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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND KEY DEBATES IN SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION

Addressing Issues of Gender, Sexuality, Plurality and Power

Edited by

Vanita Sundaram and Helen Sauntson

Global Perspectives and Key Debates in Sex and Relationships Education

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PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF GENDER IN SCHOOLS

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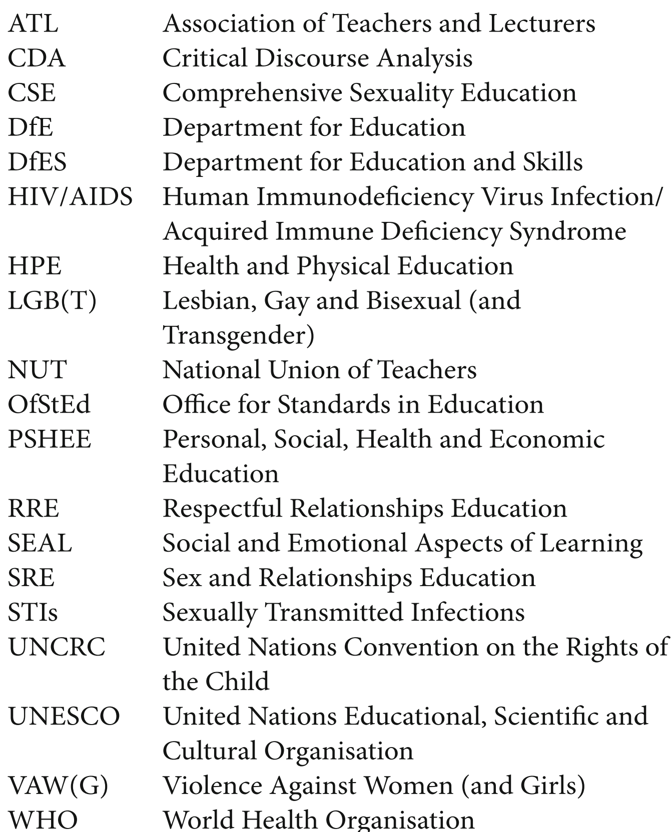

ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HPE	Health and Physical Education
LGB(T)	Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (and Transgender)
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OfStEd	Office for Standards in Education
PSHEE	Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education
RRE	Respectful Relationships Education
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SRE	Sex and Relationships Education
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VAW(G)	Violence Against Women (and Girls)
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Introduction: Global Perspectives and Key Debates in Sex and Relationships Education: Setting the Scene

Vanita Sundaram and Helen Sauntson

Sundaram, Vanita and Helen Sauntson, eds. *Global Perspectives and Key Debates in Sex and Relationships Education: Addressing Issues of Gender, Sexuality, Plurality and Power*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
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Sex and relationships education (SRE) curricula and provision are being discussed, debated and problematised with an increasing sense of urgency in many countries around the world. Existing research has investigated ongoing areas of consideration, including youth perspectives on SRE, the organisation and delivery of SRE and the shifting emphasis from sexual health to sexual rights within SRE curricula. These are valuable and important advances which have contributed to a discursive shift away from understanding SRE or comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) solely as a public health issue. Increasingly, there are calls to focus more explicitly on gender, sexuality, plurality and power within SRE. A number of sociocultural, political and legal shifts have taken place in a range of contexts which have, arguably, created a conducive environment for discussing issues of gender and sexual equality and plurality within education. Specifically, these include:

- an increased political recognition of gender and sexual violence among teenagers, encompassing debates about understandings of consent (Coy et al., 2010; Beckett et al., 2013; Sundaram, 2014);
- expanded knowledge about homophobia in schools juxtaposed with the recent legal shifts, such as the sanctioning of same-sex marriage in a number of countries (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Rasmussen, 2006; Guasp, 2012; Marriage (Same Sex-Couples) Act, 2013);
- a renewed debate about 'plurality' in SRE in the context of increasingly multicultural communities (Tasker, 2004; Todd, 2011; Allen et al., 2014);
- political and social concerns about children and young people's access to pornography and sexualised imagery (Papadopoulos, 2010; Brook, 2013; Ollis, Harrison and Maharaj, 2013);
- public and political concerns about the sexualisation of young girls and women in a range of print and online media (Rush and La Nauze, 2006; Bailey, 2011; Renold and Ringrose, 2011);
- proposed changes to the professional remit of teachers in relation to child protection and safeguarding (Department for Education (South Africa), 2002; Department for Education (UK), 2014).

At the time of writing, these are some of the key issues that have been raised as serious concerns within schools and in society more broadly. Each of the chapters in the book takes up one of these debates about the place and content of gender, sexuality, and relationships education in

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schools, taking root in current theoretical and empirical research in the field. The book therefore acts as a research-informed response to, and as an evidence base with which to inform ongoing political, educational and social debates about SRE. Thus, it is hoped that it makes an active contribution to the enduring international conversation about young people, schools and SRE. Unlike other work which focuses mainly on national contexts in relative isolation, this book offers a global perspective which will illuminate commonalities and contrasts in priorities, tensions and challenges for SRE in Anglophone countries in the global North and South (UK, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa). Thomas and Aggleton's chapter provides an overview of research into the content and delivery of sexual health programmes across countries and contexts. Through this critical review, the authors are able to identify the key characteristics of effective SRE and therefore what may be the most productive steps forward in continuing to develop SRE both in the UK and globally. In each of the subsequent chapters, the authors ask critical questions about the content and delivery of SRE with reference to the key themes outlined above. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, we briefly outline previous research in each of the thematic areas covered and provide a summary of how each chapter contributes to key issues, debates and challenges within the respective areas.

It should be noted that individual authors may refer to 'sex and relationships education', 'sexuality and relationships education' or 'sexuality education' depending on their geographical (and theoretical) location. All terms are taken to refer to teaching about sex, sexuality, sexual health and respectful or healthy relationships in schools.

Sexualisation

One international (although Eurocentric) crisis that has risen in recent years in relation to girlhood has scrutinised girls' 'sexuality' vis-à-vis the discursive framing of premature and thus age-inappropriate 'sexualisation' of girls (Renold and Ringrose, 2011). Reports on the 'adultification of children' have been commissioned in Australia (Rush and La Nauze, 2006), the USA (APA, 2007) and the UK (Papadopoulos, 2010; Bailey, 2011; Buckingham, 2011).

Ringrose's chapter explores the sexualisation debates as a 'postfeminist panic' over girls' and young women's sexuality, focusing on England as

a case study. The chapter maps how the British print news media deploy repeated gender patterns in their reporting, mobilising anxiety around girlhood sexuality and femininity. Ringrose shows how this media reporting resonates with SRE policy, guidance and curriculum in the UK, which is organised around sexual risk and danger in highly gendered and sexist ways. The chapter considers how these gender anxieties are also dominant in UK reports and policy guidance around 'sexualisation' and girls. Ringrose shows how repeated gender stories come to construct dominant discourses about (female) sexuality, femininity and risk, providing a robust framework from which to critically respond to sociopolitical anxieties about the sexualisation of girls and young girls' sexuality and to reconsider the treatment of female sexuality within SRE.

Pornography

A growing body of international research tells us that pornography can impact negatively on young people's attitudes toward and expectations of sex and relationships (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004; Flood, 2009; Ollis, Harrison and Maharaj, 2013). In the UK, sex education charities and governmental organisations have highlighted the prominence of pornography as a source of knowledge about sex and relationships for young people (Brook, 2013; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013). Debates have circulated about whether to limit children and young people's access to pornography and whether primary prevention initiatives might be effective in reducing engagement with pornography and related, negative behaviours (Papadopoulos, 2010; Bailey, 2011). There have been calls for schools to be a key site for challenging the use of pornography among young men in particular (e.g. Limmer, 2009; Sex Education Forum, 2013). However, resistance from religious organisations, parent and other pressure groups continues due to fears about exposing young children to sexualised imagery and the 'promotion' of pornography in classrooms.

Ollis' chapter draws on recently completed research in Australian schools to explore innovative models for teaching about pornography. Ollis argues that it is necessary to critically reflect on the appropriateness of the content of sex and relationships education at different stages of schooling while considering the need to address current concerns such as pornography and violence. Ollis critically examines these debates,

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paying particular attention to the challenges of taking a 'strength-based' approach to SRE while addressing the negative impacts of pornography and sexualised imagery.

Gender violence in teenage relationships

A growing body of evidence suggests that partner violence among teenagers is relatively widespread (Burton et al., 1998; Barter et al., 2009) and that young people express high levels of tolerance of violence, providing justifications for a range of forms of violence between men and women (Barter et al., 2009; McCarry, 2010; Sundaram, 2013, 2014; Maxwell, 2014). Schools have been identified as potentially powerful agents of social change in regard to violence prevention work (Maxwell et al., 2010; Dustin, 2013). These debates have focused on the possibilities of SRE as a curricular space in which issues of gender, power and violence might be addressed (Brook, 2013; EVAWC, 2013; Sex Education Forum, 2013).

In their chapter, Sundaram, Maxwell and Ollis use recent research from four projects to argue that gender is central to young people's understandings of intimate relationships and their acceptance of violence within relationships and that gender should therefore be centrally placed in violence prevention work. They argue that introducing gender and sexual subjectivity as central concepts in violence prevention work and within SRE can expand the predominant focus on health and risk-minimisation to one about equality, rights and agency for young people. The authors offer a conceptual framework and some emerging models for taking forward gender equality and violence prevention in a strength-based framework for teaching about sex and relationships.

Consent

How sexual consent should be discussed with young people is the subject of current policy debates and contestations in the UK and elsewhere. While the current UK government VAWG strategy recognises the importance of addressing consent, with no statutory relationships and sex education there are few contexts in which these conversations with young people routinely take place. Organisations that work with young people as victims/survivors of violence and in school-based

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primary prevention programmes have long identified sexual consent as an issue which requires specialist attention and intervention (Coy et al., 2010; EVAWC, 2010). Ongoing debates about the place of consent in SRE curricula might not take into account the significant consequences of failing to address these issues with young people.

In their chapter, Coy and Kelly draw on recent research in the UK to argue that teaching about sexual consent within the context of SRE is crucial to challenging a spectrum of problematic behaviours, from misinformation about consensual relationships to contexts that are conducive to sexualised violence. The chapter highlights the way in which young people's notions of gender mediate understandings of consent, rape and victimisation. Coy and Kelly's work shows how limited understandings of consent can contribute to attitudes, behaviour and cultures which are supportive of gender-based violence and rape.

Homophobia and sexual diversity

Research with young people suggests that homophobia in schools remains high in the US and the UK (Guasp, 2012; GLSEN, 2013). Homophobic bullying has also been found to be prevalent in other countries, such as Australia (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Rasmussen, 2006), Brazil (Moita Lopes, 2006) and South Africa (Francis and Msibi, 2011; Msibi, 2012). A number of organisations have pointed out that same-sex relationships and diverse sexual and gender identities are not currently addressed in primary or secondary schools (OfSted, 2013). Further, in the UK, a number of recent legal shifts have sought to formally reject discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation/identity (Equality Act 2010, the repeal of section 28 in 2003 and the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2014). However, there is no consensus as to the role of schools in this regard.

Sauntson and Sundaram's chapter draws on an analysis of the most recently published sex and relationships education curriculum guidance for England (2014) to argue that despite social and legal advances, very little provision is made to address sexual diversity and to challenge homophobia in schools. The chapter employs an innovative analytical technique to show that LGBT-identifying young people continue to be marginalised within official school discourse and curricula. This

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has clear implications for policy and practice for tackling homophobia within schools.

Religious and cultural plurality

Recent research suggests that sex education centres on normative subjects, treating categories of difference, including religious or cultural diversity as 'added on' and deviant from the unchallenged norm (Haggis and Mulholland, 2014). In contexts characterised by frequent migration flows and increasingly multicultural communities, such as the UK, European countries and Australasia, it is imperative that we begin to question the hegemonic norm and interrogate the positioning of young people who are culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse. Allen et al. (2014, p. 394) have noted that the priorities and concerns of religious, cultural and ethnic minority youth are not reflected within SRE across a range of contexts. Further, faith-based schools are free to exempt their pupils from SRE. Current provision therefore privileges white/Western norms and expectations around sex, sexuality and relationships.

Quinlivan and Allen's chapter uses recent theoretical and philosophical ideas to explore ways in which sexuality education might be radically reimagined to include religious and cultural plurality. The authors propose a new form of pedagogical ethics which disrupts notions of religious and cultural diversity as difficult within sexuality education and instead focuses on the 'uniqueness' of individuals as they come together in different spaces. Drawing on the philosophical work of Todd (2011) and Barad (2007), the authors propose we think differently about the concept of 'diversity' and how it may be reimagined for SRE.

