. She is a verbal person and wittily says, “words sometimes spill out of my mouth before I think them through.” She enjoys writing and feels she is “pretty effective at getting my point across and being understood.” When asked about her comfort level with her own sexuality, she chuckled and responded with “Umm...great!” She says she will go to great extremes to gain competence. To illustrate, Ann’s presentations at the parent workshops are so well prepared, she is often asked if she is a nurse. She also says she is a “person of faith. I’m a Christian.” She is very careful, however, to never let this come out in the classroom as dictated by the terms of the grants for the program.

When asked about her deficits, Ann admits to being “organizationally challenged.” She struggles with tasks such shuffling papers around, organizing handouts and checking the role. Along with that, time management problems in the classroom may affect how much of the lesson is covered as she gets so engaged in the spontaneous dialog that goes on in her class. And she

admits that she is not good at remembering names. She also says after 6 years, she can “do my lectures in my sleep” and has to regularly check herself to keep it fresh.

A quick smile, energetic responses and many chuckles and laughter describe Ann’s demeanor during the interview. When I transcribed the interviews, I parenthetically noted when a participant chuckled or laughed during a response. Ann chuckled or laughed approximately once every three minutes during her hour and a half interview. Only one other teacher laughed as much as she did. Her pattern of laughter was directed toward herself, as she considered her responses to many of my questions. She also made small humorous comments and quips about her interactions in the classroom. Many interview questions required some consideration of topics to which Ann had never given any thought. Often she would give her response and then say, “Did that answer the question?” This seems to reflect her characteristic of wanting to be competent. Also her passion for the abstinence message and her great desire to educate her students about cultural misinformation was demonstrated in the inflections and tone in her voice. Ann was very easy to converse with and her mannerisms were inviting and relaxed. She reported that on student surveys she usually scores 90% and above when the students are asked if they would recommend the program to a friend. This indicates to her they must “like me.” I, likewise, found that I “liked” her.

Ann began teaching abstinence education with an established and reputable program utilized by many schools in the southeast. With major funding cuts, this program was drastically reduced and Ann began teaching with another program that contracts to use the same curriculum. At present, she teaches in charter and private schools, as the public school district does not want the curriculum. She estimates about three fourths of the students are Caucasian and one quarter are African American or Latino. As part of the program, a parent workshop is offered previous to the class presentations so parents can review the content of the curriculum and the presenters can address parent concerns and encourage their child to participate. The amount of parent involvement depends on the school but she says, “No matter how much we tried to engage them, incorporate them into this huge issue, very important issue in their kids lives, the percentages were not good.”

As mandated by company policy, however, a site-approved representative is required to be present in every class for liability purposes. To attend an abstinence class, a child is opted in, rather than out, by their parent.

The dosage for the abstinence curriculum is 450 minutes long, generally held in nine classes over nine consecutive days or in accordance with the class meeting schedule at a school. Some of the content curriculum that Ann mentioned included “a biology day where we talk about where babies come from and talk about the onset of puberty and hormones and what happens when someone is capable of reproduction.” The content is adapted to reflect topics that are age appropriate. She felt the message is a “unifying message” that is relevant to every cultural circumstance and if a parent has opted their child into the program, then it is “something that we all have in common.”

The abstinence education programs that Ann has been involved with offered regular and comprehensive training and evaluation. In her first teaching position, she attended annual weeklong training conferences replete with updates on latest medical statistics, presentations on adolescent brain research and studies on the biology of love. Online resources keep Ann updated on current health news and statistics such as the frequency rates of sexually transmitted infections. Other online trainings on topics such as the biological learning differences between genders helps Ann hone her skills. She also tries to stay abreast of current trends by doing “a lot

of my own homework”, flipping through teen magazines, paying keen attention to the students’ remarks and conversations in the classroom.

Evaluations of the overall effectiveness of the abstinence program are determined along with evaluations of teacher impact by giving students pre and post surveys about their abstinence intentions. Ann explains, “When our scores come back, we generally have a little meeting and flip through them and discuss what predictors we had good movement and which predictors we could improve upon. Generally, after a venue is when we know how we did, how our performance was. If I was weak on a certain predictor, I think about ways I can boost that one. If I’m unexpectedly strong on a predictor, I wonder what it was specifically, what gave me my good outcome in this predictor. Over six years of doing presentations is summed up as, “They just keep getting honed and honed, tweaking here and there, and so I think I found out some good systems that are working for me.” She feels extremely well prepared and “very confident” in teaching abstinence curricula. “I can’t think of any hesitations or in any area where I feel I’m not on stable footing.”

Ann describes her teaching style this way, “I like to use logic. I like the concept of speaking in big ideas and drawing connections and carrying ideas out to their logical conclusion.” She explains, however, her use of logic varies according to classroom composition. She uses logic and critical thinking with low risk, emotionally healthy students who are supported at home. But finds a more emotional approach is better with higher risk kids. She admits that she is probably not the best teacher for higher risk kids. Using logic, Ann says, challenges the students to think critically about the messages they get about sexuality and she invites her students to think about those messages in terms of ideas and implications.

Entrenched with her logic and critical-thinking approach, Ann describes her classes as being replete with humor, passionate delivery, enthusiasm, and wanting her students “to have a good time” in order for them to be comfortable with the topic. She likes to “keep a somewhat orderly slumber party” to help overcome any awkwardness felt in the all-female classes that she generally teaches. Ann portrays her teaching style as open, interactive, and informal where she focuses more on how the students are responding and what they are doing in the classroom rather than the presentation. She also describes it as a “performance to some degree” where she can be animated and dramatic at times.

Ann uses very little lecture and says variety is a key to keeping student interest. She uses open-ended questions to get her students “thinking in a way maybe they haven’t thought of before” and to give “an opportunity to engage the entire class in the dialogue.” Ann also uses questions and discussions to gauge developmental levels and differences in learning styles. She answers student-generated questions based on what is allowed within the curriculum but uses broader concepts to answer more general questions. For example the response to “What is oral sex?” may elicit an answer with appropriate details according to the class maturity level or a less mature class may be directed to seek further information from a parent. In contrast, “How do you know if you love someone?” would trigger a lengthy discussion with the class. One of her techniques is to make the information emotionally relevant often by the use of personal stories, “just talking about life experiences,” and laughingly adds, “things that I have gleaned through my 32 years of experience.” With permission, she includes stories of acquaintances who practice abstinent lifestyles or who re-committed to abstinence. These stories are then used to convey ways to put the abstinence message into practice. Fidelity to the curriculum plan is important to her but she says, “I think I sometimes use the curriculum as sort of a launching pad.”

The strong feelings that Ann has about adolescents and the abstinence message establish the foundation for student participation. She says working with teenagers is a “natural fit” for her as she enjoys young people and respects them as individuals, welcoming “debate and differences and opinions.” She values student responses, right or wrong, and often tells them, “Good job. You are so smart” or she will “thank them for submitting the answer and say why it was a good answer but not quite the one I was looking for.” The language Ann uses is medically accurate and she approaches the subject with reverence and respect “because it deserves it.” Ann explains, “I am operating on core beliefs and think that comes through in the delivery.” Her sincere approach, which she says, “kids can pick up on,” signals to the students her authenticity and believability. She also ensures the class members show respect for the subject and each other.

Developing rapport and connecting with students allows Ann to immerse her students in the class material. She realizes it works in her favor to be young and to dress stylishly and have students think, “you are cool.” Prior to beginning instruction, she establishes a comfortable atmosphere by having students fill out a card with their name, an interesting fact about themselves, one question they have, and one topic they would like discussed over the course of the class. She then shares information about herself and plays a guessing game with the students’ cards. This gives Ann an opportunity to “connect with each one, one on one, talk to them a little bit, actually just make them the center of focus to the whole class. It gives me a chance to have an individual conversation with each student, even if it’s for a brief amount of time.”

Ann’s ability to observe and evaluate individual students as well as the classroom atmosphere allows her to adapt her teaching style and methods to suit the circumstances. She gauges her “logical conclusions” or “emotional” approach according to low or high-risk schools. Some students in the presentations are pregnant or are the product of an unwed pregnancy. Ann seeks to show sensitivity to them and invites them to embrace the message in the context of their circumstances. She watches signals and body language of students to judge level of classroom engagement. She tries to make eye contact as often as possible and determines “how intently they lean in or make eye contact, nod their head, or throw up their hand to chime in something they just thought of.” Many teachers may spurn whispering in class, however, when Ann’s comments are followed by whispering, she often judges that, “they are making immediate application of what I just said and engaging their peers in the subject matter. I think that’s a good thing.” However, she does not allow the classroom to get out of hand. Ann wants the message to reach as many students as possible and utilizes as many ways as possible to engage all of the students. Occasionally, however, a rare student refuses to engage in the class, and she gingerly “cuts her losses” and focuses on the remaining students who do want to listen. To judge the knowledge that students have prior to beginning the presentation, she has the students write down a question or topic they would like addressed. The responses give her an idea of what the most innocent and the most knowledgeable child in the class knows so she can adapt the presentation accordingly. She also reviews student comprehension from previous days by using questions. In order to maximize student engagement, Ann varies her questions, activities and delivery based on her observations.

Conveying the message that the students are important and that she cares enough about their futures to devote her profession to teaching them is important to Ann. Ann indicates the curriculum, “comes right out and tells them about their worth and their value” but she tries to say it with, “sincerity and conviction, and let them truly know that they are too valuable to gamble with.” She attempts to get the students to be “future oriented” and to think about dating well and marrying well. Valid research findings are presented in hopes that students will think critically

and “hit them on a more cognitive level.” In addition, “We want to touch their emotions and have them internalize the information and think of the implications of the information for themselves, for their future, for their families and loved ones. We also want them to put it into practice.” Ann feels she has made an impact when students make an application such as bringing in a magazine article saying, “Look, this is what you were talking about.” She says she likes to see students when, “they get fired up and they get mad at some of the misinformation that they’ve been fed when it’s been made obvious to them.”