Teacher training

An established body of work exists about challenges schools face in the organisation and delivery of SRE. Youth perspectives have been sought regarding preferred content of SRE and sources of information. However, less work has been conducted to explore the perspectives of teachers tasked with delivering this content within SRE and the potential barriers they experience. There is an increased focus on the expanding remit of teachers to protect children from sexual (and other forms of)

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exploitation and the UK government has recently released safeguarding guidance for teachers (Home Office, 2014). While imparting knowledge about respectful, consensual and healthy relationships might be considered to be part of a safeguarding role, teacher training programmes do not currently include dedicated preparation for sex education. Existing research suggests that teachers lack confidence to teach about these issues, and the lack of time given to SRE within school timetables and confusion about what should be taught about further compounds this. Our knowledge about the affective aspects of teaching SRE remains limited.

In response to this knowledge gap and to recent debates about the role of teachers in safeguarding children in the UK and elsewhere (Department for Education (South Africa), 2002), Francis' chapter draws on research with teachers of sexuality education in South Africa to explore how they manage discomfort and challenges in teaching about a range of topics. The chapter reveals that teachers create 'comfort zones' around topics that feel familiar, such as sexual risk, and may avoid creating opportunities for new perspectives to be learned. Francis suggests that teacher training must include recognition of the emotional work and challenges involved in teaching about sexuality and relationships, including teachers' own understandings of themselves as sexual beings. This is a radical proposition in relation to a subject characterised by a formalised and distanced focus on health, risk and safety and an avoidance of personalised and non-normative perspectives on the part of pupils and teachers.

The role of sex and relationships education in addressing the social, political and legal concerns outlined above has been varyingly exalted and rejected. Objections to involving schools in work to educate young people about gender-based violence, homosexuality, pornography and sexual consent have been voiced by a range of groups, including parents, political groups, religious communities and teachers. The issues outlined above are common to the debates about SRE taking place in many countries. If SRE is to make a difference, its development and implementation needs to be considered in relation to the sociocultural context. This is a key argument which is developed and illustrated with reference to a range of international contexts throughout this book. This collection collates world-class research in order to respond to the concerns being voiced by educators, social commentators and politicians, as well as to

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offer an evidence base from which future directions in the debate around sex and relationships education can be identified and informed.

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1

School-Based Sex and Relationships Education: Current Knowledge and Emerging Themes

Felicity Thomas and Peter Aggleton

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Introduction

It is widely accepted that children and young people have the right to education for sexual health, with these rights being enshrined in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).[1] According to WHO (2010), knowledge and information provided through sexual health education is essential if people are to access their sexual rights and be sexually healthy. Education for sexual health – called variously sex education, sexuality education or sex and relationships education (hereafter, SRE) – involves the acquisition of information and the opportunity for young people to explore and develop their attitudes, beliefs and values as they relate to gender and sexuality, sexual and gender identity, relationships and intimacy. Sexual health education also aims to develop young people's knowledge and skills to make informed choices regarding their behaviour, and in so doing, limit their risk and vulnerability to sexual ill-health through factors such as unwanted pregnancy, unwanted, abusive and exploitative sexual activity, unsafe abortion and STIs, including HIV.

Sexual health programmes can be delivered in a range of contexts including schools or workplaces or in the community. This chapter examines what is known globally about effective approaches to SRE in schools. After assessing current understandings of effective styles of work, we discuss where the gaps lie in existing knowledge and point to areas where empirical data relating to gender, sexuality, plurality and power discussed elsewhere in this book can usefully inform understanding and ongoing debate.

The school's role in sex and relationships education

Schools offer a particularly important and influential context within which to provide young people with education to promote sexual health. As well as offering a reasonably safe environment, teachers can help normalise and legitimate understandings of, and concern for sexuality, both among young people and in the wider community (Ingham and Hirst, 2010). Schools are also important in enabling educational programmes to reach large numbers of young people from diverse backgrounds before they become sexually active, offering opportunities to encourage young people to delay the onset of sexual activity and

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providing ongoing and supportive education as they begin to engage in sexual activity (Kirby et al., 2006a).

Kirby et al. (2006a) identify a number of advantages regarding the use of sexual health curriculum-based programmes in schools. First, these tend to be more intensive and consistently structured than those offered outside of the school syllabus. Second, it is also more likely that they will be based on research and prior programme evaluation and that they will have been pilot-tested and endorsed by the appropriate authorities. This can help ensure that teachers and other educators contributing to them are guided and well informed, and it may also help to alleviate or overcome any personal prejudices or limitations in teachers' skills.

Non-curriculum-based programmes have, however, also been used in education for sexual health and include activities sometimes used in curriculum-based approaches, such as drama, quizzes and posters, as well as activities such as health fairs and one-to-one counselling. In some cases, peer-education programmes have been widely advocated as alternatives to, or alongside, teacher or other adult-led education. These types of intervention have been praised for their ability to relate to young people and to motivate them to participate (WHO, 2010). However, reviews have raised concerns about the knowledge levels of peer educators and the costs of training as new cohorts of trainers are required on a regular basis (Kirby et al., 2006a).

There exists continuing debate about whether SRE should be taught as a stand-alone subject, integrated within an existing mainstream subject such as health or biology, delivered across several other subjects (e.g. citizenship (or civic) education, biology and health) or included as part of more general student guidance and counselling. In countries such as Australia and the UK, actions to promote sexual health in schools have been linked to broader attempts to develop a more health promoting and supportive school environment. Under the labour administration of Tony Blair in the UK, the Every Child Matters agenda was launched in 2003 and involved raising the profile of schools in relation to health-related outcomes. It was accompanied by initiatives such as the National Healthy Schools Programme in England that sought to use schools as a means of promoting individual and community health. As Aggleton et al. (2010) explain, recent years have seen a shift in the focus of such health interventions, at least rhetorically, toward a more holistic 'whole school' approach, which recognises that health promotion requires engagement with both the formal and less formal aspects of the curriculum, works

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within the broader context of young people's lives and requires the involvement and commitment of a wide range of staff beyond just those specialising or trained in personal development and health promotion.

Importantly, whole school approaches to SRE recognise the need for a supportive institutional policy framework within which the school operates. This encompasses factors such as school policies and rules, approaches to bullying (particularly on the grounds of gender and sexuality), the resources and learning materials that are made available and the prevailing discourses of sexuality inherent within the institution (Ingham and Hirst, 2010). Research has consistently found that strong leadership and support by head teachers, school governors and parents is crucial for the successful integration of sexual health into educational settings (UNESCO, 2009a). At the same time, demonstrating that the provision of high quality SRE is a matter of institutional policy rather than the personal choice of individuals can help to alleviate tensions that may exist over the implementation of such programmes within schools.

Effects of sexual health education in schools

Most experts believe that children and young people want and need education for sexual health as early and comprehensively as possible (UNESCO, 2009a). However, in many countries throughout the world, it remains unavailable. Even in countries where SRE exists, programme delivery is often reported to come too late for many young people (WHO, 2010). Teaching is also reported to be patchy and inconsistent and to place too much emphasis on biological issues, often at the expense of social and emotional concerns such as feelings and relationships (Ingham and Hirst, 2010). While this may be due, at least in part, to a lack of resources, it is often also attributed to the perceived or anticipated resistance that results from misunderstandings regarding the nature, purpose and effects of sex education (UNESCO, 2009a). Integral to this is a belief that such initiatives will generate promiscuity among young people (Grunseit et al., 1997; Stone and Ingham, 2006).

The sensitive and at times controversial nature of sex education has meant that, in some countries (most notably in parts of the USA), programmes have been limited to a focus on abstinence-only approaches. Such programmes teach and encourage young people to remain abstinent from sexual activity until after marriage as the only method to reduce

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their risks of STIs, HIV and unintended pregnancy, and they provide little or no information about contraception or safer sex practices.

In recent years, a significant amount of research has taken place, particularly within the USA, to establish the effectiveness of abstinence-only programmes in comparison to more comprehensive programmes (sometimes called 'abstinence-plus' programmes), which educate young people about a wider range of safe sex practices. One particularly rigorous evaluation of four US federally funded abstinence-only programmes found that young people in the abstinence-only programme group were no more likely after 4–6 years to have abstained from sex than those enrolled in the control group. Among those reporting having had sexual intercourse, the young people receiving abstinence-only education reported similar numbers of sexual partners and similar timing of sexual debut to those in the control group (Trenholm et al., 2007).

Such findings align with those from other studies which conclude that the majority of abstinence-only programmes do not reduce the risk of HIV (as measured by self-reported outcomes), do not delay initiation of sexual activity, do not reduce frequency of unprotected vaginal sex, do not reduce the number of sexual partners, do not increase the return to sexual abstinence among sexually active young people and do not impact on condom use (Underhill et al., 2007a; Institute of Medicine, 2008; Kirby, 2008; UNESCO, 2009a). Some research even suggests that abstinence-only programmes increase the risk for STIs and pregnancy, since young people engage in sexual relations with little knowledge of how to protect themselves (Brückner and Bearman, 2005). Moreover, such programmes undermine the fundamental human rights of young people to health, information and life (Society for Adolescent Medicine, 2006). At the same time, a number of surveys (primarily in the USA) have found that the majority of parents do actually approve of sex education in schools (Kirby, 2006) and, indeed, are often opposed to abstinence-only programmes (Bleakley et al., 2006). Despite continued debate over their use, it is now generally accepted that sufficient evidence does not exist to justify the dissemination of abstinence-only programmes (Silva, 2002; Kirby, 2006, 2007, 2008).

More positive outcomes have been reported from comprehensive SRE programmes, with evaluation reviews finding that a number of such initiatives reduce the self-reported incidence and frequency of unprotected sex and the number of sex partners, increase reported condom use and delay the initiation of sexual activity among young people

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(Grunseit et al., 1997; Kirby, 2007, 2008; Underhill et al., 2007b; Institute of Medicine, 2008; UNESCO, 2009a). Evidence from the USA suggests that good quality comprehensive programmes work for both boys and girls, for all major ethnic groups, and for sexually inexperienced and experienced young people from a wide range of different backgrounds (Kirby, 2007). There is no reliable evidence to demonstrate that comprehensive education for sexual health leads to earlier or riskier sexual activity, and therefore, no evidence that the implementation of sexual health programmes in schools increases promiscuity among young people.

Characteristics of effective sex education

Much of the evidence regarding the effectiveness of SRE programmes paints a fairly positive picture. However, it is important to recognise that many programmes designed to reduce risky sexual behaviour are very modest in scale and, in themselves, do not offer a stand-alone solution to eliminating sexual risk taking (Ibid.). Agreement on how best to deliver SRE (as an isolated subject or integrated with other subjects) also remains open to debate. According to Ingham and Hirst (2010), the multifaceted nature of sexual behaviour means that it is unlikely that one intervention alone will have a clearly measurable impact. It is also vital to recognise that much of what is currently known about effective sex education is fairly limited in scope, with the majority of studies focusing primarily, and often solely, on heteronormative (and frequently reproductive) behaviours and identities. This is seriously unfortunate given the diversity of identities, practices and positionalities that characterise human sexuality and the importance of promoting the full inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in SRE.

Although recognition of such caveats is of vital importance, studies and reviews of SRE programmes globally have identified a number of characteristics found to be effective in terms of increasing knowledge, expounding positive values and attitudes, developing skills and impacting positively upon the sexual behaviour of young people. In particular, a number of characteristics relating to curriculum development, curriculum design and good practice in schools can be identified from recent reviews of these studies. Here, we will focus on findings from some of the most widely regarded authoritative reviews including the work of the

late Douglas Kirby (Kirby et al., 2006b, 2006c, 2007; Kirby, 2007) and UNESCO (2009a, 2009b).[2]

Curriculum development

Experts in research on human sexuality, behaviour change and related pedagogical theory should be involved in the development and adaptation of curricula and make use of social learning theories as the foundation of programme development. Curriculum developers should understand the kinds of behaviours that young people actually engage in at different ages, the environmental and cognitive factors that affect these behaviours and the best ways of addressing these factors within the local context.

While there is commonality among young people in terms of their needs regarding sexuality (UNESCO, 2009a), there are also differences across and within communities, contexts and age groups in terms of young people's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills as they relate to sexual behaviour and risk taking. Understanding why young people act in certain ways is important for the development of effective education programmes for sexual health, as is the development of gender and sexuality sensitive programmes that are intended for both boys and girls and targeting students at different stages of development with relevant messages and appropriate goals.