Ann also sees herself as a role model for students. She shares portions of her life’s stories with her students, which includes being a teacher as a single as well as a married woman. She says, “It’s nice to be able to say I’m married. I made it. I crossed the finish line and it was worth waiting for.” She shares her husband’s story of re-committing to abstinence 10 years before they were married. It is a “badge of effectiveness” and the “highest complement” for Ann when she hears a student say, “I want to do what you’re doing when I grow up.” She loves her job and says she would like to do it the rest of her life but realizes age would be a barrier.

Case #2 George

George is a slender, young-looking 50 year old who is full of laughter and passionate monologues about the dedication he has to abstinence education and the curriculum he used as well as his classroom management style. He was seated for the interview but is likely taller than average as he had a brief stint overseas as a professional basketball player and coach. He says this influenced his desire to build character and values especially among young men. His hair is very short and his Caucasian facial features are small and defined. He currently resides in the southeastern part of the United States where he was an administrator and instructor with an abstinence program for eight years until funding ended. He clarifies that his comments in the interview are based on his experiences as both an administrator and a teacher.

George obtained two degrees, one in accounting and one in business education and then continued his education by earning a master’s degree. He has worked as a researcher and also taught 14 years in public and private schools before turning to abstinence education. He currently works as a marriage counselor at a family foundation and speaks at conferences and seminars.

George had a “very religious, fundamental” upbringing by “wonderful encouraging parents” who built up his confidence. He was strongly impacted by those early teachings as illustrated by his many confident responses and remarks that had religious overtones. He believes, “Confidence is at the core of humility. Knowing who you are, what your are doing, so you can help others become all that they were created to be and intended to be.” Although, he says, “I have been on both sides,” he is a passionate advocate for choosing to be abstinent before marriage. His personal education about sexuality came through health classes and from peers and the media. Sex was talked about in the home “a little bit” and was very straightforward, “You don’t do that.” He states that his spiritual values go beyond what is taught in public abstinence curriculum but adds, “Everything that’s in abstinence values, I wholeheartedly live out and teach and encourage and am sold out to it.” His engagement in the abstinence movement is prolific. He served on several committees and boards; met and corresponded with evaluators, directors, owners and writers; kept abreast of legislation and blogged.

Some defining characteristics of George are his high energy level and his unabashed passion. When he talks about the inequities of the philosophical bases of sexuality education, he laughs and says, “I get kind of fired up about that!” He constantly exhibited a “fired up” and enthusiastic demeanor during the entire two-hour interview. He considers himself to hold many traits commiserate with a responsible, intelligent, extroverted person: congenial and open,

knowledgeable, empathetic and sensitive, confidant, a good communicator, engaging, trusting, optimistic and humorous. He says he is moralistic but not legalistic in the sense that he, “in no way can force my morals on anyone.” He has high expectations of others but “wants to help them get there because people will help me do that too.” He admits he is “a little bit inflexible from time to time.”

Our interview was the longest one I conducted. George was quite verbose but extremely articulate. He often couched his remarks in laughter and framed them in numbered points. For example, many of his responses would begin with a thought such as, “Well, I think, two things go into that” and then discuss the two things. His responses were lengthy but the depth and breadth of his knowledge and insights matched the intensity of his passion for the subject. He seemed to be very sincere in his convictions without being overly imposing. Being an administrator, he observed and evaluated teachers using similar topics as I was asking so his responses reflected a more mature and studied manner than other teachers. He was very personable, entertaining and animated, addressing me by my name several times. Some people, however, might consider his boldness and intensity somewhat unpleasant.

George is extremely, if not fanatically passionate about the curriculum he used in his program. The dosage was 450 minutes spread over several days of regular class meeting times and included a 30-minute time allowance each for a pre and post-test. The basic foundation of the curriculum believes that the “first and foremost priority teachers of sex education of students should be their parents.” However, they saw little success with attempts to incorporate parents into the program. George remarks, “Most parents have been conditioned to just hand their kids off to whatever school and letting go with that.” Out of the approximately 4000-5000 students per year who participated in the program, around 88% was Caucasian with the balance mostly African Americans. For instruction, school meeting space determined whether genders would be mixed or separated, although the overwhelming staff preference was to always separate the sexes when possible. George says the curriculum was designed for that and almost always had better test results from split gender classes. Several days when sensitive material was presented, genders were required to be separated. A male/female team would teach the mixed gender classes and a teacher of matching gender would teach the single gender classes. Each teacher strictly adhered to the curriculum “because it was so good. We were strong on fidelity to plan, fidelity to curriculum. Fidelity to core never changed.”

The curriculum for the program that George directed was used in many communities in the southeast region of the United States. A minimum of 32 hours of continuing education was required to be a presenter. Annual conferences were offered by the sponsoring foundation and training could also be obtained from other organizations. George boasts that their training “was usually one to three years ahead of everything else across the country” and would include training on teen brain research, developmental brain research, relational issues impacting sex education, bonding hormones and was “always on the cutting edge.” Around 70% of the training dealt with learning the content and then proven teachers led classroom simulations demonstrating the presentations and activities. “We would get to see hands on, effective teaching methods, how personality affected that, how preparing it a little differently based upon...developmental differences.” This was followed by questions and answers and feedback from other instructors. George commented how this preparation “was a powerful thing to give teachers” and built a high level of teacher confidence. Although the curriculum was extremely effectual, George felt all teachers were susceptible to becoming complacent with the material and had to continuously

work hard to maintain optimum enthusiasm and freshness in the presentations in order to succeed.

The program George directed also offered an after-school club, “a kind of positive peer environment club for students.” A few schools embraced the idea and membership grew to thirty or forty students. The abstinence education instructors supported the club and helped build homecoming floats, attended football games or went bowling. It allowed students to see instructors in a less formal setting and that opened some doors and “would really help the classroom setting, the content to come alive a little more...the results would be much more effective.”

Instructors in the program were observed and evaluated by an administrator at least once per semester on such things as content knowledge, presentation, consistency, classroom management and professionalism. Student post-tests scored by professional evaluators were also used to critique teachers and help them discover areas in which to improve. Speaking from the viewpoint as a teacher, George says he personally looks for engaging comments and questions from the students along with the research results to indicate his classroom effectiveness. He also cites the “folders of letters” that were unsolicited from students with “phenomenal” feedback. “Much of them bring tears to your eyes...on how it had changed that young person’s life. You knew they were listening by what they wrote.” He adds, “The formal gives you the head connection. The informal gives you the heart connection.” In evaluating his teachers, George remarks that he would “much rather have people who prepare and work hard and have the character to do that than just talent or just rely mostly on talent. I’ll take the work ethic over talent almost every time, depending on where the balance is.”

The classroom management style for which George received acclaim is based on what he terms foundations, boundaries and guidelines. He claims having these principles of respect and caring in place “sets the environment so they can become good learners” and that the research bears this out. Once students understand and abide by the principles, he is then able to deliver interactive, engaging and enthusiastic presentations. He says no matter the developmental level or learning style of students, variety is the key to effective presentations and includes group discussions, roleplaying, and question and answer sessions at the end of the class. His answers to questions “Would always go back to the curriculum. I want to say 100% of the time.” The curriculum, he adds, is especially good at addressing all learning styles. He praises positive engagement with “a pat on the shoulder, maybe a fist pump, or maybe a thumb’s up or just a ‘Great job’.” He also says humor and stories are critical to success, “If you can have some of those in every class, most every class, you’re going to find that to be most effective...but stories are the best.” George believes a teacher must be able to “be in tune with what’s going on” in the classroom. He sums up his teaching style this way, “Coaching might be as good a word to encapsulate all of that. I found that to be a really effective coach you not only have to teach it, but you have to allow them to work through it, model it, and then let them practice it some as well.”

Being in tune with the class, George explains, means making an assessment of the physical, physiological, hormonal, mental and emotional development of students. He checks with the regular classroom teacher especially in middle schools where wide-ranging developmental levels exist. Being sensitive to, “What they’ve been exposed to personally, family, and other education” and understanding how it “affects the hearing aid that they are hearing through” is necessary. George is attentive to “getting the furrowed brow and the glazed-over look” from the students indicating he’s not getting through or the material is boring or it is

too much. He watches body language, facial expressions and verbal cues. George mentioned he had a few instructors who “probably weren’t gifted to be teachers” who struggled with connecting with the students but most of them “were able to connect with a broad range of kids and backgrounds and developmental maturity.” George feels his “in” for connecting with students was his background as a former college professional ball player and a coach. “The perception was this guy, number one, he cares for us, more than anything; number two, he knows what he’s talking about; number three, because of that, he wants us to get it and he wants us to live it out because it’s evident in his life, that he’s living it.”

George says the students “can read your passion or our passivity” and they “know the ones who care.” Caring, to George, is a choice and is fostered by establishing the foundations, boundaries and guidelines. He says, “I can care but I’m not their friend. “ “You want to have a positive impact on their lives. You care about what they are learning. And to know that you were teaching something that would positively impact kids’ lives, not only their personal life, but their relational, potentially their family lives, and their futures was extremely satisfying and positive.” He conveys the sentiment that, “You have value as a person and your relationships, not only the way you think of yourself, but your relationships should reflect that...we talk about the high value you place on every human being. Not as a sexual being but as a human being.” He wants to give students alternate choices to situations they may have witnessed so they “can make the best and healthiest decision for your life and for your relationships...without condemnation for their family, for their parents, for anything else.”

Case # 3 Robin

Robin was the only interviewee who did not have access to a web camera and was unable to be interviewed on Skype. Therefore, I have no physical description of her but she tells me that she looks “really young”, like she’s in high school. Students question her often about her age but she says, “I think they feel like I can identify with them.” Soon after completing her bachelor’s degree in psychology and a minor in sociology at a school in the Midwest, Robin began her career as an abstinence educator in a southwestern state. She is 25 years old, married and Caucasian. The only other teaching experience she has is as a volunteer teacher, mentor at her church. As part of her duties with the agency where she works, Robin instructs a related program at a local hospital. She has been with the agency about 3 years, although only one year in a teaching capacity.