Involving young people in the development of curricula also increases the effectiveness of sexuality education programmes. In the UK, for example, the involvement of the UK Youth Parliament in the process of reviewing sex and relationships education helped reveal major gaps in provision and influenced the decision of the government at the time to introduce compulsory SRE in 2008 (UNESCO, 2009a). More recently, acknowledgement that young people have played little part in defining their sex education needs to date has led to the University of South Australia and SHine SA[3] launching a major research project to involve young people in designing and updating the educational resources used in South Australian schools (University of South Australia, 2014). Such initiatives are useful, not only in defining the needs and concerns of young people, but also in identifying their assets and providing an important base on which to build upon their existing knowledge and skills.

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Effective SRE programmes in schools are often underpinned by a 'logic model approach' that specifies their health goals, the types of behaviours affecting those goals, the risk and protective factors affecting those behaviours and the activities needed to change those factors. UNESCO (2009a) reports that effective programmes for changing behaviour, particularly those that reduce pregnancy or STI rates, use a clear, four-step process for creating the curriculum. This involves identifying: (1) clear health goals e.g. reducing unintended pregnancy or HIV and other STIs; (2) specific behaviours that affect pregnancy and HIV/STI rates and behaviours that can be changed; (3) the cognitive or psychosocial factors that affect those behaviours (e.g. knowledge, attitudes, norms, skills); and (4) multiple activities to modify each of these factors.

A key factor underpinning successful sexual health programmes in schools has been the implementation of initiatives that are sensitive to community values and consistent with available resources such as staff time and skills, space and materials. Seeking the cooperation and support of parents, families and other key community members from the outset and regularly reinforcing this during implementation has also been found to be effective. Research evidence suggests that parental concern can be allayed via the provision of parallel programmes orienting them to the content of their children's learning and equipping them with skills to communicate more openly about sexuality with their children.

Curriculum content

With respect to the design of the curriculum, research findings point to the importance of health goals that are clear and focused and which emphasise values that strengthen individual principles and group norms against unprotected sex.[4] Information also needs to be evidence-informed, scientifically accurate and balanced and conveyed in ways that are easily understandable, unambiguous, culturally relevant, gender-sensitive and age-appropriate.

Often, effective school programmes have established close links with local sexual and reproductive health services to facilitate the use of contraception and STI testing. In some cases, service providers have established a regular base within the school setting, which not only ensures easy access to their services but also helps normalise the concept of sexual health. Some programmes have drawn upon educators and speakers from outside the school itself (e.g. health providers and

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religious or community leaders) to provide useful additional insight and understanding for young people. However, effective programmes require such speakers to follow school guidelines and present objective and evidence-informed material rather than ideological or moral viewpoints. Importantly, organisations involved in sex education initiatives need to work together to provide a culture that supports choice, respect and responsibility and reinforces a coherent and consistent set of messages, since conflicting messages have been found to undermine the success of such programmes.

Effective programming also requires that contexts and situations that may lead to unsafe sexual practice are addressed, with clear guidance on how to avoid such circumstances and how to get out of them. In communities where drug or alcohol use is associated with unprotected intercourse for example, it is vital to address the influence of drugs and alcohol on sexual behaviour. Where programmes draw upon important community values such as self-respect, research recommends the need to make clear the specific sexual and protective behaviours that are consistent with these values.

A focus on specific risk and protective factors that affect particular sexual behaviours is also important, with emphasis placed on factors that are amenable to change via the SRE programme (e.g. knowledge, values, social norms, attitudes and skills). Gender inequalities and norms, for example, often affect a person's experiences of sexuality, their sexual behaviour and their sexual and reproductive health. To effectively reduce sexual risk behaviour, therefore, programmes need to critically examine and address these inequalities and stereotypes and provide skills and methods of avoiding unwanted or unprotected sexual activity. At the same time, curricula should proactively seek to address gender inequality and challenge negative social norms and stereotypes, especially those relating to gender and sexual differences.

Research has also shown that the effectiveness of school-based sex education programmes may be enhanced by the use of participatory teaching methods such as games, role-playing and group discussions to help young people personalise and integrate information, explore individual and peer group norms and values and to practice skills in, for example, refusing unwanted or unprotected sex, resisting peer or social pressures and insisting upon the use of appropriate contraception. Multiple activities are recommended in order to address each risk and protective factor, with successful programmes lasting for at least 12–20

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sessions. Programme reviews recommend that topics are covered in a logical sequence, generally focusing first on strengthening motivation to avoid STIs and pregnancy (i.e. focusing on susceptibility and severity) before moving on to address the specific knowledge, attitudes and skills required to avoid them.

Good practice in schools

As well as covering multiple topics over a number of sessions, reviews of effective approaches to SRE have found that educational materials need to be covered in an age-appropriate manner[5] and that messages need to be reinforced over the course of several years. In some cases, successful programmes have been reinforced via school or community-wide components subsequently. Ideally, programmes should also have an in-built element of flexibility to facilitate variations in the pace of delivery if particular subjects stimulate a lot of discussion. Programmes that include a combination of whole and small group work, mixed and single gender work and opportunities for one-to-one sessions (if deemed necessary and desirable by students and teachers) are also reported to be successful.

Importantly, effective SRE requires participating students to feel comfortable and safe. The creation of a protective and enabling environment within the school setting is therefore vital. This usually involves the establishment of ground rules to be followed during teaching and learning of SRE. Such rules include the avoidance of ridicule and humiliating comments, avoiding personal questions, recognising the legitimacy of all queries, respecting the opinions of others and maintaining confidentiality.

Reviews have consistently emphasised the importance of skilled and motivated educators in the delivery of SRE programmes. Relevant and desirable characteristics include an interest in teaching the curriculum, personal comfort in discussing sexuality, an ability to communicate with young people and skills to utilise participatory teaching and learning methodologies. Where those implementing the programme lack knowledge of the subject, appropriate training should be offered by experienced and knowledgeable trainers, with clear goals and objectives based on the curriculum that is to be implemented and opportunities to rehearse key lessons in life skills training. Such training should enable programme implementers to distinguish between their personal values

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and the needs of learners and stress the importance of delivering the curriculum in full, rather than selectively.

Appropriate monitoring, supervision and support have also been found to be necessary for teachers delivering SRE in schools. Because SRE is not well established in many schools and is often considered controversial, principals, head teachers and managers need to provide encouragement, guidance and backing to those involved in programme delivery. This includes ensuring that all aspects of the curriculum are delivered as planned, that teachers have access to support when responding to new and challenging situations and that assistance is provided to both update educators on key developments in the field of sexuality education and to adapt the school's programme as necessary.

Effective programmes often use regular classroom teachers, some of whom may be trained in health or life skills education. As part of the established school structure, such teachers will be known by both students and the wider community and are well positioned to be able to integrate sexuality education into a range of different subjects. Alternatively, programmes may use specially trained teachers who circulate between classes and grades and focus specifically on sexuality education to deliver the curriculum. Advantages of this latter approach include the ability of specialist teachers to cover sensitive topics and implement participatory activities and to act as a key source of information and a link to community-based services. Studies reveal that both types of educators are able to deliver programmes effectively. To date, a general focus on adult-led programmes has meant that debates over the relative effectiveness of adult-led versus peer-led sex education programmes remain inconclusive.

Expanding current debates and knowledge on effective SRE

Research has shown that, in order to be effective, SRE needs to be comprehensive, clear and focused, up-to-date, inclusive, developmentally appropriate, sensitive to community values and designed to engage with the behaviours and needs of a diverse range of young people. To adequately prepare teachers for this kind of work, various kinds of input and support are needed. These include good quality initial and in-service teacher education to encourage teachers to address sexual health as part

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of an integrated, whole school approach and recognition of the fact that promoting sexual health in schools requires attention to both the formal and the informal curriculum. The overall ethos of the school, a school's code of discipline, its prevailing standards of behaviour, the attitudes of staff toward pupils and the values underpinning these are fundamental in providing an atmosphere conducive to the promotion of sexual health and well-being and the development of pupil self-esteem.

Although these findings demonstrate that school-based SRE can be effective, it is important to reiterate that existing programmes and initiatives tend to be limited in scale, and they in themselves, do not eliminate sexual risk. At the same time, it is important to recognise that while systematic reviews and programme evaluations have undoubtedly enabled a better understanding of many of the factors that help support effective SRE, by their very nature, such studies tend to focus on what works within existing practice and far less on what is missing or could be improved in the provision of sex and relationships education. As the chapters in this book make clear, there is considerable scope for a more detailed analysis of a range of issues relating to gender, plurality and power and for a more nuanced discussion on sexuality than has been the case in most reviews and syntheses of SRE to date. For example, while issues relating to violence, pornography and sexual diversity are often talked about within the context of SRE, there has been no detailed review that systematically examines what is and is not effective in the teaching and learning of such topics.

Additionally, the time-lag that exists between the initiation of interventions and their review for effectiveness means that we are unable here to provide in-depth analysis of successful practice relating to more recent developments, for example technology and social media, that are widely thought to affect sex and relationships among young people. However, important empirical work on such issues is now emerging from which lessons can be learned. The recently published *Secondary Students and Sexual Health* survey in Australia (2014), for example, found that nearly one third of sexually active students had used social media for sexual reasons, sending naked or semi-naked pictures to others in the form of 'sexting'. While the potential for harm is clearly apparent, particularly when the sending of images is non-consensual, recent research suggests that caution is needed before assuming that sexting is inevitably a detrimental practice (Albury et al., 2013). At the same time, however, Ringrose et al. (2012) point out that engaging in forms of sexting places

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considerable pressure on young people to fit a certain image and open themselves up to being judged by others. Indeed, according to this report, the majority of the technology-related threats come not from 'stranger danger' but from technology-mediated sexual pressure from peers, pointing to a key area where, as the chapter in this volume by Ollis explains, more detailed discussion relating to issues concerning gender and power could be developed.

Similarly, chapters by Sundaram, Maxwell and Ollis, and by Coy et al. (also in this volume) offer important insights into the ways in which gender mediates young people's attitudes in relationships and, more specifically, toward gendered and sexualised violence against women and girls. Issues around the potential for addressing violence prevention within school contexts are explored, including the challenges for developing a less risk-focused curriculum for sexuality education.

While schools are key environments in which to provide information about sex and relationships to young people, the delivery of good quality, SRE within schools remains sporadic (Mitchell et al., 2014). Although this may be in part due to teachers' and principals' own attitudes and beliefs relating to young people's sexual activity (see, for example, Iyer and Aggleton, 2013), research findings internationally suggest that many teachers still do not have adequate resources, training or backing to provide students with the breadth of information they need (Strasburger and Brown, 2014). As the chapter in this volume by Francis reiterates, good quality teacher training in SRE remains vital, as are more detailed understandings of the impact of teacher attitudes and effect on the delivery of sex and relationships education.

Linked to this is the tendency for strongly normative sexual practices to be reinforced through sex and relationships education.[6] Under these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that a recent survey found that 44% of same sex attracted or gender questioning young women found their school sex education to be of little relevance, nor that relatively high levels of teenage pregnancy and STIs were reported within this group. As the chapter in this volume by Sauntson and Sundaram emphasises, there is a need for more inclusive approaches to SRE to address the needs of gender and sexual minority young people. The chapter by Quinlivan and Allen also explores issues of inclusivity in SRE in terms of addressing religious and cultural plurality.

Finally, lack of adequate training, support and resources continues to restrict what teachers feel able and comfortable to teach, as exemplified

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in Francis' chapter in this volume. While factual and scientific topics such as STIs, safe sex practices and contraception, as well as information about social and personal relationships (e.g. managing peer influence, feelings and intimate relationships) have been found to be taught fairly consistently, in too many schools SRE remains focused on the negative (e.g. the avoidance of STIs, pregnancy, and sexual relations) rather than on more positive forms of health and well-being. Finding ways of talking about feelings, desire and respect in ways that are meaningful and relevant to young people – and recognising that these are themselves complex and contested concepts (see Allen et al., 2014) – remains an important step in the development of future forms of SRE. It is our hope that this volume and others like it make a significant contribution to achieving such a goal.

Notes

1. The term 'child' in this convention applies to those aged up to 18 years.
2. Kirby et al. (2006b) is informed by a review of 22 sex education programmes implemented in developing countries, Kirby et al. (2006c) by a review of 83 studies worldwide and Kirby (2007) by 115 studies from the USA. UNESCO's (2009a, 2009b) International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education is informed by a review of the literature on 87 studies from around the world, 29 from developing countries, 47 from the USA and 11 from other developed countries.
3. SHine SA is a sexual health agency in South Australia that works in partnership with government, health, education and community agencies and communities to improve the sexual health and well-being of South Australians.
4. 'Unprotected sex' is now recognised as being a contested term (see, for example, HIV Prevention Justice Alliance, 2014). However, the term has commonly been used to refer to sex without a condom, and this is the context within which it is largely used within the literature reviewed in this chapter.
5. See UNESCO (2009b) for recommendations on appropriate age-based educational content and learning objectives.
6. With few exceptions (e.g. Schaafsma et al., 2014) normative practice also tends to be reinforced through reviews and evaluations on school-based SRE.

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Postfeminist Media Panics Over Girls' 'Sexualisation': Implications for UK Sex and Relationship Guidance and Curriculum

Jessica Ringrose

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Introduction

In their book *Young Femininity: Girlhood Power and Social Change*, Aapola, Harris and Gonick (2005) argue that Anglophone girlhood is continually represented in Western media through oppositional discourses of celebration vs. crisis (girls 'in crisis' and 'creating crisis') amidst media and pedagogical tropes of girls' empowerment. One international (although Eurocentric) crisis that has risen in recent years in relation to girlhood has scrutinised girls' 'sexuality' vis-à-vis the discursive framing of premature and thus age-inappropriate 'sexualisation' of girls (Renold and Ringrose, 2011). There have been high profile policy reports across Anglophone countries. In Australia, a widely cited report on 'corporate paedophilia' looked at the 'adultification of children' and 'direct sexualisation' of girls (Rush and La Nauze, 2006). In the USA, the American Psychological Association commissioned a report on the 'sexualisation of girls' (APA, 2007). Starting in 2009, in the UK, the Scottish Government commissioned a report on sexualised goods aimed at children (Buckingham, 2010) and the Home Office conducted a Review on the Sexualisation of Young People (Papadopoulos, 2010). These were followed up by a review of the reviews by the neo-liberal UK Coalition Government entitled *Letting children be children* (2011). Official government concern over child sexualisation has fed into, or followed on from, a veritable flood of popular books, television documentaries, news programmes and popular films on child sexualisation.[1]

In this chapter, I explore the sexualisation debates as a 'postfeminist panic' over girls' and young feminine sexuality, focusing on England as a case study. I map how the British print news media deploy repeated discursive gender patterns in their reporting, mobilising anxiety around girlhood sexuality and femininity. These sexualisation media panics are theorised as postfeminist (McRobbie, 2008) because they often position girls' sexualisation as a moral problem resulting from too much and too early sexual liberation for girls, blaming feminism, poor mothering and particular girls for the demise of respectable femininity. Indeed, I illustrate how these media stories enliven moralising, class-based discourses around age-appropriate sexuality for girls (Egan, 2013). Next, I show how the media reporting discursively and affectively resonates with UK sex and relationship (SRE) policy, guidance and curriculum in the UK, which is organised around sexual risk and danger in highly gendered and sexist ways. Finally, the chapter considers how these gender anxieties are also

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dominant in UK reports and policy guidance around 'sexualisation' and girls. I argue that taken together the mutually reinforcing risk discourses in the media, curriculum and policy arenas represent a postfeminist panic that works to eschew attention to the most basic of girls' (and all young people's) rights – the right to mandatory, useful contemporary education about sexuality and relationships (Robinson, 2008).

Postfeminist panics: affect and gender anxieties over sexuality

Postfeminism has been theorised as a set of discourses and political practices grounded in assumptions that gender equity has now been achieved for girls and women in education, the workplace and the home (McRobbie, 2008; Gill and Scharff, 2011). Angela McRobbie (2008, p. 4), a key figure in theorising postfeminism, suggests it is characterised by a set of discourses that 'actively draw on and invoke feminism ... in order to suggest that equality is achieved, [and] in order to install a whole repertoire of meanings which emphasise that it is no longer needed, a spent force'. Postfeminist discourse also promotes the idea that women have now won total equality or even surpassed boys/men, so that feminism is attributed with having 'gone too far' and unleashed girls'/women's competitive and aggressive qualities and (girl)power, particularly their new-found sexual freedom and expression, which defies traditional norms of feminine embodiment, display and behaviour (Taft, 2004). Moreover, girls'/women's over-success is positioned as having been won at the expense of men/boys (Martino et al., 2009). Postfeminism as a concept describes, then, both the cultural diffusion of feminism into the public domain and a backlash against feminism, due to fears and anxieties over the shifting gender 'order' (Connell, 1987).

Blackman and Walkerdine (2001), drawing on Cohen, define 'moral panics' as public anxieties that particular forms of behaviour are 'deviant' and pose a menace to the social order. Lynne Segal (1999) talks about gender and sexual 'anxieties' over shifting and destabilising feminine and masculine 'roles' and subject positions as these relate to transformations in contemporary late modern cultures characterised by de-industrialisation and the breakdown of conventional 'sexual contracts' and gender roles in the private and public spheres (see also Walkerdine et al., 2001). Moral panics and shared group anxieties are a useful framework for

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thinking about the affective dimensions and dynamics of how public discourses circulate and emote and how this may shape something like state policies around health or education (Buckingham, 2011). Moral panic is an idea that helps us to understand the power of some educational discourses to grip the public imagination and individual psyches and enliven controversy and fear over the state of gender and sexuality. This is not to say that a panic does not hold elements of 'fact' or 'truth', but these tend to be overshadowed by a sense of urgency and crisis that may belie the degree of the problem being represented.

Postfeminist panic is a concept that can help us to consider the affective tenor of public debate through the repetition of patterns, repeated gender stories that come to construct dominant discourses or ways of framing and imagining phenomenon like gender, femininity and sexuality (Gill, 2007). Affectivity is a way of thinking about 'what sticks or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values and objects' and also how emotions and ideas travel and sustain energy and force (Ahmed, 2010, p. 30). In particular, it can help us map out how certain issues around shifting gender 'roles' and sexual behaviour become sites of heightened concern, as points of anxiety or fear (Segal, 1999).

One of the primary sites where gender anxieties around girls' and women's appropriate place and behaviour in society circulate and take force is through the contemporary media. Public opinion, including policy is increasingly 'mediatised' or shaped and informed by the media (Fairclough, 2000). Educational policies are 'spun' and formulated through media coverage around political issues in complex ways (Gerwitz et al., 2004). As Rawolle (2010, p. 22) suggests, research on the mediatisation of educational policy issues 'offers a way to view interactions between the media and education policy as an ongoing process of change, rather than as a series of relatively disconnected episodes or media-events'.

My affective reading of mediatisation does not make causal arguments about policy formations and 'media effects' as some type of hypodermic needle injected into policy making bodies (Egan and Hawkes, 2010). It is not possible to claim that media debates directly determine particular policy decisions or educational guidance or even practices or cite causation between postfeminist panics and educational policies. Rather, I explore how dominant discourses are repeated within the popular press, academic research and policy in ways that are mutually constitutive (Ball, 2008). I try to make a more nuanced relational mapping that places

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official government concern over child sexualisation, within a context of widespread moral panic in the news media on this topic mapping discursive repetition (Gill, 2007) and affective tenor (fear, anxiety, panic) (Ahmed, 2010) in the news media on girls' sexuality as at risk and in danger. I also show how the panic over girls' sexuality that takes shape in the media debates on girls' sexualisation resonates strongly with the moral conservatisms in sex education guidance for the UK. Repressive fears around the appropriate sexual roles, activities and behaviours for girls flows through these multiple sites reaffirming particular discursive tropes and nostalgic ideas about gender and sexuality as logical, truthful and common sense (Hall, 1997), calling upon readers to identify with some representations of girlhood and reject others (Driscoll, 2002).

Sexualisation of girls and the popular press

A consistent stream of UK news headlines for nearly 10 years has fed the postfeminist panic over the sexualisation of girls. The article 'The truth about tweens' (*Independent*, 2006) reports on 'shocking evidence of premature sexualisation of girls' using internet chatrooms. This article suggests that parents are unaware of sexual chatting and that the girls involved are 'at risk for pregnancy and for sexually transmitted diseases', despite the researchers not knowing if the girls were actually engaging in sex or merely 'talking sex' online. The focus of the article is exposing 'sexually precocious behaviour in young girls'.

In 2007, similar concerns revolved around the release of the American Psychological Association's report on sexualisation of girls, which argued that sexualisation can lead to 'lack of confidence, depression, eating disorders and a negative effect on healthy sexual development'. While the article offers an analysis of sexual objectification of girls, its understanding of the problem as having specific psychological, cognitive and health effects for all girls reduces the problem to an issue of inherent risks of sexuality facing girls, neglecting the complex classed and raced construction of girls' sexuality and the complexity of issues different girls might be facing.

In 2008, *The Times* article 'I'm single, I'm sexy and I'm only 13' again proclaimed sexualisation was taking a toll on girls' 'mental health' suggesting that 'teenage girls are being swept up by reality TV style tits-out culture, becoming more willing than ever before to bare all'. The

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article drew on a poll of UK teenagers by 'Lab TV website' which found that UK 'glamour model' Jordan was top of the list of good role models, with 63% saying that lap dancing would be a good profession.

It would appear that the extension of sex work as an economic possibility for middle class girls (63% considering lap dancing) is what underpins a great deal of the moral outrage here, rather than a feminist concern to address the political economy of sex work, prostitution and pornography with transparent fair labour conditions, for instance (Dines, 2009). Egan and Hawkes (2008a) have suggested the sexualisation discourses position girls' sexuality as both risky and at risk, mobilising widespread fear, anxiety and moralism. They suggest that the lack of understanding about what the generalised notion of 'sexualisation' actually 'moves feminist thinking away from a deconstruction of dominant patriarchal culture' because it vilifies girls' sexuality as opposed to sexism (Ibid., p. 319). Rather than critically engaging with the dynamics of sexual objectification and exploitation that organise the sex industry, for instance, the sexualisation discourse is drawn around class-based moralising lines and tends to invoke fears over contaminating forms of sexuality infringing upon constructions of appropriate girlhood sexual innocence and purity (Duschinsky, 2012). Media discourses seem primarily concerned about the 'premature' and 'age-inappropriate' sexualisation of girls and fuelled by a desire to return to a mythical time/space of sexual innocence for some (middle class) children (Egan, 2013).

The construction of innocent and safe childhood has long been critiqued as a middle class construction (Cook, 2005), but it is critical that we gender the 'sexualisation' debate and expose the powerful discursive threads that point to how it is particular girls' bodies that are under an increasingly microscopic gaze. Some girls' bodies are defined as being more 'at risk' and are surveyed more closely. Egan and Hawkes (2008b, p. 294) suggest the sexualisation debate 'reproduces ... patriarchal and moralising beliefs about the ... pathological nature of female sexuality – particularly the sexuality of poor and working class women'. Historically dangerous, licentious sexuality has been constructed as the purview of working class women (Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008) that may potentially contaminate an idealised, sexually innocent, or at least 'coy', purer guise of, middle class feminine sexual subjectivity. Unpacking the media discourse of premature sexualisation, it seems that the projected focus of anxiety surrounds the letting loose of an unbridled, classed female sexuality that is dirty and degenerate.

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More recent media reporting on 'sexualisation' in the UK continues to represent girls' sexuality as in crisis/creating crisis through these class based concerns. Two major UK teacher conferences in April 2013, the ATL and NUT, reported on the dangers of sexualisation for girls vis-à-vis school.[2] One argued 'school children are becoming so corrupted by pornography that girls aspire to look like porn stars' and another warned parents about the dangers of lap and pole dancing, featuring an image of young women in a pole dancing class as a dangerous pedagogical object.