Robin was raised in a Christian home and her parents were “very vocal about, you know, basically the emotional side of getting involved too quickly or too deeply in a relationship.” They did not want her to date until she was in high school. She recalls learning about sexuality in her combination health and driver’s education class where she felt sorry for the teacher because he was “very embarrassed by the topic and even talking about anatomy.” Her college experience was just the opposite as she had a human sexuality instructor who was very open, so much so that the students were embarrassed. She thinks these extremes on the spectrum helps keep her teaching balanced.

The descriptors Robin uses about herself portrays someone who is easy to get along with and respectable. She considers herself congenial and open, empathetic and sensitive, candid and moralistic, with a high level of caring for others and respect for others. She admits to not being a very demanding person and rates herself moderate in gauging her expectations of others. She feels her creativity is limited a bit in the classroom because she sticks so closely to the prescribed curriculum. But feels she is optimistic, humorous and passionate. Robin would like to be better at organization and sometimes feels frustrated with herself in that area.

My interview with Robin was very succinct. Her answers were complete but lacked the robustness of other interviewee responses. She was thoughtful and pleasant but did not demonstrate much passion in her voice. When I asked her if she thought the interview was true to what she did in the classroom, she said someone might see different perspectives but she tried to explain the best she could. Granted, this was a phone interview but I didn't sense as much passion or animation in her voice as some other teachers, although her sincerity and commitment to the curriculum was readily apparent.

The program where Robin is currently employed continues to operate despite the federal budget cuts. The curriculum used in her program is a well-known and frequently used curriculum. She estimates the student population in the schools that offer their program is 60% Hispanic, 15% Caucasian and the remaining percentage Native American and a mix of other ethnicities. The curriculum is designed for classes with mixed genders. Age-appropriate curricula are offered to 6th graders and above in public schools and religious settings. Class size ranges from 15-30 students. Program dosage is approximately eight, one-hour lessons, depending on the school class schedule. Parents are required to opt in their children to the program and are invited to a parent meeting but few parents attend. Robin says she feels like the parents think they have already read the information on the permission form so don't see a need to come hear it again. There are homework assignments for the students to take home and talk with their parents about but Robin doesn't know if the students are honest about reporting if they do.

Robin feels the curriculum is contrary to the ideas that her students have developed about sexuality through their use of TV, movies and music. And she feels it is important to dispel the misinformation about what is portrayed. She wishes the curriculum addressed the topic of media exposure a little more. The program grant stipulations prohibit depth of discussion of different topics for different grade levels and so Robin responds to student questions accordingly and maintains fidelity to the curriculum "very closely." If there is time on the last day, however, she will respond to student interests because, "I've already gone through everything." She deviates from the curriculum on one point by allowing students to write an anonymous question each day. She then takes about 5 minutes at the beginning of the next day's class and uses the questions to check comprehension and as a review.

Robin began in the abstinence education field as an after-school mentor to 5th and 8th graders, which was "a little less formal than a classroom." She then observed several program presenters and helped in their classrooms for a period of time. Before teaching solo, she attended a formal training on the curriculum. But she says, "It wasn't very helpful as far as helping me feel more prepared to teach in the classroom. I'd say the best was seeing other educators. The trainer that we specifically had wasn't very good at making it seem new or explaining when we came across issues with it. She basically read from the book." Nonetheless, Robin gained confidence and feels very comfortable with her own presentations now although she says, "it's a learning experience every school that I'm at." In order to stay abreast of current trends, Robin collaborates with the other instructors in the program. They often share up-to-date information or current teen topics by email or at their monthly meetings.

The program supervisor conducts annual formal evaluations of the teachers but each time a presentation is complete at a school, the regular classroom teacher is asked to evaluate the abstinence presenter. Those evaluations go straight to the supervisor who will then address any issues with the presenter. There are also monthly meetings with the supervisor. On a personal level, Robin says she evaluates "every day after I'm in the classroom, even after every period." She explains that the first class of the day is "my guinea pig to see how it works. And then by the

afternoon, I've got it kind of down pat." When Robin is confronted with challenges, she readily turns to her fellow teachers and supervisor for advice and suggestions because she trusts their experience and wisdom.

Robin sets a professional tone in her classroom and expects students to respect her even though she can look the same age as some of them. She says, "I'm there to teach. I'm not there to be their friend but I can be a friendly teacher. It's not my job to be just like them or something just to get their approval." She tries to be fun and if she has a chance, she asks about "things they are interested in to get to know them a little bit." She says she doesn't "share too much personally about myself with them because it's more about them and it's about what they're learning." She feels sharing personal experiences will not "increase or decrease their respect for me." At times, she can become embarrassed about some of the questions asked and the students will comment on her face "turning red." But she responds with, "Yeah, this is kind of embarrassing but I'm going to address it." She generally feels prepared when she enters the classroom and writes an outline of the day's topics on the board so she doesn't surprise any of the students with the next subject. Robin also finds having detailed notes of her presentation helpful for the times when she sometimes "goes blank."

Robin utilizes many techniques to foster respect in her classroom. She often publically gives compliments to students who participate and kindly addresses students who are distracted or who give questionable answers to questions. She reminds the students of the importance of the message and thanks them for attending. During discussions, Robin makes eye contact and demonstrates respectful listening and speaking and she expects the students to do likewise. Humor, she explains, is "effective when it's correctly placed" but misplaced when it is used to minimize the seriousness of sexual activity as is often done in TV shows. She uses humor in her classroom to laugh with people in a "kind way."

Robin cares about the message and wants her students to sense her comfort in talking about sexuality topics so their learning will not be hindered. She desires the students to be comfortable "talking about that sort of thing and the facts about STD's and the nitty-gritty of it. It's not embarrassing to talk about, when you are talking about the truth, and how it is because they are not getting that from anybody else." She recognizes, however, "that it's all right to kind of meet resistance" and be "open to the fact that not everyone is going to agree with what the curriculum is teaching or comments that I say and that's OK." She is sensitive to the different upbringings and cultural traditions students may have and how those may differ from hers. Robin knows the message is "important and relevant and I get excited because I know that the information is necessary. And it's not something that a lot of them know. And so I like teaching something new to them and see how they react to it." She also tries to "break down their expectations" that may have been errantly developed through the media.

Robin's feels her age and young looks help her to connect with students and engage them in the class. She says she is "pretty good at feeling out if someone feels comfortable or not" and uses that sense to recognize different learning styles and eagerness to participate in class. She also seeks to engage students by being attentive to the kinds of questions they ask, what they are wondering and what they are trying to process. Discussion and thoughtful responses are encouraged in the classroom with questions such as, "What do you guys think? Have you heard this before?" Robin is respectful of the students and is patient with them as a feeling of safety is established for frank discussions, which may take "a couple of days...for them to feel like it's okay for us to talk about this stuff." She is very careful to complete the curriculum and expects the students to "realize something and maybe change some of their behavior in the future. Yes,

definitely. I don't know how they couldn't change anything or any way because of this." The message coincides with her personal values, which are "the driving force behind why I do it."

Case # 4 Mike

Thirty-nine year old Mike is an anomaly among my participants. He currently lives and teaches on a small remote U.S. island located outside the continental United States. His spouse is also an abstinence speaker and he has a son who attends middle school where his parents present. He lightheartedly describes his ethnicity as "White...I'm about as plain as it can get." He has a slight build and referring to his balding, he playfully remarks, "In all seriousness (it) can affect whether you might be effective or not with certain teens." He says, "My teen years kind of identified who I became as an adult and I think that is the same for a lot of people. And so choices, I made, good and bad, helped to define me and who I became today and what I'm passionate about and so forth. I have personal knowledge when it comes to making decision as a teenager, how things can just really mess up your life, certain decisions, whether it's in sexuality or drugs or alcohol." His only memory of formal instruction about sexuality education was from a video in sixth grade. He says most of his information came from MTV or from peers, which he lightheartedly says, "wasn't correct." Now, however, he gives himself a "very high" rating on his comfort level with his own sexuality.

Mike obtained an associate's degree in radiation therapy and worked for about 10 years in the health field where he says he gained many helpful skills working with people. He has also been a full-time youth pastor for nearly 15 years and became "familiar with speaking in front of crowds and specifically teenagers." He has been a public speaker for 14 years and involved as an abstinence speaker for about 11 of those years. His career in the abstinence field first began as a presenter in Texas and then he became a program director and trainer there. While in Texas, he stopped keeping track after logging presentations to over 10,000 students. He presently volunteers his time to present abstinence education in the schools and communities. For the past five years, Mike has also been a substitute teacher in the local schools.

Mike describes his personality with terms such as congenial and open, candid, moralistic, trusting, hard worker, a "kind of a take-charge person." When asked about his level of optimism and humor, he quipped, "Well, the glass is not just half full for me. It's usually almost all the way full." And then laughingly says, "I tried to mix both of those together in that comment!" He says his level of keeping confidences is "very high especially because, in my professional life as a pastor, that's very, very important." In his teen years, he was the "class clown" but now channels that into more productive avenues. He tries to be "pretty well educated, well read." He thinks he could be better at being empathetic and sensitive although he feels he is very caring which is necessary in the classroom and in a small community. "You know a lot of family situations and you can see how that definitely affects their decision making and so forth. Your heart goes out to people." He says experience has helped him hone his communication skills. He sums up by saying, "I think I'm a pretty good guy!"

The depiction of Mike in my interview was gentle in speech, sincere in his conviction to influence teens and authentic in his desire to become a trusted adult in the lives of youth. His responses to my questions were compassionate and thoughtful and full of innocent laughter and humility. He seemed to simplify some of the complexities of presenting abstinence education to youth expressing the adage, "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Mike was easy-going and mild while exhibiting a quiet passion for helping others.