> Teachers warned that pole dancing clubs and beauty pageants are turning back the clock on decades of campaigning for sexual equality. There are concerns that pupils are growing up in a culture where pornographic images are widely available, cosmetic surgery is advertised, and there is a 'fixation' with staying slim. Teachers fear this can undermine young women's self-confidence and contribute to problems such as eating disorders and anxiety about their appearance. This can disrupt both girls' school work and their social life, say teachers ... Delegates called for recognition of the negative impact of sexism and the need to protect equal rights for women ... NUT general secretary Christine Blower said, 'It is important for all children and young people to learn, in an age-appropriate manner, about respect for their own and other people's bodies and emotions'. (*Telegraph*, 2013)

In the news story above, we see contradictory calls – feminist discourses of sexism and sexual equality are intermeshed with neo-liberal post-feminist discourses of girls (under) achievement and misguided aspirations – body image, anorexia, hypersexualisation and self-esteem are confusingly mangled together. An overriding problem signified in the stories and the image accompanying the text (of a pole dancing class) is that girls' energy may be channelled in the 'wrong' direction (an affective future concern about outcomes and trajectories), toward the pole (making money with their sexual bodies) instead of flowing into the rational productive academic channels (making money with their brains). On the one hand, this can again be analysed as a classed concern over erotic capital (Egan, 2013) and the wrong (read middle class) girls slipping into economic practices of selling sex; on the other, it expresses feminist concerns over the commodification of the young female body. Sites external to the school (pole dancing clubs, beauty pageants, pornographic culture) are constructed deterministically as a scapegoat for sexism against girls, rather than suggesting that the very practices of SRE operating within schools may be not only lacking in information but actually constructing female sexuality in equally problematic sexist

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ways. Such news reports are affectively overladen with adult projections of fear and anxiety onto girls, who are in many senses robbed of any potential 'agency' in the imagined space of a scary futurology dominated by 'sexualisation' and 'pornification' (Smith, 2010).

In desiring to return girls to a mythical state of sexual innocence and purity, the sexualisation discourse denies spaces for expression of sexuality from girls, reading every expression of sexual identity or practice from girls in deterministic and reductive terms as evidence of victims of sexualisation (see also Lerum and Dworkin, 2009). This relates in important ways to dominant trends in sex and relationship education in schools. In the next section of this chapter, I explore resonances between the recent moral panic on sexualisation and older discourses of risks of inappropriate youthful sexuality activity that have long informed sex education. My aim is to show how the public sexualisation debates are in many cases simply reinforcing older discourses of sexual risks for young people and girls in particular.

Girls, risk, protection and sexuality in sex and relationship guidance

Historically, sexuality has been a tricky educational issue with schools having to mediate between the specific cultural backgrounds, influences and norms of local parent cultures and nationally mandated curricula on sex education. Traditionally, sexuality was bracketed off as a discrete topic in secondary education as a health discourse dealing with reproductive functions. Sex education was modified to sex and relationship education (SRE) in 2006 in an attempt to address issues of sexual relationships. The Labour Government attempted to change policies to address aspects of sexuality in primary schooling in the UK, perhaps in response to the developing discourses over premature sexualisation and pressures for schools to address these trends. But a move to make SRE mandatory was overturned by the Conservative Government in 2012, leaving SRE in an anomalous position in the UK. On the one hand, it is compulsory for 'maintained' schools (i.e. not free schools or academies)[3] to offer it, at least to a minimal level (and many schools have only six hours a year devoted to it) within the science curriculum. It is also the only area of the curriculum which schools are obliged to consult parents about before delivering it. In fact, many schools hold special meetings

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for parents to view the materials to be used in lessons, and some parents can opt out of sex education due to cultural and religious preferences. At present:

> the law requires that primary schools must decide whether sex and relationship education (SRE) should be included in their school's curriculum and, if so, what the educational provision should consist of and how it should be organised. Secondary schools, meanwhile, must provide SRE (including education about HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases) and must teach human growth and reproduction as set out in the national curriculum ('Sex and Relationship Education: Views from teachers, parents and governors', 2010)

To date, then, SRE is not compulsory in UK primary schools, and secondary schools have only certain areas targeted as mandatory. The related personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is not mandatory and is currently undergoing yet another 'review' leaving its status uncertain (*Telegraph*, 2014). Thus, SRE inhabits a perpetually shaky space in the formal school curriculum, and increasingly it is the individual school's responsibility to manage the curriculum and pedagogy, making its delivery ad hoc, and its status devalued (Alldred and David, 2007). The 2010 Sex and Relationship Education Report also suggests:

> Current SRE provision in the UK lags behind that of many developed countries and a 2007 survey by the UK Youth Parliament of over 20,000 young people found that shockingly 61 per cent of boys and 70 per cent of girls aged over 17 reported not receiving any information at school about personal relationships.[4]

Moreover, it found:

> 90% of parents and 93% of Governors thought schools should be involved in providing SRE, but that 80% of teachers do not feel sufficiently well trained and confident to talk about SRE. Only 9% of school leaders rated the teaching materials available to them as 'very useful'. More than one in four school leaders and a fifth of governors believe that current SRE in schools is failing children by preparing them for the future 'not well' or 'not at all well'. (Ibid.)

Part of the problem has been the bracketing off of sexuality as a 'special' area that is removed in policy and curricula from other gender concerns (such as the gender agenda). As Stevi Jackson famously suggested in 1982, sex education is like a 'remedial programme made necessary by society's attitude to children as a special category of people and sexuality

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as a special area of life'. Also significant is how gender equality issues get separated off from sexuality in sex education provision in the formal curriculum of schooling (Epstein and Johnson, 1998). As gender and education scholars have suggested, gender is constructed in dominant educational discourses and policies (for example, the UK Labour Party's 'Gender Agenda') as the crude bodily distinction between numbers of girls and boys in school and gender is compared by performative success by gender in test scores (Skelton and Francis, 2008). In this way, gender issues can be constructed as an equality box (performance by test scores due to some girls' high performance on exams) that has been ticked (as with other affirmative action discourse that takes equal female representation to have eliminated sexism (Ringrose, 2012)). This works to eclipse ongoing issues of gendered and sexualised power relations in schools, for instance, gendered dynamics of instruction, sexism, sexual harassment and violence and other issues of girls' well-being in school (Ibid.).

Researchers in the UK and internationally have criticised sex education programmes as refusing to engage with the 'realities' of sexual relationships and gendered power dynamics among young people (Kehily, 2002; Allen, 2004; Robinson, 2008) and consistently reducing sexuality to an issue of 'plumbing' and disease which is influenced by a 'protectionist' discourse: that adults have the responsibility to protect children from the risks of sexuality (Alldred and David, 2007). The most recent DfE guidance released on 14 January 2014 largely repeats the previous guidance (DfES, 2000) that SRE is primarily about avoiding pregnancy and disease reduction with the core message of 'delaying sexual activity' repeated no less than three times in the first five pages of the report in statements like:

> Secondary pupils should learn to understand human sexuality, learn the reasons for delaying sexual activity and the benefits to be gained from such delay, and learn about obtaining appropriate advice on sexual health.
>
> Effective sex and relationship education does not encourage early sexual experimentation ... It enables young people to mature, to build up their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity.

To take a specific example of regional SRE guidance for Year 9 in London,[5] five of the six lessons focus on risk and three on contraceptive methods. Lesson two, 'recognising and managing risk' will teach young people to 'assess and manage the element of risk in personal choices and situations', suggesting a discussion focus on sexual activity, human

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reproduction, contraception and pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infection and HIV. Lesson three, 'Reasons to have sex or delay', is also organised around risk in 'decision making', encouraging discussion of 'informed choices, and personal, social and moral dilemmas and choices'. Lessons four, five and six focus on 'contraceptive methods, condoms and STIs' respectively, foregrounding the primary focus on preventing pregnancy and disease, although condoms are the only contraceptive focused on in explicit detail in the guidance.

To summarise, the SRE guidance centres on risks of diseases, teenage pregnancy and safeguarding against poor personal sexual 'choices'. The body is fragmented into discrete 'risky parts' to be managed. Epstein and Johnson (1998) have found this focus on protection and risk makes discussion of desire and pleasure difficult in the sanitised space of schooling. Epstein critiques the nature of the relationships promoted in SRE where heteronormative relationships organised around heterosexual penetrative sex are privileged and normative, yet risky and appropriately delayed. Thus, she and others have suggested that SRE advocates an a-sexual or non-sexual, heterosexual relationship in the singular.[6]

This has particular implications for girls. Michelle Fine (1998; Fine and McClelland, 2006) has suggested that there is a 'missing discourse' of female desire writ large in sex education, organised around health and reproductive danger. In the USA context, this risk has typically been contained through abstinence education, going much further than other developing countries in advocating the delay of sexual intercourse till marriage and positioning women as moral regulators of sexuality by positioning their bodies as risky sexual objects to protect from predatory male sexuality (Aapola et al., 2005). Allen, writing in the New Zealand context (2004, p. 183), suggests that there is a total absence of a viable discourse of 'erotics' in sex education, indicating that young women are particularly disadvantaged since they are 'already socially constituted as possessing lower levels of sexual desire and being able to experience sexual pleasure less easily than young men'.

In the UK context, discussions of male sexuality in the SRE guidance contain overt reference to male arousal – erections and condoms – and the curriculum also contains references to 'wet dreams' which position the sex drive as higher and more out of control for males than girls and position girls as at risk or/and moral regulators of such predatory and drive-based sexuality (Allen, 2004). However, while the mechanics of female reproduction (menstrual cycle) are present, the mechanics of

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female arousal are often not (Reiss, 1998). This is a crucial distinction since reference to male orgasm is present in the SRE curriculum, but reference to female orgasm is typically not: this remains a taboo site. Male arousal and sexual pleasure is therefore a discursive 'condition of possibility' (Foucault, 1982) in the SRE curriculum, which foregrounds the phallus-condom-vagina assemblage of parts (Renold and Ringrose, 2011), while female sexual pleasure is mystified and repressed. Female sexuality is reproduced as a passive hole to receive the penis. We can see immediate resonances between SRE and the current panic on premature child sexualisation. Both discourses are organised around notions of sexual risk and age-appropriate sexual experiences and construct normative accounts of 'healthy sexuality' focused on delaying sexual practice and self-sexualisation (from girls particularly), constituting those who do not manage a healthy sexual self as deviant. The resulting educational problem is that SRE continues to offer little guidance addressing gendered and sexualised relationships within the context of the 'sexualisation' fears reinforced in the media reporting explored above.

Implications of the sexualisation reports for education

Returning to the official government discourses of sexualisation I raised in the introduction to this chapter, the UK reports on sexualisation have had different aims and have had different things to say about education. The Scottish Parliament report has been lauded for undertaking rigorous research and offering a 'thorough review of literature',[7] but focused on exploring parents' and children's views on sexualised goods and did not explicitly aim at interventions of strategies for education. Nonetheless, the role of the school did come up as a key concern for parents:

> Parents felt they needed some support in their efforts to deal with this issue. Some expressed a wish for schools to address the issue of sexualisation with young people – partly because they recognised that doing so themselves could be ineffective, or easily dismissed by their children ... However, parents felt that they often did not have a voice in schools, including on issues such as holding proms or policies on uniform, make-up and so on that had direct and significant consequences in this area (Buckingham et al., 2009).[8]

A crucially important aspect of this report is its recommendation for further research and exploration of educational resources to address this issue.

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The Sexualisation of Young People report (Papadopoulos, 2010) has been widely critiqued by academics (see Atwood and Smith, 2011) for bias and using 'cherry picked' data and failure to distinguish academic research from PR campaigns.[9] It has also been criticised for reducing the issues around sexualisation to an age-appropriate dialogue of sexually regulating girls, who were constructed as victims in relation to predatory males (Renold and Ringrose, 2011; Duschinsky, 2012). Despite these weaknesses, the Home Office had worked with women's organisations and feminist groups to outline some of the core issues of sexism underpinning corporate 'sexualisation'. It also had important recommendations surrounding the need for raising awareness around issues of sexualisation in education including: introducing 'gender equality' training and modules into Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) education; developing a 'whole school approach to tackling gender inequality, sexual and sexist bullying and violence against women and girls', developing lessons on 'sexualisation'; and advocating that gender stereotypes and pornography be included in DCSF's revised Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) guidance for schools (Papadopoulos, 2010, pp. 14–15). This represented a significant set of recommendations which would have opened space for analysis of gender stereotypes and sexism within the spaces of schooling.

However, any feminist voices articulated in the Sexualisation of Young People review were largely undercut by the Bailey Review, which focused its concerns again on issues of parenting, family values and responsible marketing. The emphasis has returned from analysis of gender and sexism to age-appropriate rules around sexual activity and delaying entry into what is assumed to be inevitable sexualised adult culture (Coy and Garner, forthcoming). There are references to the need for media literacy in the Bailey Review but no joined-up analysis of how we might work on issues of sexualisation across PSHE and SRE in particular.

Conclusion

At the time of writing, and after the prolonged postfeminist panic over girls, political refusals to revise the existing sex education curriculum to address issues of 'sexualisation' and digital technology persist (*Telegraph*, 2014). Even more difficult for campaigners, activists and academics concerned with young people's sexual rights is the failure of the most

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recent vote in the House of Lords in January 2014 to make sex education mandatory in the UK, which redraws the boundaries around sexuality education as a private, culturally bound set of issues (*Telegraph*, 2014). Mary Jane Kehily (2002, p. 71) has suggested that there is a perennial problem of gaps between official sex education and the ' "lived" experience of sexuality among pupils'. At present, this gap seems particularly problematic and wide, given the intensifying moral panic on sexualisation evident in the UK media and beyond, the inadequate and limited SRE provision and the refusal to make SRE mandatory in schools.

In this chapter, I have outlined the sexualisation panic discourses as resolutely postfeminist (Gill, 2011). News media accounts continually bring up fears over girls as at risk and in crisis in what ostensibly appears to be a concern for girls' well-being. Yet the concern is repeatedly affectively oriented toward pushing girls back into a (adult, middle class, racialised) fantasy space of sexual innocence to 'protect' girls (Egan, 2013). I have outlined how the media sexualisation panic resonates with the focus on sexual risk in SRE guidance in UK schools, which continue to be organised around parts and plumbing, disease and delaying sexual activity via managing the phallus in ways that totally neglect girls' desires and sexual rights to knowledge about their bodies (Robinson, 2008; Lerum and Dworkin, 2009). Taken together, then, the postfeminist panics over girls' sexualisation evident in media, government reports work alongside the repressive tendencies in the SRE guidance in a mutually constitutive fashion, with deeply sexist effects that neglect the gendered power dynamics of sexuality both within educational contexts and beyond.

Notes

1 For a comprehensive review and critique of popular books and films on girls and 'sexualisation', see Egan, 2013.
2 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9936103/Schoolgirls-want-porn-star-looks-teachers-told.html; http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-21990043
3 A useful description of the difference in requirements for maintained schools and academies in England can be found at: at http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/385195/current_status_of_sre.pdf
4 http://accordcoalition.org.uk/2011/07/14/peers-debate-the-importance-of-statutory-pshe-in-lords-debate/

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5 This is taken from *SRE core curriculum for London a set of schemes of work with detailed lesson plans and suggested resources for the foundation stage, primary and secondary curriculum*. It has been put together by Young London Matters, an initiative sponsored by the Government Office for London in response to the new statutory curriculum for PSHE (Young London Matters, 2009).
6 There is also the heteronormative assumption that girls will be heterosexual, there is little consideration of sex with other women or of anyone stepping outside the sex they were assigned at birth (e.g. trans-identities) (DePalma and Atkinson, 2008).
7 http://www.drpetra.co.uk/blog/unpacking-the-bailey-review-on-commercialisation-and-sexualisation-of-childhood/
8 http://archive.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/equal/reports-10/eor10-02.htm#2
9 http://www.drpetra.co.uk/blog/unpacking-the-bailey-review-on-commercialisation-and-sexualisation-of-childhood/

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3

The Challenges, Contradictions and Possibilities of Teaching About Pornography in Sex and Relationships Education (SRE): The Australian Context

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Introduction

Pornography is an intensely personal, private and political issue: one capable of dividing sex and relationships educators. Over the past 20 years in Australia, there has been enormous progress in inclusive practices, acknowledgement of sexual activity and improvement in the provision of resources to support sex and relationships education (SRE) in schools. These positive changes have happened alongside an increasing concern about the high levels of violence against women (VAW). Increasingly, authors are pointing to the broader structural aspects of gender relations and inequality as implicated in the cause and the solution. Gender-based entitlements, power, objectification and status are now recognised as playing an instrumental role in the dynamics of VAW (Russo and Pirlott, 2006; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), 2014).

A recent UK report on young people and VAW has identified the role of the media, sexualisation and access to pornography in a range of sex and relationships issues (Horvath et al., 2013). Reporting on the inquiry, the authors point to the pervasive role of pornography in children's and young people's lives. The inquiry found, 'Frequent accounts of both girls' and boys' expectations of sex being drawn from pornography they had seen; and professionals told us troubling stories of the extent to which teenagers and younger children routinely access pornography, including extreme and violent images' (Horvath et al., p. 4).

Similar exposure to pornography can be found in Australia. In one study of 13–16 year olds, 61% of girls and 92% of boys had been exposed to pornography online (Fleming et al., 2006). Many young people are learning what sex looks like from what they – or their partner or peers – observe in pornography (Häggström-Nordin, Hanson and Tyden, 2005; Flood, 2009).

These concerns have been the impetus for an increasing focus on pornography and its links to VAW in SRE in Australia. Pornography, material designed to arouse (Crabbe, 2014), is not in itself problematic; in fact, for some young people pornography can provide an important source of information where little else exists. However, researchers argue that mainstream pornography has become extremely violent (Malamuth, Addison and Koss, 2000). It depicts women enjoying violent sexual behaviours, provides unrealistic images of women and men's bodies and shows sexually unsafe behaviours such as intercourse without condoms or oral sex and then anal sex without a condom (Dean, 2007). One key

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concern is the proliferation of easily accessed pornography and its use by young people as a tool for learning about sex and relationships in place of SRE in schools (Flood, 2009; Crabbe, 2014).

Australia is in the process of implementing a national curriculum that endorses SRE to students in primary and secondary schools (ACARA, 2013a). However, this remains a contested process and implementation by no means guaranteed. Responsibility for implementation resides with state and territory governments whose nuanced political agendas will determine the extent and nature of SRE in schools.

The final document reflects the nature of current debates and future directions in SRE in Australia, which in broad terms mirror those occurring internationally. When should SRE begin? What is appropriate content at particular grade levels? How explicit are we in our approach? Who should be teaching SRE? What sexualities are privileged in the current approach? How do we move from a sex-negative approach to a sex-positive approach? What messages are we giving students about sex and relationships? Should we be teaching about violence against women in SRE? Should an examination of explicit sexual imagery and pornography be part of SRE? These questions go to the heart of SRE in Australia and form the subject matter of this chapter.

In particular, the emphasis is on the challenges, contradictions and possibilities of teaching about pornography education in SRE. This new curriculum proposes a strengths-based approach in which students are encouraged to be healthy citizens rather than present sexuality issues as a problem of risk, harm and negativity. It assumes that students come to class with strengths and knowledge that can be built upon. Yet pornography that depicts gender inequality and VAW is a negative reality and an issue young people want and need to explore in SRE in schools (Allen, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2013; Harrison, Ollis and Johnson, 2014; Hirst, 2014). Drawing on data collected from qualitative research with teachers and students involved in a Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) pilot in three secondary schools in Victoria, Australia, this chapter examines the challenges and possibilities of teaching about pornography in SRE.

Why teach about pornography in SRE?

The shifting landscape of technology

The use of mobile phones, laptop computers, social media sites such as personal blogs (Facebook) and photo and video posting websites

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(YouTube and Instagram), accessed at schools or involving school students, has meant that schools have been required to deal increasingly with incidents relating to explicit sexual imagery and pornography. The latest Australian research with students in Grades 10–12 (16–18 year olds) shows that 43% had sent a sexually explicit written text message and 52% had received them; 26% had sent a sexually explicit nude or nearly nude photo or video of themselves; 9% had sent one to someone else and 42% had received one of someone else. When the data is compared on the basis of sexual activity, sexually active students have much higher rates of exposure. For example, 72% had sent a sexually explicit written text message, 84% had received one, 50% had sent a sexually explicit nude or nearly nude photo of themselves and 17% sent one of someone else. Over 70% had received one of someone else (Mitchell et al., 2013).

Although policy frameworks exist in Australia to deal with school-based incidents (DEECD, *Building Respectful and Safe Schools,* 2010), such procedural documents do little to help young people make sense of, and navigate their way through and around, what can be problematic exposure and imagery, nor assist them to explore issues of desire and pleasure. Young people have easy access to what can be sexist, violent, homophobic, disrespectful, sexualised and sexually explicit images that often present unrealistic expectations and portrayals of gender, power, intimacy, desire and sexual consent in sexual relationships (Flood and Fergus, 2008; Brook et al., 2009; Powell, 2010).

Never before has there been a more immediate need to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and understanding to deconstruct and reconstruct these representations in line with the reality of gender, sex, power, sexuality and respectful relationships. A recent study of students' experience of SRE in Australia (Johnson, Harrison and Ollis, 2014) shows that students want to learn about sexualisation, pornography and sexual consent as well as respectful relationships, love, sexual desire and pleasure in SRE. Violence in relationships, staying safe online and pornography were amongst the ten issues students in Grades 8–10 (13–16 year olds) wanted more depth on (Johnson et al., 2014). Other studies have shown a clear mismatch between what students want to know and what teachers are prepared to cover in SRE (Allen, 2005; Johnson, 2012).

The elephant in the room

There is growing consensus of the need to address pornography in SRE (Allen, 2006; Crabbe and Corlett, 2010; Haste, 2013; Crabbe, 2014;

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Harrison and Ollis, 2015). The problem is 'exactly how porn should be addressed in the classroom' (Haste, 2013, p. 520). Haste argues that one of the key challenges facing SRE is how to deal with male pupils' use of and reference to pornography (Ibid.). Others go so far as to argue that boys' disruptive behaviour in SRE can partially be explained by not critiquing and engaging with the power of the pornographic discourse (Allen, 2006). Allen (2006) contends 'from this perspective, pornography provides the 'script' through which many young men are inducted into the conventions of sexual behaviour' (p. 521).

Pornography's capacity as a poor sexuality educator and poor information source has been highlighted by a number of authors (Fergus and Heenan, 2009; Crabbe and Corlett, 2010; Dines, 2010; Flood, Haste 2013), including young people themselves (Mitchell et al., 2013). However, current SRE in Australia rarely includes explicit coverage of sexual behaviours, such as masturbation, intercourse, anal and oral sex, except in programmes that focus on intellectual disabilities (Family Planning NSW, 2002). In other words, young people do not get to see what sex looks like in practice. This is a tension that goes to the core of the debate about pornography use by young people. If SRE is not going to provide accurate information that enables young people to see and explore what equitable, inclusive, consensual, pleasurable sex looks like then where do they get it?

Respectful relationships: a curriculum context for pornography education

In Australia, respectful relationships education (RRE) is the educational context for teaching about VAW and, therefore, pornography (Flood et al., 2009). In 2009, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) commissioned a report (Flood et. al., 2009) to explore evidence and develop best practice in VAW prevention education. This report has been instrumental in the development of school-based interventions that aim to prevent VAW in Australia and that enable a focus on pornography (CASA House, 2008; Crabbe, 2014; DEECD, 2014).

Unlike other SRE issues, RRE is clear and identifiable throughout the Health and Physical Education (HPE) component of the new Australian Curriculum (AC), to be implemented in Australian schools in 2017. This

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provides enormous potential to engage in education about pornography in SRE, if schools and teachers are supported with teaching resources and professional learning (Ollis, 2014).

The inclusion of critical inquiry in the HPE curriculum as a key pedagogy holds perhaps the most potential to develop students' awareness and understanding of pornography's role in perpetuating gender inequality and VAW in SRE. For example, there is an expectation that students will, 'critically analyse and critically evaluate contextual factors that influence decision-making, behaviours and actions, and explore inclusiveness, power inequities, taken for granted assumptions, diversity and social justice' (ACARA, p. 4). An explicit focus on power has been shown to assist students to make the connection to VAW (Sundaram, 2013; Ollis, 2014) and is considered a key aspect of best practice in VAW prevention education and pornography education (Ollis and Tomaszewski, 1993; Carmody, 2009; Flood et al., 2009; Crabbe, 2014; DEECD, 2014,)

In addition, the HPE curriculum includes a set of 'General capabilities' students should develop as part of their experience of the curriculum (ACARAc, p. 2). The capabilities of 'critical and creative thinking', 'personal and social capability' and 'ethical understanding' (pp. 2–8) are also instrumental in a best practice approach (Flood et al., 2009). Moria Carmody's (2009) programme 'Sex and Ethics' is an example of this framework in action. Consistent with others in the field (Sundaram, 2013), Carmody's intervention is based on listening to the voices of young people and their lived experience of gender and violence. Theoretically, her work draws on feminist post-structuralist ideas utilising Foucault's ideas on power and sexual ethics (p. 9). For Carmody, the challenge is 'how to support young people in their use of power to shape their sexual lives and ethical sexual subject' (p. 9).

An example of teaching about pornography through SRE

A recent case can be found in the practice of a small group of feminist teachers, whose practice I researched as part of a curriculum pilot called *Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out Against Gender Based Violence* (BBR), released in 2014 (DEECD). The teachers contacted me in 2012 after reading about the BBR resources with the hope of assistance. They were interested in using the draft BBR to develop a programme for students that focused on the objectification of women, pornography and respectful relationships.