The curriculum used where Mike currently resides and in most places where he has presented is part of the school curriculum and offered in health or science classes. In middle

school parents “opt in” their students and in high school students “opt out.” Seventh and eighth graders receive 4 total hours of instruction over 4 days each year. Those in high school have the option of attending another 4.5 hours of instruction, giving students the opportunity to receive 12.5 hours of total instruction while in public school. The genders are always mixed in the classes. In Texas, the student population was around 73% Caucasian and 22% African American. The student ethnicity where Mike currently resides depends on the location of the school. It can be exclusively the native ethnicity or down to 1/3 native and 2/3 Caucasian. Students are encouraged to have conversations with their parents however; sensitivity to this request is required as some village cultures include the acceptance of incest and abuse. Mike begins his presentations “talking about their goals and their future...and how their thinking changes as you get older. He covers “what is absolutely necessary but I certainly use a lot of latitude when it comes to stories, when it comes to illustrations and so forth. If I get any kind of new stuff that I heard somewhere else or saw or a life story, it’s in there automatically.” Being an unpaid volunteer and under no grant requirements allows Mike freedom to customize his presentations.

Mike received his initial training as an abstinence educator “within the confines of their building” when he was first employed in Texas. After that he observed many other speakers, team taught, and then finally “got let loose on my own.” He felt gaining the knowledge, internalizing it, getting experience presenting and then training others was key to his success. He says the speakers are not there to impress students but “you have to give them something worth listening to.” Mike also gained skills through the courses he took for his pastoral certification and also cites the benefits of his informal training working in the health field. Mike said he never spoke in front of people as a youth except to be the clown but through his life and teaching experiences, Mike built his confidence level as he addressed multiple nationalities in inner cities, small towns and now an island community. With training inaccessible to him in his present location, Mike utilizes the Internet to keep current on statistics and trends.

When Mike was employed in Texas and when he presented with programs funded by federal grants, formal evaluations were required. Now, however, he evaluates himself, “Every time I walk in a classroom and walk out.” He uses his wife as a sounding board and sometimes his son who is actually a student in his classes to give him feedback and suggestions. Mike says when he was teaching to students that he only saw in the classroom, he felt he was being effective when he would receive accolades from the students after this presentation. But being in a small community and knowing the students through being their pastor or coach or substitute teacher, he rarely receives those kinds of comments from students. They say, “You’re Mike, though. I’m not going to tell you that kind of stuff.” He now has been in the community for 5 years and ponders the influence he has had and wished he could do better. He is cognizant of what goes on in the community, what is posted on Facebook and is concerned about the choices his former students make but continues to offer information about healthy choices through his presentations. Mike suggests that some teachers, “just don’t stick around” long enough to get it in their heads and add their own self to their presentations and that experience is the most effective training.

Mike is aware that his appearance can affect the initial perceptions of students so he dresses in a professional but “cool” way because he doesn’t want his age and his receding hairline to make him look too old. He talks to the kids as they walk in the door and tries to “get into their world” which isn’t difficult because he knows nearly all of the kids by name and likely attended their ball game on the previous night. He begins class by explaining how he got to be the “sex guy.” He immediately sets a light tone so kids can “let their guard down a little bit “and

lets the students know they are “not going to get too serious even though this is serious subject.” Ground rules about respectful language and behaviors are established and he ensures that thoughtless comments are dealt with in tasteful and light ways by saying something funny or by rephrasing the comment using appropriate terms. He highlights positive student participation by saying things like, “Wow, what an awesome answer. Did you guys hear that?” so students will feel validated and respected.

“I’m a mover...while I’m talking, I do not stay in one place. I will project my voice often,” “I try not to be monotone,” and “I’ll move close to them” are all techniques Mike employs in his delivery. His classes are very conversational and include dialogue he controls “but they don’t see that control. They just see, hey, it’s a chance to talk.” Lectures are at a minimum but questions abound in his presentations. He quizzes them for review and uses questions to “lead them to the water and let them take the drink.” Mike has been asking his questions so long that he can predict the questions that will be asked and the answers he will get to his questions. He does not manipulate; manipulation is for your own benefit he says but he tries to motivate them to “the right answer that they realize is reality or truth and then try to elaborate on that.” He creates an atmosphere where the students feel safe so they will participate, learn from each other and ask their questions, keeping any kind of judgment out of the classroom. He says, “Certainly being relational and not mechanical” is what a teacher needs to do and Mike adds, “Go in confident but don’t think you know it all because, when we go in with that, we get into a ‘convince’ mode because we think we know it versus a relational mode and letting the kids talk and be able to say what’s on their mind as well.” He believes student questions are necessary because, “What we think as adults may be completely off from what they may be thinking.” He presents the material he feels that he needs to but remarks that if “you fail to answer (a student’s question) or you refuse to answer it, kids will turn you off for the rest of the time.”

Mike believes teaching kids about healthy relationships is essential knowledge for them to have a productive life at present as well as in the future. He says teaching abstinence is a passion of his and “a part of me wishes I could do it all the time.” Funding cuts, however, require that Mike only volunteers now and he does so because he cares deeply for the students. He realizes that no matter the nationality or cultural norms, “most of those kids want the same things when it comes to a relationship, at least long term.” He “understands people’s individual situations” and is quick to tell students they can do whatever they want; he is not there to force anything on them. “But when I think they hear what is truth about how it is healthier to wait...this is where it jives with them, if you will, it supports their thinking when they hear something that makes sense to them, whether it be that it makes medical sense or maybe it makes educational sense or for some of them, it makes moral sense to them as to why it’s best to wait.” He tells them, “I’m just here to let you know that I care about you.”

Modeling the lifestyle also contributes to his effectiveness. Mike is quick to relate stories about him, but says it was much easier when he did not know the students personally. Nevertheless, “I think it’s so important that they understand. Look I was a teenager as well and I understand, and here’s what I did. But here’s how I changed as well to protect me for my future.” He lets the students know the personal story of him and his wife, “of waiting and how awesome that’s been. And we share those stories and those successes, if you will, with kids, cause that’s what they identify with, honestly.” Mike is a presence in the community and invests and involves himself in the lives of those around him. He laughingly adds, “I played laser tag last night with a few teenagers and ran into a chair and bruised my shin...but that’s beside the point.”

Case #5 Nate

Nate was 15 years old when he first began in the abstinence education field. He was reared in the Midwest by a mother “who runs a home for troubled or pregnant teenage girls” so he says, “I’ve always kind of been around that, you know, that message.” Nate is only 26 years old but has over 10 years experience being an abstinence advocate although he no longer teaches due to federal funding cuts to abstinence education programs. He has short dark hair, is clean-shaven, appears physically fit and by our cultural standards, a nice-looking, married, Caucasian young man. Soft-spoken, humble and down-to-earth describe his manner. He says he was “raised in church” and loves his parents dearly but realizes there wasn’t a lot of open communication in his home and can’t recall that sexuality was talked about at all. It was “just one of those things you were supposed to understand and not ask questions... you know you’re not supposed to do it because you’re told and that was it.” At present, however, he rates his comfort level with his own sexuality as a 10 on a 10-point scale.

Nate recalls his teenage years, “Me being the teenager that I was, (I had to) find out on my own, or why do I believe this. Is it just because you tell me to, or whatever?” He continues, “(I was) putting myself in some situations where I learned from those situations,” referring to a long relationship he had in junior high. After high school, Nate attended a couple of years of college and during that time volunteered with the Big Brother, Big Sister program. He developed a passion for helping kids figure out their lives and says, “I have a heart for youth” and he wants to “work with somebody and teach them self-respect and all that stuff, which is what it all boils down to.”

Unlike other participants in this study, Nate is “not a talker.” He says, “I’m quiet and if you were to tell me I was going to do this job before, I would say you’re crazy. There’s no way I can get up in front of kids and talk, especially about sex. But, I mean, you gotta just put yourself out there.” Nate says he is not normally open nor candid and not very confident in himself. He describes his humor as “stupid humor, goofy” and says, “people tend to laugh because I’m nervous and being retarded.” In contrast, Nate describes many of his strengths such as being empathetic and sensitive and says he “cares too much” and often cares so much “to where their problems become mine, but shouldn’t.” He is trusted and is often “the one they normally come to when they get problems” because they “don’t have to worry about me blabbing my mouth.” Respectful, moral, creative, encouraging, optimistic are also descriptors Nate gives himself.

I found Nate’s quiet, subdued characteristics offers an atypical personality type for the abstinence educators I interviewed. He appeared introverted and although he has an abiding passion for the subject and for helping youth, he displays that concern in a gentle manner with depth and feeling. He explains that he becomes lively and animated in the classroom, but his interview reflected his calm nature. Nate’s responses contained many colloquial expressions and weren’t particularly robust, however, his sincerity, congeniality, genuineness and cognizance of the nuances of abstinence education were apparent in all he said.

The curriculum Nate used is one that is often used in many other parts of the country. He says they researched “nearly every curriculum that was out there” and chose this one because it offered a different curriculum for every grade level. Nate and his team presented in around 33 public schools, often as part of health classes. Students in grades 7 through 12 received either a one or two weeklong workshop. The ethnicity makeup of the classes depended on the location of the schools with “the south (side of town) mainly Caucasian while the north side was a combination Hispanics and Blacks.” When federal funding ended for Nate’s program, classroom teachers continued teaching the abstinence message as mandated by state law. Parents were

required to give permission for their child to be included in the workshops and a student could choose to leave at any time. The composition of most classes had the genders mixed and was taught by a male, female team. When single gender classes were held, as sometimes was the case with particular schools or ages, similar gender teachers taught. Nate prefers single gender classes for the older students because it allows the students to “open up” and allows him to be “real about what they are going through.” He states, “Whether they listen to my advice or not, you know, they still had questions, they still want to know.” Parents were invited to workshops but no parents attended or visited the Facebook or MySpace pages that were especially designed for parents. Nate says, “They didn’t want to talk to their kids about this stuff. (They think) that’s our job, not there’s.”