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The subsequent programme they developed included a strong focus on pornography. The teachers selected suitable activities from the draft BBR to complement others they had previously used in SRE and focused the entire programme around the viewing of *DreamWorks 3: Desire, Sex and Power in Music Videos* (Sut Jhally, 1997). The activities were piloted in February/March 2013 in two mainstream co-educational secondary colleges (40 students) and their own alternative setting (10 students).[1] The teachers advertised the programme to local secondary schools, and three responded. After initial discussion of the programme aims and content with the interested schools, plus the viewing of *DreamWorks 3: Desire, Sex and Power in Music Videos* (Sut Jhally, 1997), two of the three schools elected to undertake the programme over a four-day intensive period with one co-educational Grade 9 class in each school. The third school felt the video was inappropriate for the students in Grade 9. According to one of the teachers, the school leadership felt that it would be 'traumatising' for their students.

Following ethics approval from the education authority and the university, qualitative data was collected from students using a post-programme survey; content analysis of students' activity reflections, and creative writing tasks (20 girls and 20 boys in the two mainstream schools) and one focus group interview (10 students in the alternative programme – three girls and seven boys) about their experience of the programme activities and how they understood the issues of sexualisation, gender, power and relationships.

Individual interviews were conducted with four teachers (three female and one male) who had developed and/or taught the programme to explore their experience of planning, developing and teaching the programme. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Pornography emerged as a key issue of teacher concern and student interest. Consistent with other researchers in SRE (Allen, 2006; Haste, 2013), the teachers in this study took the view that pornography could not be ignored because it was a constant backdrop to their students' understanding of sex and sexuality, particularly the boys.

> I guess it all started when we had students presenting with a lot of issues surrounding pornography use and being hyper-sexualised. So we had the whole range of kids that were viewing pornography, and quite openly talked about it and when we did the pornography brainstorm, all the websites came out, all the stuff came out ... even the ones at (the mainstream school) that we didn't think had probably been exposed to porn, all knew about Anime porn,

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> all knew about cartoon porn. So, that was easy then, because you could talk a bit more about it, because you knew that they all had at some stage – because you can't just go 'oh, who watches pornography?'. (Claire, Female Teacher)

The teachers had been working with students in a non-mainstream context that afforded them great freedom in what they covered. Claire acknowledges the sensitivity that surrounds including an issue such as pornography in SRE in mainstream schools and the importance and sense of legitimation that the reality check with young people can bring.

As part of the pilot, students also undertook content and textual analysis of media and music videos. Using Gail Dines' (2010) notion of 'porn world', students participated in an activity developed for the pilot by Crabbe and Corlett that compared the messages in 'porn world' with what happens in the 'real world'. The students then explored the notion of respect and a respectful sexual relationship, comparing their ideas of respect with the way that sex, sexuality and gender are represented in the media, music videos and pornography.

The following excerpt illustrates the impact of the activities according to one of the teachers:

> to the conclusion that if I am someone that's going to watch pornography, I'm not going to have a good relationship with another person ... Lots of our kids in the programme said I'm not watching pornography anymore, because I'm never going to have a girlfriend if I watch pornography ... Yeah, and one of the boys at [the mainstream school], at the end of it said ... you know the best thing I've learned in this whole time? He goes, I didn't realise girls don't like anal sex. Thanks for teaching me that. (Pam, Female Teacher)

These comments reinforce young people's, particularly boys', use of pornography as an important source of information about sex and the importance of SRE as a reality check against which they can explore what they see and understand from pornography.

Consistent with other research (Feltey, Ainslie and Geib, 1991), the students' response to critical media analysis was a strong emotional one in which they described what they saw as 'disgusting', 'confronting, 'uncomfortable', 'confused', 'not normal', and they voiced the need for behavioural change and cultural practices that normalised violence against women.

> 'Violence against women, not okay'... 'Everything about nothing is about sex'; 'Media over does things, changes everything'... 'Most things are sexual like how red lipstick originated'. 'Porn we learn about it in society, like music

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> videos and magazines, and it's not really how it should be as Taylor said, it just gives you – no matter how young you are, you have to be sexy to everyone or you're nothing'. (Student responses, Grade 9 mainstream schools)

Many of the students described the programme as 'life changing' with the majority of them saying their parents would benefit from the programme. Perhaps students being provided with SRE that is relevant can help explain this. Allen (2005) maintains that SRE needs to be embodied, realistic and practical for students. The students in this study found the approach to pornography education helped them to make connections to themselves, the real world and gender inequality that was practical for their lived experiences as sexual subjects.

The teachers in the pilot drew heavily on gender equity and human rights discourses. Much of the programme was designed to raise awareness of the extent of VAW that occurs through 'objectification' and 'dehumanisation' of women in pornography and popular and mainstream media. These terms used by the teachers in the activities did raise awareness of power and gender inequality. Nevertheless, the use of shame, shock and disgust, verbalised by the students, is a far cry from a sex-positive and the strengths-based approach advocated by the new Australian Curriculum.

This approach to examining pornography in SRE is not without criticism. A key problem identified by feminist scholars is the essentialist ideas conveyed about men and women. Men are 'naturally' aggressive predators, and therefore, women naturally submissive victims (Connell, 2009; Haste, 2013). In many ways, the activities reinforce hegemonic masculinity and remove agency from women. Jones (2011) argues that these sexual binaries also mean that this is exclusionary to transgendered people and adds another layer to sexual determinism criticised by authors such as Connell (2009). Tong (1989) points out that this holds no hope for egalitarian relationships between men and women until women's sexuality is not defined in relation to men. For Connell (1987), writers who adopt frameworks that maintain that men are considered the natural enemy of women mean that 'pornography is regarded as an expression of violence in male sexuality and a means of domination over women, rape as an act of patriarchal violence rather than sexual desire' (p. 55).

Yet these teachers, unlike most, are willing to do this difficult work and tackle issues that Robinson and Jones-Diaz (2005) argue are 'personally confronting, uncomfortable, or even somewhat risky.' (p. 25). How can

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this important work be carried out with young people in schools without reverting to static gendered binaries and some innate understanding of men and women?

The challenges and contradictions

A strengths-based and sex-positive approach

The previous example points to the difficulty of positioning violent and sexist pornography in a strengths-based model advocated by the new Australia Curriculum. It has been argued for nearly two decades that there is a need to move away from a focus on deficit, disease, harm and prevention in SRE to one that celebrates sexuality and works to build a positive sense of self (Health Canada, 1994 and 2003; Hillier, 2001; Allen, 2005; Weinfferink et. al., 2005; Ollis, 2013; ACARA, 2014). With the exception of Western European countries such as Holland, Germany and France, (Weinfferink et al., 2005; Ferguson et. al., 2008), SRE is overwhelmingly positioned in negative discourses of disease and risk (Jones, 2011).

The new Australian Curriculum explicitly states its intention is to move away from a focus on health risks, instead adopting a strengths-based approach concerned with starting from what is positive about health and health behaviours. This approach builds on the idea that most young people consider themselves healthy and that they bring with them particular strengths and 'developing positive attitudes and a repertoire of knowledge, understanding and skills can improve their health and wellbeing' (ACARA, p. 4).

A sex-positive approach[2] requires an even greater shift in thinking about sex, sexuality and young people, one according to Windsor and Burgess (2014) 'that recognises that sex can be enriching' rather than dangerous and one 'that asserts, at its core, that people benefit from holding positive attitudes about sexuality' (p. 694).

Although Australian research (Mitchell et al., 2013; Johnson, Harrison and Ollis, 2014) demonstrates that young people want the inclusion of pleasure and pornography in SRE, the age-old challenge of translating policy and research into practice in schools remains. Without professional learning, adequate teaching resources and some supported risk taking, teachers are reluctant to cover areas of SRE that might problematise gender normative behaviours and understandings, such as gender,

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pornography, pleasure and sexual desire (Leahy, Horne and Harrison, 2004; Ollis, 2010, 2013).

Celebrating sexuality in a sex-positive and strengths-based framework is about assisting teachers to explore the implications of negative discourses that currently plague SRE resources and programmes and develop inclusive practices. However, taking a 'strengths-based' and 'sex-positive' approach to issues such as VAW and pornography that depict violence against women presents a number of challenges. In terms of 'strengths', this is likely to translate into programmes and teaching activities that include a focus on help seeking behaviours. Leahy et al. (2013) are critical of the approach arguing that a 'strengths-based curriculum places considerable emphasis on the individual (the student) to use their capacities to change themselves and others' (p. 178). Drawing on the neo-liberal focus on individual responsibility, there is a risk that strategies do not recognise gender inequality and power differences or the need for structural change that prevents the normalisation of pornography and mainstream images depicting violent and sexist images of women.

VAW, including violent and sexist pornography are negative aspects of SRE and sit in stark contrast to a sex-positive and strength-based framework. Yet, Fine and McClelland (2006) argue that SRE needs to 'place sexual activity ... within a larger context of social and interpersonal structures that enable persons to engage in the political act of wanting' (p. 11). They describe this as occurring 'inside a stew of desires of opportunity, community, pleasure and protection from coercion and danger' (p. 11). For Fine and McClelland, the key is helping 'young women and men navigate across the dialectics of danger and pleasure' (p. 12). Translated into practice, sex-positive SRE would involve 'critical analysis', 'trusting conversations', 'conversations about sexuality, power and justice', 'help seeking' and 'negotiating risk and pursuing pleasure' (p. 12); they would include a discussion of the power of the pornographic discourse. Other researchers argue that it would also acknowledge 'pleasure, danger and ambivalence as well as giving space to the naming and discussion of the innumerable possible emotions, sensations, fantasies and evocations that flow from sexually aroused bodies' (Cameron-Lewis and Allen, 2013, p. 128).

This framework would enable pornography, alongside pleasure, arousal and intimacy to be discussed, presenting a more realistic view of the complexity of 'multiple expressions and dimensions of sexual intimacy' (Cameron-Lewis and Allen, 2013, p. 12). In turn, young people

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need to be provided with the tools to negotiate what they do and do not want in sexual relationships; enabling conversations around agency and respectful relationships that can assist young people in developing more positive self-images (Ingham, 2005; Oliver et al., 2013). Cameron-Lewis and Allen (2013, p. 128) argue that such an approach will also enable 'alternative ways of enacting masculinities and femininities.'

Making gender explicit

The other challenge is making gender explicit. The previous discussion indicates the potential to provide education about pornography within a VAW framework as part of the new Australian Curriculum in HPE. However, conspicuous by its absence in the curriculum is clear, identifiable learning statements that refer to the impact of gender relations.

Curriculum developers have recently used the Australian Curriculum in HPE to guide resources that include pornography (Ollis, Harrison and Maharaj, 2013; Crabbe 2014; DEECD 2014). Using very generic statements such as 'build and manage respectful relationships', 'enable students to access, evaluate and synthesis information to take positive action to protect, enhance and advocate', experienced curriculum developers have linked to gender, VAW and pornography (DEECD, 2014). However, the inexperienced or the teacher in a school using the HPE curriculum as a guide to programme development in SRE could be forgiven if their approach to RRE excluded gender, VAW and pornography.

Over the past 20 years, the one key component of an effective educational strategy, agreed upon by researchers, policy and programme developers to address VAW has and remains an explicit gender analysis that explores constructions of masculinities and femininities and the connection to issues of gender justice, gender equality and power (Ollis and Tomaszewski, 1993; Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Kenway and FitzClarence, 1997; Carmody, 2009; Dyson, 2009; Flood et al., 2009; Allen 2011; Sandaram, 2013; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014).

A number of studies show that without explicit reference to gender, gender-based violence and/or VAW, the curriculum will become gender neutral and the need for this to be made explicit to students lost (Sundaram, 2013; Ollis, 2014). When teachers lack the awareness, confidence, understanding and skill to teach about these issues, they are not covered (Whittaker et al., 2006; Ollis, 2009, 2013). There is no mention of pornography or explicit sexual imagery in the HPE – AC as a source

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of sexuality and relationships information for young people. Nor is there any reference to pornography's potential connection to gender inequality and VAW.

Conclusion

Pornography can no longer be ignored in SRE: nor can the need for young people to be provided with resources that enable them to see and explore what gender inclusive, pleasurable and consensual sex is. The task, as others point out (Allen, 2006; Haste, 2013), is finding the most effective approach. Some promising work has begun in Victoria, Australia, as part of a whole school approach to explicit sexual imagery (Crabbe, 2014). Nevertheless, many challenges remain.