At age 15, Nate observed the director giving presentations and began his early training. Later on, he was formally trained on how to use the curriculum and also attended annual national conferences where representatives from his and other programs shared their best practices. The formal training, although critical to gain the knowledge about statistics and content, is not what Nate considers most important. He states that having the correct information is important but “one of the reasons we were successful is because we each had our own way of presenting and relating to the kids rather than by going line by line and number by number, you know, and just handing them over the book.” His team consisted of members with a variety of backgrounds such as a former drug addict and a female who had been pregnant as a teen. They often substituted stories in the curriculum with appropriate personal experiences. The best training, according to Nate, was observations and experience. He received no training on classroom management but states, “I think actually sitting in a classroom, watching what unfolds in that classroom, how to react, how the teacher reacts. I think that is the biggest learning tool.” Commenting on training, Nate sums up by saying, “Without passion for the youth, you can have all the training you want and it’s not going to be effective. So I think that is really the number one thing, just having a passion for it.”

Program and teacher evaluations were professionally evaluated by administering pre and post surveys to the students. The results of the posttests, which calculated the impacts of the presentation on the students, were returned to Nate and his team and were reviewed and discussed. In addition, evaluations came from several other sources. After each presentation, the teachers discussed their experiences and offered suggestions to each other. Several presentations were recorded on video and were evaluated by the team, which resulted in “tweaks” being made to their presentations. Nate says he gauges a good presentation when the classroom discussion turns into comments and rebuttals between students and “then you could tell it was in ‘clicking mode’.” Another method was the comment cards from the students, which reflected their thoughts on the class. Some comments “weren’t so good to read” but “there’s always at least one kid that will let you know that you made a difference or even that you gave them something to think about.” Nate says, “That’s all the satisfaction in the world for me and I was plenty satisfied with that. Getting to help those kids.”

Nate’s teaching style is open and interactive. He likes to have a good time but establishes rules to keep order, especially during discussions. He says, “One kid isn’t going to ruin it for the rest of the class. I’m not going to have that.” The curriculum is designed to spend two weeks delivering workshops to one middle school class and during that time, Nate learns all the students’ names so he can get them involved. Despite his quiet nature, Nate says he is very enthusiastic and animated in the classroom because “You can’t sit there like a bump on a log or they’ll fall asleep. We like to get up there, kind of in-your-face feel.” He has all of the lessons

memorized so he doesn't have to refer to the book, which enables him to better relate with the students. Questions are used to engage the students, spark discussion and gauge student knowledge on the topic so he will know where to go with the class presentation. In answering student-generated questions, Nate says, "If it's a question that they ask, you know, I'm not gonna lie to them. I'll tell them, from my experience, whatever, as much detail that's needed" all the while keeping his answers within appropriate bounds.

The atmosphere in the classroom is professional, respectful, safe and fun. Nate wears business casual attire to show respect for the classroom teacher and school administrators and to establish authority because he is so young. But he says, "It makes it harder to relate to the kids when you come in all dressed up." He establishes respect in the classroom by "being honest, being real and being open. They can tell if you are just filling them full of crap or if you are really there for them. Kids can read you a mile away." He says the first couple of days are tough because the kids are "just watching you. Seeing if you're honest, if you're truthful. They're seeing your mannerisms." The use of personal stories and "being vulnerable" helps establish trust. "And they can tell if you truly care or if you're just there telling them things you're supposed to." Some students see him in town and feel safe enough to call out to "The sex guy." Some students confide in him after class to which he only listens and gives no advice. He just lets them "talk and get it out." Also he uses humor often. He says, "Since we did have a team, just kind of bounce off each other and it's...and yeah, we like to have fun. "

Nate is very passionate about influencing students to avoid the mistakes he made when he was younger. He says, "Put me in front of those kids and I'm not going to shut up. You know, that's in me. That's what I want." He doesn't present workshops because he's there for the job. He's there because he has "heart" and "passion" and he doesn't have "to force it out." He wants the kids to know that he knows what they are going through and that he is there, someone is actually taking their time to talk or to listen to them. He realizes the various backgrounds of his students as some of them live in a "shelter down the road" and others are from affluent parts of town, but they all need honest, accurate information and encouragement. Relating to the students is essential. He explains, "the only difference between any presenter, great or horrible, it's the fact that some of them couldn't get those walls down." Nate believes his biggest asset in being relatable is his past experiences.

Case #6 Peter

Peter is a slender 39-year-old Pacific Islander who says his 74-inch height helps get the attention of his students. He is the youngest of 4 children and says he was constantly around younger people. Peter "grew up in the church" and was very naïve and sheltered about sexuality. He received "very little" information from his parents and doesn't recall anything in public education. He says, "I learned it all on site." Peter has a strong belief about the message he delivers to the students, "It's so much more than, 'say no to your sexuality until marriage.' It's so much more than that. It's about becoming the person you are designed to be. And so, growing up, I didn't have that freedom. I didn't have that drive to pursue my goals and dreams because I felt confined, I felt suffocated."

He started being a youth leader early in his college years. After earning a degree in English education, he taught middle and high school students for 7 years. After tiring of the bureaucracy of the public school system, he began work with the YMCA where he found the non-profit sector widened his scope for avenues to impact youth. He looked for further opportunities in his community, which resulted in a position at another local agency, which brought him to the abstinence education profession. He says, "It wasn't abstinence that drew me

in. It was the ability to impact more youth. I don't think I knew what I was getting into. Because prior to this job, I hadn't gone around and go, "Hey, save sex until marriage." It was just a lifelong message for me." He continues, "This (job) kind of gave me roots to a message that I believed in for many years. I had never taught it though, with this much passion, with this much drive." Peter is married and the father of twin toddlers and with a broad grin says his wife has to "reel me in sometimes when we are in a public restaurant because I say things that are just normal words for me now." Peter has taught abstinence education for two and half years in the Southwest region of the United States and about this experience he remarks, "I can't believe I do that. I wake up and I have the opportunity to invest in families and youth." Aside from his position as an abstinence presenter, he participated in community committee meetings that were associated with a statewide abstinence movement. Peter no longer works full-time as a presenter; however, he still substitutes for the agency.

Peter's contagious and energetic smile matches his spirited and lively manner, and in his terms, "I'm just spunky." He describes himself as optimistic, humorous, enthusiastic, passionate and driven. Being sensitive and empathetic, he says, goes with the territory of teaching this subject. He cites examples of when a "12-year-old kid raised their hand in class and asked, 'Who do I talk to?' both my parents are in jail." And "I had a sophomore girl raise up her hand and go, 'I have a STD', right in the middle of class. She was pregnant, so it was not a good situation." So, Peter says it is a balance game for him and he recognizes that teachers "have to be resourceful, on a spur of a moment." He admits the things that frustrate him are "a student who is apathetic, an adult who is unwilling to invest in young people and in another generation" and obstinate behavior. He has a great desire "to see people grow. Go from one level to the next level, to move one step at a time towards their goals and dreams." He says he tries to "encourage them" and "prod them a little bit with some enthusiasm."

During our interview, Peter's animated movement, voice inflections and facial expressions all reflected his exuberance and excitement for having the opportunity to have an impact on other people through his presentations. He repeatedly used refrains that echoed his overarching themes of wanting students to pursue their goals and dreams and having a trusted adult in their lives to help them in this pursuit. He had quick wit and an abundance of lively and contagious laughter. He was conversant and personable, asking about my family and complimenting me on the few things I shared. He was relaxed and seemed to have great zest in discussing his experiences with abstinence education. The interview was informative, yet focused less on routine details and more on his ideologies concerning the message and his desire to "wake them up" and "give them permission to look forward."

Most of the classes in the region of the country where Peter teaches have "a wide variety of mixed cultures," but are mainly Caucasian and Hispanic. The curriculum is offered to public schools in grades six through twelve for an hour per day for five days. Parent consent is obtained before a child can participate and parents are invited to observe the classroom instruction but few accept the invitation. Primarily Peter teaches mixed gender classes by himself with an occasional team teaching opportunity. He rarely, but occasionally, presents to solely male or female classes. He comments, "There is a significant dynamic in the classroom when the genders are broken up. You can isolate the message a little bit more." He says he covers the curriculum but uses it "as a skeleton" because the variety of activities offered is adaptable according to the dynamics of the classroom. Because he has memorized all the activities, curriculum and "a good portion" of the statistics, he often allows student-generated questions to guide the flow of the class and he says, "I weave the curriculum into the questions they ask me."

Peter received “a number of different trainings” that lasted “anywhere from two to four days long” in the use of the curriculum. A demonstration of the activities and presentation of the content were given by trained facilitators with the trainees acting as students. He feels training is important in equipping presenters with content knowledge and he does not discount the necessity of having that knowledge, however, he says, “All the years of training we’ve had is irrelevant. As a public speaker, as a trainer, as a facilitator, there has to be transference of the information and the education you have to your audience. So I would say the ability to build that bridge with the audience outweighs training.” He adds, “I just think teachers have an innate ability to connect with their audience. That’s why they choose the profession. So, you know, I don’t think there’s a degree that really prepares you.

You need to be committed to young people. You need to have a commitment to your audience as a speaker.”

The agency administrator where Peter is associated evaluates the instructors once or twice a year and gives post surveys to the students in order to gauge results. Some time later, the student evaluations are compiled then shared with the presenters. For more immediate confirmation of his teaching effectiveness, Peter examines the anonymous questions and comments he receives during the instruction week. “Personally,” Peter clarifies, “as a teacher, you’re a critic of yourself constantly.” He has gathered over 100 letters that he keeps. Often the students remark that he is “pretty crazy.”

Peter’s teaching style is informal, open, interactive but is also “obviously mixed with some formality. He says, “I would think I’m a little bit unorthodox in my delivery.” He is firm with the students when he first enters a classroom but sets no formal rules. He expresses to the students that he needs their respect but formally setting rules “disappeared” as he grew in teaching maturity. He does “little things” to establish the classroom tone he desires: introduces himself, welcomes the students, expresses his enthusiasm to be there and puts the emphasis on the students by telling them this class is about them and their relationships, not “two plus two.” He says he also honors the classroom teacher, thanks the school, shakes hands, gives “high-fives” and gives verbal compliments. He physically moves around the classroom and “constantly changes it up” by using volunteers, telling stories and being humorous, using his markers as a boy and a girl visual aid to represent a couple. The agency policy is to avoid answering personal questions, however, he often uses stories that are “made up” or are true accounts that others have experienced that demonstrate a principle. He uses questions like, “Are you kids mature enough to handle this?” to garner student attention to his stories. Peter then says, “They start listening and they listen all five days as the stories have to do about them.” When students ask questions, he answers with either specific, detailed information that is appropriate to the question or formulates discussion so the question is redirected back to the student. For example, when a girls asks if she should have sex with her boyfriend, Peter tells her that he is not going to answer that question, but here are some questions she needs to think about.

Peter dresses professionally, articulates well, engages him and the students in the class and “sticks to the message.” Beyond these basics, his goal is to create an atmosphere where the students “feel alive” and “safe.” Sometimes known as “the green Jello man” or “the sex guy,” he is “excited” to teach and expresses his “passion for this audience and my desire to see them excel and really pursue their destiny and their future goals and dreams.” He recognizes his message is an “eye-opening experience” for many of the students as they “come in with a cloud over their head” because the “message out there is skewed.” Peter begins the workshop by telling students “there’s nobody like you” and “placing value on ‘A’ student, not necessarily the classroom.” He

speaks to them about their significance and value, that they matter, that there is no one else like them and how their dreams and goals may impact others. He feels students are “hungry” for someone to tell them this and that his message is all about “taking care of yourself” and it belongs to them. He acknowledges that not all of the students will buy into his message but feels great satisfaction that he can walk away that week “knowing that someone’s life is going to be altered” because of his efforts. It’s a message and position about which he says, “I love it! I love it! It’s a lifetime message for me!” He says he wants students to know, “It is a thrill growing more mature and growing older.”

When asked about his techniques for achieving the kind of classroom he has, Peter laughingly responded, “There are no techniques. That’s the beauty of it. If I could tell you how to do it, then everybody could do it.” After a bit more probing however, he describes that “it’s about wanting to get down at their level” and has everything to do with connecting with the audience, convincing them of their significance and being an effective public speaker. He says he talks to each student and that his goal is “to connect with every student in that classroom regardless of whether he or she is square or circle or triangle.” It plays in his favor to be “pretty charismatic in the classroom.” When he first began teaching the abstinence curriculum, it was all about the content such as “1 in 4 of teenagers are sexually active and will end up with an STD after they graduate from high school.” But now he has re-focused his emphasis to “put value on the person.” He feels it is invaluable to tell the students on the first day, “You have permission to go after you goals and dreams” even though “we come from all walks of life.” He has a great desire to connect with the kids and expects “someone’s future is going to come to fruition because of your message. The next 90 minutes you’re going to spend with the youth, someone’s life is going to be saved.” Peter recounts a poignant story of an 8th grade girl who participated in a class activity that allowed her to express an emotional event that occurred with her boyfriend. Afterwards she wrote an anonymous question, “What do you do if your boyfriend is pressuring you to have sex? I like this boy.” Peter addressed the question in class by leading an open discussion using appropriate content from the curriculum while not knowing the submitter. At the end of the workshop, he received a note obviously from the same girl saying, “Thank you so much. I was contemplating suicide because of the pressure I was receiving from my boyfriend. I broke up with him. You saved my life.” He reiterates, “You are going after that one person or those few people. And you don’t know who they are.” Peter summarizes by stating presenters need to make it, “practical. It needs to be charismatic. It is needs to be applicable to their life. I think that is (what) makes a quality message.”

Case #7 Tina

Tina is the 32-year-old married mother of five and resides in the Midwest region of the United States. She readily speaks about her experience of being a single teenage mother; how she struggled to graduate from high school and that she often ended up homeless. She believes these experiences “help me be even more effective in the classroom because I can see these teen guys and these teen girls headed on a path that I wouldn’t want anybody to go down.” She has been an abstinence instructor for over 5 years.

Tina has come a long way since her challenging teen years. She graduated from a technology school as a certified medical office assistant and was employed as an office manager in a doctor’s office where she managed the internship program. She continued her education and will graduate in August of 2012 with her bachelor’s degree in business management. She is currently employed with her second agency as an abstinence instructor. In addition to her position as a classroom instructor, for the past several years she has been a motivational speaker

at area high schools and church groups, and a presenter to females at a juvenile correctional facility. She readily shares her personal story and talks “about why it’s important to save sex for marriage and regain abstinence if we’ve already had sex.” Her story has also been published in a magazine for non-profit organizations. Along with sharing her story, Tina is very engaged in the abstinence movement statewide. She was invited to the state capital where she was “right up front and close” to representatives and senators and spoke on behalf of continuing abstinence education funding. She says the legislators “were very happy to see someone come out, especially being an African American and being young and being a part of that movement.”

Tina explains that her formal experiences learning about sexuality are something she doesn’t remember very well. Her mother “didn’t really talk much about sex. The only thing she would tell us was just don’t have sex. She didn’t explain anything else, just don’t have sex. And then the other message was, if you do engage in sexual activity, then make sure you use a condom or birth control pills.” She had comprehensive sex education in her work and family class in middle school but said she wasn’t “really taught abstinence education.” She now totally embraces the message and says, “Everywhere I go, I take the value of abstinence in any conversation outside of the school, outside of work, that’s still my moral stand...is abstinence education, abstinence until marriage.”

The descriptions that Tina uses to describe herself portray a strong, deliberate and caring person. She considers herself congenial and open, displaying a transparency about herself to her students while maintaining her professionalism. “I want them to be able to relate to me and know that I am a real person,” she says. “I think that is very important in a class that they don’t think you have a perfect life because otherwise they may shy away and think like, she don’t relate to me or she don’t know what I’m going through.” She says she always wants to think the best about people and bring out the best. “I’m an encourager. I feel like I have a very strong personality and I’m very outgoing and outspoken and that I have a big impact on my students.” Tina also wants to empower her students. She explains, “they maybe have low expectations for life, I’m going to encourage them. I’m going to bring them up so they can have high expectations for their life.” Tina sees herself as having a very high work ethic and being dependable. Even when she is sick, she knows “the kids are looking forward to seeing me...there’s just something about those kids that make me feel glad that I came today.” She claims her interpersonal skills, her verbal communication skills and being highly organized also help make her effective.

Tina had limited time when our interview was held as she had a class directly following. She made sure I understood that she could not be late so her responses to the questions were succinct, yet thoughtful and meaty. There was no hesitation when I posed questions to her, indicating to me that she had, indeed, honed her skills as a public spokesperson for abstinence. She would often make a statement, however, and then add a grin and a small chuckle that seemed to demonstrate a kind of sweet sincerity. She was unabashed when she recounted her story as a single teenage mother and very boldly explained that she teaches her daughters only abstinence until marriage. Her manner and presence seemed business-like, perhaps because of our time limitation and it seemed she could exude an authoritative presence in the classroom. In contrast, she also displayed an element of lightheartedness and a genuine concern to connect and empower her students. I sensed she could have a good laugh with her students, if the situation allowed.

The curriculum Tina presents not only advocates abstinence, but also has a social values component. The curriculum may be offered in each grade from sixth to tenth, according to the desire of the school, and consists of 4 days of instruction of about 50 minutes each day. Tina

estimates 60%-70% of the students are Caucasian, 20-25% are African Americans with the remaining percentage Asian and Hispanic. Workshops in public schools or private schools are held in conjunction with their health, family or science classes. Parents must give written permission for the child to participate. Tina says a parent meeting is held and the parents love the program. She says the program is widespread in the community and she recruits other groups such as those at apartment complexes, community organizations, churches and universities and offers summer programs so students who choose to do so, can reinforce what they learned throughout the school year. No matter where Tina teaches, she says, "I make sure I follow the curriculum very closely because the curriculum has been evaluated and actually works. So I stick as closely as possible so you can get the same results."

Being well trained is integral to Tina's success. Job seminars and workshops are required where information and statistics are relayed so teachers can give the students current and factual information. Tina also shadowed other teachers, studied the curriculum and wrote her lesson plans before receiving director approval to teach. She also attended a national abstinence education workshop held on the state level where guidelines and standards for abstinence education were taught. The agency where Tina is employed is the "program trainer" where other organizations receive instruction on the curriculum. She says being part of these trainings contributes to her further understanding of abstinence education and what is "needed to be taught in the classroom." Her high confidence level is maintained through attending regular staff meetings where current statistics and research are discussed and where the teachers are encouraged to read "a lot of different books pertaining to teenage sexuality and different things like." Tina considers herself very knowledgeable citing that, "Even today I was at a middle school teaching and the teacher, on the evaluation, wrote that I was the best speaker he had ever had and that I was very knowledgeable."

The executive director, classroom teachers and students evaluate Tina's presentations. She receives constructive criticism and comments from each of those sources that she then uses to improve her teaching. The administrative evaluation is a periodic in-class observation but the classroom teacher and students complete questionnaires each time Tina presents. Along with those evaluations, she says, "I think for me, my measure is what students are telling me." Flash cards and pledge cards are given out at the end of the workshop and she is thrilled at the enthusiasm the students show, especially when they proclaim, "I'm definitely saving sex for marriage."

Tina enters her classroom assignment wearing a professional suit or dress. She makes introductions, gives some background information and rules and then tells students what to expect for the entire week. She says she stands calm, giving direct eye contact and "lets them know that I'm not shy or afraid or anything like that. My body language also displays confidence." Her rules include the students not sharing any personal stories and "no talk shows...we can't talk about talk shows." She prepares all of her materials the night before, reviews the lesson "to make sure that I hit all the goals, objectives for that day" and then she spends time "thinking about how I want to conclude, what's the most important thing you want the students to take away from the classroom." She is cognizant of different learning styles and classroom compositions and varies her methods so she can "get the message out to everybody in the classroom so no one feels left out." Tina recaps her previous day's lesson, perhaps repeating herself "over and over again to make sure they understood" or "break it down even further, or simpler terms, if I feel like maybe somebody didn't get it." She is careful, however, to only use professional language. She says she "takes a lot of humor into the classroom" to keep her

students entertained and focused and that her students often remark, “You the funniest teacher we ever had.” Classroom discipline is usually minor and is often left up to the classroom teacher. She tries to catch students exhibiting a value that was taught in the class and she will sometimes reward them with candy. She says she answers a lot of questions because she feels the students learn more from the questions they ask. One of weaknesses on which she has improved is the speed of her speech. She says she can talk very fast but realized that was affecting student learning and she doesn’t want to detract from her goal of letting her students be “empowered to do what they’ve been taught.”

The curriculum message that is delivered by Tina often surprises students. “We’re not going in and teaching to say no to sex but teaching them character values. Teaching them to think about their future. Teaching them to think about consequences.” Tina says the students have to make a connection, “Something she’s saying has to make sense or I want to really live it because of the passion of what she’s saying.” Conveying that passion and caring, Tina believes, is instrumental in her success, “I actually believe in what I am teaching. I think that is the most effective thing—to believe in abstinence education.” She wants “to identify what the needs are in the classroom, what are some things they believe to be true that’s not, and how I can educate them to believe the truth and say what the truth really is.” She talks about their goals and their dreams and “sometimes I even tell them that I care and that’s why I’m there and I really care about them and I want to help them make healthy choices.” She is also sensitive with her reactions to students who may already be sexually active or who may come from a home situation with a teenage parent. She sometimes can identify these students by the questions they ask or amount of comments they make. On the first day of class she is sure to say that those who may already be sexually active are “still worthy, they are still valuable” and that regaining abstinence is possible. By the same token, she is keen to identify students who are shy or embarrassed and not place them in awkward situations. A sense of her classroom atmosphere is reflected in an anecdote Tina shared, “Two guys came up and they wanted to give me a hug. And so I gave them a hug back and show them I really care.” Tina says she keeps her passion alive from year to year by remembering her experiences as a teenage mother and by looking at her own community and the rates of teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and poverty.

“I’m this person who is always looking to encourage, always looking to impact somebody’s life. So for me, when I go into a classroom, that’s what I’m looking for. I’m looking to make the change.” Tina’s goal in teaching abstinence education is to “know my audience...know what their needs are,” and “key in on those students who may be struggling or the students I know who got the message.” She says this ability to identify these students is “just a habit... a skill that I learned.” When she first started teaching she told herself, “I’m not here to reach the whole entire classroom, if I do then that’s great. But if I could walk away knowing that one student’s life was touched today or one student changed their mind about saving sex before marriage, then I did my job.” It gives her great fulfillment when students thank her for “coming out today” or say, “I was thinking about having sex and you really changed my mind today.” She lets them know they can make a change if they want to. She says it is a “satisfying feeling to know that you are empowering, educating our youth for tomorrow. You know, they are our future generation. And you are empowered to know that you are helping make a difference in their lives.”

Because she has lived in the same community for a number of years, Tina is recognized outside of the schools and often has a student come up to her or point and tell a parent that she is the one who taught the class about abstinence. She also believes she is a particularly good role

model in inner city schools where being an African American with an abstinence message is scarce. Of her students, Tina says, "I think they look at me as somebody who is real. It gives them a picture of reality, like oh, it really can happen. Then also, they look at me as someone who is relatable. They also look at me as a leader and a role model. You become a part of the community and the kids see me over and over again." Tina is certain, "it has to be a value that you have in your heart that you really and truly believe in to be an effective abstinence educator."

Case #8 Karla

Karla has been teaching abstinence education for nearly 6 years in a city in the Midwest. She is a Caucasian 43-year old mother who is in her second marriage. Her first husband died when her son was 10 months old and she uses this experience in the classroom, "I talk about being a single parent, not by the choices I made but by circumstances. And I get them to realize...I make it relevant to what I'm talking about." Karla has a bachelor's degree in business administration and is currently pursuing a master's degree in education. She has had formal teacher training and education classes, has completed her student teaching and has been a substitute teacher. Other related work experience includes working with medical billing and with patients in several doctor's offices. Karla feels her medical background helps with what she teaches. Although she feels that it is important, she says she does not participate in any additional efforts to promote abstinence due to her time limitations working full-time and caring for her family.

Karla always felt she could talk to her parents about sexuality topics. They provided her with a "very old video" to watch "but I guess I never really felt a need to ask my parents." She recalls being given "the talk" in elementary school but never a mention of "abstinence in particular." She does recall, however, a presentation of different contraceptive methods in her health class and "feeling very overwhelmed that there were so many choices and how you could ever keep anything straight." She says she is very comfortable with her sexuality at this point in her life and feels her lifestyle choices lend credence to her teaching "because it's not doing one thing and then doing another. I'm trying to be a role model about it. It lends me honest credibility." She says she hasn't made a lot of choices she regrets.

The descriptions Karla uses about herself indicate a sensible and pragmatic person. She says she tries to be optimistic but says, "I think rather than optimism versus pessimism, I think I'm right there in the middle. I think I am a realist." She says she is honest and forthright, "If I'm giving an example from my life, then it's an honest example." And she explains that she has "good values and good morals. But it's not something I try to preach." Being a life-long learner is important to Karla and she has a high work ethic, "I do what's expected of me, when it's expected. I try to be as responsible as possible. Go over and above." Karla prides herself on respecting authority, "I was a rule person. I followed the rules. I didn't break them very often." She has respect for others' opinions, views and rights and expects respect in return. "I think it really bothers me when someone is out and out rude, disrespectful." She tries not to be rude to anyone, "even the people that cut you off in the grocery store." She views herself as "an easy-going person", however she says, "My children would probably say I am stressed and uptight. Everybody has stressful times. I do good under pressure but probably not so pleasant at times." She also suggests that she is "probably not very sensitive just because sometimes my mind is going different directions." Karla tends to "take people at face value until I get burned, until they do something that makes me think negatively of them. So I'm probably a little too trusting in the classroom as well because sometimes they can take advantage of me when I'm not in control of

the classroom.” Her communication skills have improved from when she “used to be horrible in front of people.” But now she says, “I would hope in the classroom, I would hope I come across as being a good communicator.” Other character traits she mentions are having a good sense of humor and being “very detailed oriented.”

In the interview, Karla’s responses indicated that she had thought about the questions I had sent to her previous to the interview and even remarked that she had written some of her thoughts in preparation. She added very little embellishment to her answers as compared to other participants and projected fewer of her own feelings about the curriculum or the students. She was cheery and pleasant but also expressed sentiments about sides of her that reflected her “realistic” character traits. More than any other participant, she alluded to her commitments to her family.

The curriculum Karla uses is based on developing positive social values including abstinence. It is presented mostly in public schools, “40 to 50 minutes per class and I get, typically, 4 or 5 days with them.” Most often Karla teaches solo but, on occasion when a school requests, she will team-teach. In both instances, the classes contain both genders. She estimates 75% of the students are Caucasian, 20% African American and the remainder Mexican American or Asian. Students attend the classes unless parents opt them out. Karla follows the curriculum, “as closely as possible so I don’t get myself in trouble.” By “trouble”, she means, “I tell them this is what happened in my life that I make sure it is a true example. That way I don’t have go, ‘what did I make up? What did I say?’.” She continues, “I try not to deviate at all from (the curriculum) but sometimes it is inevitable depending on their questions. You kind of have to, you want to make sure you are answering their questions. So you have to deviate that way.”

Concerning training, Karla says, “I don’t have a lot of insecurities because I have been well trained and I am very knowledgeable of the subject.” Training in her office occurs twice yearly and “more if we find we need it.” Monthly staff meetings keep her informed of “extra things to read” and allow her to receive any additional or background information that is needed. She cites that her college courses in education “are exactly what you need to become a teacher—classroom management, how to organize your classroom or how to make sure kids aren’t walking around and making sure you are talking to every student.” She says she also likes to attend “extra community trainings” such as one she recently had on “sexting” and sexual harassment in the schools.” Karla keeps abreast of current trends in teen sexuality issues by listening to news reports, being attentive to celebrity gossip and noting student conversations about the media they are watching. She will “make a point to watch the movie they are talking about or watch the current TV shows that are out there” to be prepared to address issues and questions that students pose.

Evaluations are part of Karla’s teaching experience and she only mentions those completed by the classroom teachers and the students. Classroom teachers rate her on items such as being on time, on task, not “going off on a random tangent.” The students’ evaluations of her often contain comments such as, “Oh she was so fun or she had a great sense of humor. This was very educational.” One of the ways Karla, personally, determines if she has been successful is by “spontaneous outbursts” such as when she is greeted with excitement and anticipation when she arrives with comments such as, “Are you going to be here the rest of the week? Oh, that’s really good cause I love talking about this.” Also, “Homework participation is a big thing. If they’re not really into the class, you’re not going to get as much participation of the homework.” Karla explains it makes her “feel good” when past students remark to her, “‘See, I’ve still got the pledge card.’ You know, that makes me feel good cause that makes me feel like they listened,

they understood, they're taking some of what I said to heart and they are thinking about it." And, "It's always nice to hear, "Oh you're the lady who talked to us about that."

In portraying her teaching style, Karla describes her preparations as doing "a lot of reviewing and background information so I feel like I know everything I can and if I don't know it," she continues, "I can get caught in a little bit of a confidence issue sometimes in the classroom but, you know, I will somehow check it out and get back to them if I don't know the answer." Through her years of experience, however, she says, "I've got it down to a science." She believes "organization is the key to everything" and makes sure her materials are gathered the night before. Having a good sense of humor in the classroom and out is important to Karla and she says she tends to "crack a lot of jokes and try to have some fun. When I'm in the classroom, I'm pretty much me." As students arrive for class, she greets them and looks for personal ways to interact with them; has eye contact and learns a few names; really listens, "It just helps you connect with the person in the classroom a little bit more if they think you are taking an interest in them personally." She informs students of the plan for the week and today's class and may review instruction from the day before or even from previous years. "Fun and easy-going but with a purpose," and "interactive" is how Karla describes her style, "I have to make sure I maintain the purpose of the class. It can't just be a free for all. But we can have fun while we are talking about it." When she asks questions, she gives them time to "collect their thoughts" and when she answers questions she gives them enough information "so that they get the answers...might not be the answer they want but that they understand the answer." She also offers a variety of ways for students to ask questions according to their comfort level such as writing their question or seeing her after class. Karla makes her presentations visually appealing with posters or a "great big lighter" and sometimes gets the attention from a rowdy class by shaking "my big jar of Now and Later's." She uses examples from her personal life so she can "connect better with the kids" and they will be "more likely to remember" and also to "make the connection when I feel like I'm losing them." She tries to accommodate stories from students but says time doesn't allow for much of that. When asked for a summary of her teaching methods, Karla said, "being an entertainer. Making sure that, I don't know, it feels like you are always on stage. You know there is no down time when you are a teacher. It's like boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. So that would be it probably, entertaining, educational."

Karla tries to develop a learning environment where students feel she has "their best interest at heart, that I'm giving them actual information. It's with their best intentions, their best, with the intention that they can use this information." She wants them to feel she is credible but realizes not all of the students will embrace the message. "They think they know everything and there's not one thing I'm going to say that's going to make a difference and so you kind of have to be a little bit more extreme. Reel them in by making them see that things don't happen the way you plan sometimes." Acknowledging this fact, however, she still feels "very satisfied" in her job. "I feel like I'm making a difference and not in just one or two lives but in a whole lot of people that I come in contact so I'm very well satisfied with making a difference and contributing positively to their lives." Karla also tries to enrich the learning environment by adjusting the curriculum or her methods to reach the maturity level or attentiveness of the class. She is also aware of students who may already be sexually active and knows that "not judging their behaviors" is important. She feels the message, however, is still applicable to them, "I'm just here to give them information so they can make healthier choices for themselves or better choices for themselves. You know if you are choosing this lifestyle, then you need to be aware of some of the consequences and how harmful a lot of those things can be." Karla maintains respect

in her classroom when an occasionally insensitive or vulgar remark may be used in the classroom. She is quick to address it through either deferring to the classroom teacher or she says, “That’s where the motherly part of me comes out. I try to be gentle and remind them.” She expects the same respect from her students as she shows them.

Being a role model is inherent with having the position of abstinence instructor. Karla says “walking the talk” and “being honest about the things maybe you messed up in your life” are attributes kids notice. She knows that when students see her outside of school she must be a “true person and live up to what I say in the classroom.” Because her children are the age of her students, she often sees her students at sporting or school activities and is “pointed out as the person that taught them about this. It is a good reminder to be a good role model when you are out in public.” She feels satisfaction when parents tell her things such as, “Oh my son had you yesterday and said, ‘this example makes perfect sense mom’ and he was talking to her about it. So I consider that satisfying when they go home and their mind is still thinking about it and wanting to talk with their parents about it.”

Administrators

The full interview schedule used with the instructors was reduced to one question for the three participants who were administrators. The one participant who was also an instructor responded to the full interview schedule with responses indicative of both his roles. The question posed to the administrators was what they thought set apart the most effective instructors from ones they would consider good, but not the best. The following is a synthesis of their answers.

The sentiment that the defining characteristics of the best instructors are innate was a common response among administrators, “The persona to teach kids...they either have it or not,” and “People have it or they don’t. People have a sense about them and a presence in front of the classroom that can’t be taught. You can teach skills and curriculum, but you can’t teach this.” One administrator illustrates this by recounting an experience she had of observing a research-proven presenter who trained other teachers. During the time she observed, the trained teachers were not able to replicate his success in student outcomes. Perhaps part of an understanding of the inherent aspects of the best abstinence education teachers involves “really how well they have processed their own life events. Now I’ve had those who have been technically really, really, really good. But if we processed our life experiences well, then we come across more believable.” A second administrator supports this idea saying the best teachers need “a personal history that influenced them to take on the message and want to get the message out to kids.” Another director added the most effective teachers are “comfortable, confident and content with themselves and willing to pour themselves out for the sake of others...know who you are.”

Another common theme that may reflect that “people either have it or they don’t” is the references to the “persona” of the teachers and that they “really like those school kids” or “really want to relate to people.” Superficiality and being judgmental are minimized. The most common words used by administrators to describe the best teachers indicated a level of commitment and energy: passionate, enthusiastic, energetic, very positive generally, teachable and hard working. One director spoke of putting hard work above talent and illustrated the point by relating the incident of firing one of the most talented instructors because he quit preparing and became stagnant in his teaching. Another administrator adds, “It takes a crazy personality to walk into a classroom and talk about sex. They must be comfortable.”

Along with their personal comfort level and persona, according to administrators, the motivation for teaching abstinence education is crucial to a teacher’s level of success. The underlying motive for teachers to put students first and relate to them is a strong desire to

positively impact as many students as possible. The administrators agreed that the best teachers have a caring attitude about the students and orchestrate the classroom environment for maximum engagement. The best teachers have the ability to “put the children’s best interest at heart” and “really think of them first...not necessarily thinking exactly what’s my lesson plan, maybe about problems at home, but really being able to clear the decks and focus on those kids.” They are “able to cross all boundaries and still engage students no matter their background.” The instructor wants a classroom that will allow students to feel that they are cared about and that the classroom atmosphere is inviting. The presenter “sets the tone for the classroom” by coming “to work in an excited way” and making everyone feel “welcome to share opinions...whether or not they buy into the message or not.” They have the “ability to make that relationship with those kids” which may partly come from having “experiences that make them want to influence kids.”

One administrator cited a negative example of the impact of persona. A single female teacher on her staff regularly received high scores and accolades on student outcome measures. The following year, her scores dropped dramatically. The director attempted to identify an explanation and found the unmarried teacher was pregnant. This administrator is convinced that program effectiveness can vary and that teachers within a program can have varying success rates dependent on individual characteristics.

Table 1

Categories of Commonalities

Broad Categories	Detailed Information
Program Characteristics	Programs were comprehensive, had a variety of teaching methods, provided sufficient dosage, were theory-driven, and provided opportunities for positive relationships.
Program Match to Target Population	Programs were appropriately timed and were socio-culturally relevant.
Implementation and Evaluation	Programs included an outcome evaluation and involved well-trained staff.

Table 2

Agents of Delivery, Personal Characteristics, and Pedagogical Styles

Agents of Delivery	Personal Characteristics	Pedagogical Styles
Classroom teacher	Gender	Use logical consequences
Teachers of at-risk students	Age	Teach appropriate behaviors
Peers	Personality	Make learning relevant
Public health nurse	Comfort with own sexuality/topic	Use teaching expertise in classroom
Trained adults	Life History/past personal experiences/credibility	Adapt teaching strategies to student development and interest
	Past experience as a pupil	Open, interactive or distant, formal
	Ability to relate to students	Assess student knowledge and interest
	Knowledgeable	Use of humor
	Professional	Vary teaching methods
	Feelings toward students	Use well-designed message
	Affective neutrality	Exhibit high content expertise
		Dedication to program

Table 3
Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Related Experience	Region	Role	Years in Abstinence Education
Ann	32	Caucasian	M.S.	Youth Volunteer	SE	Teacher	6
George	50	Caucasian	M.S.	Public school teacher, researcher, coach	SE	Teacher and Administrator	8
Robin	25	Caucasian	B.S.	Youth volunteer	SW	Teacher	3
Mike	39	Caucasian	A.S.	Public speaker, youth pastor, substitute teacher, radiation therapist	NW	Teacher, Director, Trainer	11
Nate	26	Caucasian	Some college	Youth volunteer	MW	Teacher	10
Peter	39	Pacific Islander	B.S.	Public school teacher, Youth volunteer, hospital classes	SW	Teacher	2.5
Tina	32	African American	B.S.	Motivational speaker, Medical assistant	MW	Teacher	6
Karla	43	Caucasian	Master's student	Student teaching, substituting teaching	MW	Teacher	6
Carol	n/a	Caucasian	Some college	n/a	MW	Founder and Executive Director	25
Lena	n/a	Caucasian	B.A.	n/a	NW	Director, Trainer	31
Lola	n/a	Caucasian	M.S.	n/a	SW	Director	13

Figure 1. Association of Six Dimensions of Effective Teaching and Findings on Effective Abstinence Instructors

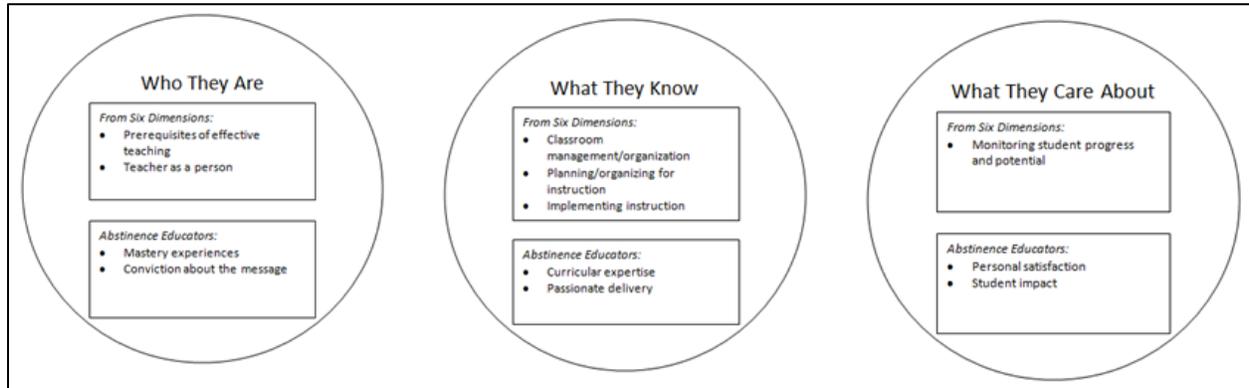


Figure 2. Effective Abstinence Education Instructor Model