The Australian experience points to SRE's potential, if policy, professional learning and resources explicitly refer to pornography and have embedded in them a feminist framework that positions VAW education in the context of gender and power and the contradictions and complexity of the realities of young people's lives. Such a framework needs to provide the opportunity for young people to critically examine gender relations and provide young people with the tools to reconstruct meanings of gender outside normative notions and discourses that enable them to act in sexually ethical ways. It should enable young people to explore both the positive and negative aspects of sexuality alongside each other.

Pornography has the capacity to divide and create moral panic. The intensely personal nature of sexual stimulation and arousal is confronting for even the most experienced SRE teacher. Yet as educators, we have a responsibility to educate in this personal area that has an increasing public place in young people's everyday lives and use of technology. If we include information for young people that is inclusive of all sexualities, is explicit, shows sexual pleasure and consent, some young people may not feel the need to use pornography to get information.

Embracing respectful relationships as a framework without losing an explicit focus on VAW will require vigilance by policy and programme developers as they write curriculum and support material for teachers to ensure that VAW remains a key focus and includes an examination of pornography in its maintenance and perpetuation.

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Changing the focus of SRE to include sex-positive and strengths-based approaches will remain a challenge because of the reality of violent and sexist pornography on gender relations. It will require shifting the negative discourses embedded in current practice to one that starts from acknowledging that students' current sexual knowing is a strength to be utilised. It will require building the skills young people need to navigate their social and sexual worlds in which they seek out or come across pornography. It will require ongoing professional development and debate on the purpose and needs of SRE as widespread Internet use changes access to information and knowledge.

The real challenge, according to Haberland (2013) and the way to bring about a fundamental shift in how and what we teach in SRE, is to enable young people to 'connect knowledge about their bodies with their lived experiences and the world around them'. Access to and use of pornography is a reality of many young people's sexual worlds. To do this effectively, Haberland maintains we need to teach them to 'reflect about emotions (including desire, anxieties and fears). It means helping them analyse the power imbalances that so fundamentally shape intimate relationships and sexual risk and develop competence to deal with them in positive and transformative ways'. In other words, take a strength-based approach, acknowledging their sexual practices and knowing. Perhaps then young people can develop the 'analytic and critical thinking skills, and fostering egalitarian and respectful norms' as part of open and relevant SRE that will allow them examine the impact of the pornographic discourse without fear, shame and blame.

Summary

This chapter examines the challenges, contradictions and possibilities of including a focus on pornography in SRE. Under the backdrop of a new Australian Curriculum that endorses SRE in schools, takes a strength-based approach and has a clear focus on respectful relationships, the chapter argues that under the right conditions, SRE can provide the context to explore the role of pornography with young people. In reality, a number of tensions exist that present an ongoing challenge for relevant SRE. Drawing on research with young people, the chapter argues the need for more explicit reference to gender, sexuality and VAW in curriculum policy. Moreover, it argues that SRE needs to provide young people

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with resources that include a focus on what sex is. If pornography is a poor sexuality educator, then SRE must include accurate education that enables young people to see and reflect on what age appropriate sexual practices that are inclusive, respectful, consensual and pleasurable look like. Then perhaps there will be less reliance on pornography.

Notes

1. The three feminist teachers teach in a specialised teaching unit designed to work with a small group of approximately 10 students who have social, emotional and behavioral issues. The program is designed to reintegrate the students back into their schools after a six-month education program.
2. The use of the term sex-positive has a contested history. It is not the intention to include a discussion of this debate but rather use Windsor and Burgess' definition. This means one that views young people as sexual subjects capable of making informed decisions about their sexual well-being.

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4

Where Does Violence Against Women and Girls Work Fit In? Exploring Spaces For Challenging Violence Within a Sex-Positive Framework in Schools

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Introduction

A growing body of research has highlighted that violence against young women and girls is a widespread problem (Burton et al., 1998; Barter et al., 2009; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014a). Part of the reason it is so endemic and difficult to challenge is that violence in relationships is often normalised and justified by both young men and women (McCarry, 2010; Sundaram, 2013; Barter et al., 2015). Although issues of violence against women and girls have long been recognised and a wide range of intervention programmes funded globally (see Parkes, 2015, for instance), commitment to such work with young people has been intermittent and poorly funded in England (Maxwell, 2014b). In this chapter, we therefore wish to critically reflect on debates surrounding the role of violence against women and girls (VAWG) prevention work in schools and, more specifically, examine how best to integrate it into the sex and relationships education curriculum (SRE). We focus on England and Australia here as this is where our recent work has been. In Australia, there have been ongoing efforts to integrate violence prevention work into school curricula at a state- and national-level, and we will draw on some examples to illustrate ways forward for VAWG prevention work in schools more broadly.

In England and Australia, there has been some targeted government action to tackle VAWG, which has included action plans encompassing front-line service providers such as schools, the police and online campaigns aimed at young people (thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk; ourwatch.com.au). The role of schools in relation to protecting young people from violence has been highlighted in the recent policy paper on *Safeguarding children and young people* (Home Office, 2014), but 'child abuse' is discussed in general and non-gendered terms, and no mention of VAWG is specifically made. Increasingly, there have been calls for VAWG in particular (different from the more gender-neutral concepts of 'bullying' or 'youth violence') to be addressed by schools (Home Office, 2010). One of the fundamental challenges, in England, many policymakers and practitioners would argue, is that the provision of comprehensive sex and relationships education (SRE) is not a statutory component of the curriculum, which means schools are free to develop and deliver this provision in any way they see as appropriate. Research indicates that such work struggles to secure the necessary space in the timetable to be done comprehensively (or even at all), is often taught by external agencies or

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facilitated by members of the school teaching team who do not have enough confidence and training, and that the focus of such work is on positioning sex, intimate relationships and sexuality as something that is risky and not appropriate for most young people to engage with (Meyer and Stein, 2001; Buston et al., 2002; Maxwell et al., 2010). In Australia, respectful relationships education (RRE) has replaced education that more explicitly uses the term VAWG (Flood et al., 2009). Just as in England, such a reframing of violence against women and girls prevention work as being concerned with promoting respectful relationships can be seen as facilitating greater openness toward developing initiatives within schools (Ollis, 2014). However, we argue that caution is needed and that policymakers and practitioners should be wary of such a move marginalising a continuing and necessary focus on VAWG.

In this chapter, we have drawn on data from four research projects (*Preventing Violence, Promoting Equality 2009–2010* (UK), *Young People and Violence 2010–2011* (UK), *Violence Prevention in Schools 2011–2013* (UK), and *Violence Against Women in Respectful Relationships Education,* ongoing (Australia)) to help us think further about how young people's perspectives on violence should help us to identify key factors that VAWG prevention work in schools should seek to address. Our experiences of being involved in these programmes also stimulated further reflection on where in the curriculum such work might best occur and how within SRE effective VAWG prevention work might take place. We will argue, as have many others, that young people's views on intimate relationships and violence are strongly mediated by their own understandings of 'normal' and appropriate gender behaviour. VAWG prevention work should therefore aim, in the first instance, to raise awareness and open up possibilities for thinking about gender differently if we hope to successfully challenge discourses that have the effect of justifying and therefore reproducing norms and behaviours that result in violence toward girls and women (Keddie, 2010; Ellis, 2014; Maxwell, 2014; Tutty, 2014; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014a; Sundaram, 2014a; 2014b). Second, we wish to explore ways in which relationship violence can be productively integrated within the SRE curriculum without reinforcing the sex-negative approach to teaching about sex and relationships that focuses on risks (explored by Ringrose earlier in this collection). Our chapter calls for a focus in SRE to prioritise engaging young people in discussions on sexual subjectivities, thereby allowing them to take up a more agentic approach to sex and relationships.

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The critical link between gender and violence – focusing on the former in prevention work

The *Young People and Violence* project was a regional study, conducted in late 2010 and early 2011, in the north-east of England. The study involved focus group discussions with over 70 young people, aged 14–15 years, from schools across the region. The aim of the project was to explore how young people conceptualise violence, with a particular focus on whether different forms of violence are understood in similar or contrasting ways and, if so, what the factors underlying these differential understandings might be (Sundaram, 2013, 2014a, 2014b). The project used a range of qualitative methods, employing a phenomenological approach which sought to understand how young people see, and make sense of, violence. Vignettes, photographs and statements which were based, in large part, on findings from previous studies were used to prompt discussions with young people about their understandings, views and experiences of violence.

The group discussions generated insights, not only into young people's understandings of violence, but their views on intimate relationships, gender roles and perceptions of natural 'male' and 'female' behaviours. Young people across the schools in the region had very clear understandings of what constituted violent behaviour. Their conceptualisations encompassed a full range of behaviours and practices, from jealousy and name-calling to physical and sexualised violence. The data suggested that young people were able to articulate what violence 'is' and that there was consensus about which behaviours could be counted as violent. Nuances in their conceptualisations emerged when they discussed whether or not different forms of violence might be seen as acceptable or not. Behaviours that were unanimously agreed on as being violent were not always viewed as problematic by the participants. Their understandings of violence as problematic or not were heavily influenced by their discourses around expected and appropriate behaviours and roles for men and women, in and outside intimate relationships. As examples, pushing or slapping were both conceptualised as violent behaviours yet when discussed within the context of an intimate relationship where expected gender roles were being transgressed, they became justified in some narratives. These behaviours were similarly justified with reference to perceived innate characteristics, such as testosterone, 'male' genes and protectiveness if they were enacted by men toward other men in a 'public' context.

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Young people's understandings of gender were relational, drawing on a binary, appeared fairly strongly entrenched and homogenous. Violence was not, on the other hand, understood in binary, 'right' and 'wrong' terms, but was conceptualised on a continuum along which different positions were adopted depending on the perceived justification for violence. In turn, justifications were, in large part, mediated by young people's views on gender. The findings from the *Young People and Violence* study confirm already well-established links between gender and violence (Burton et al., 1998; Prospero, 2006; Barter et al., 2009; McCarry, 2010), but they go further by exploring the complex ways in which young people's views on violence vary according to context, as well as being fundamentally shaped by their own expectations of gender.

The data from this study suggests that violence prevention work with young people should acknowledge and work up from their understandings and expectations around gender as a starting point (further emphasising the argument about the importance of contextualisation in such work) (Allen, 2005; Maxwell, 2006). However, currently, in English schools there is no clearly dedicated curricular space in which to discuss gender or gender equality. While most schools view SRE as the most obvious place in which to integrate discussions of VAWG (Maxwell et al., 2010). Given its focus on sexuality and intimate relationships, we have previously argued that since gender inequality (and gender itself) pervades all aspects of schooling, a focus on VAWG should perhaps be linked to other forms of equalities work occurring in the curriculum and through extra-curricular initiatives (Maxwell, 2014; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014a; Sundaram, 2014b).

Where in the curriculum does such work best fit?

Two innovative programmes of work were funded sequentially in England and Wales between 2009 and 2013, by a national charitable donor. The first programme (*Preventing Violence, Promoting Equality*) recruited five schools that were asked to develop a series of interventions aimed at challenging violence against women and girls through a specific focus on the promotion of gender equality. Each institution took a slightly different approach, influenced by their own analysis of what the issues relating to VAWG and gender equality were, who within the school took responsibility for developing this work, and other priorities

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the schools were currently grappling with. Alongside the work of the schools, a research team gathered data on the 'issues' as perceived by staff and students and followed the development of the programmes across the sample. A range of loosely connected pieces of work were developed in each school – including peer education or mentoring programmes across each site; in one school a group for young women considered to be at risk of disengagement from education and from experiencing violence was established, while in another school a group for young men who had been involved in a sexual violence incident took part in a series of workshops; a range of awareness-raising to more in-depth training for staff was provided; and specific focus on VAWG was integrated into SRE sessions and whole-school assemblies.

In part, because the above project had relied on schools themselves developing a range of initiatives, which more or less engaged with a focus on VAWG, the subsequent programme, funded by the same donor, sought to recruit external agencies specialising in VAWG prevention work, but all with a different area of specialism. The *Violence Prevention in Schools* project was comprised of organisations specialising in drama-based interventions, working with young people with severe learning difficulties who had experienced sexual abuse. Its main aim was to promote young people's participation and worked with black and minority ethnic communities or organisations who provided a range of domestic violence services. These organisations were tasked with engaging schools in their local areas in the development of a 'whole-school approach' to challenging violence against women and girls. Informed by the previous study, these programmes sought to review and re-develop relevant policies, provide training for staff, augment the resources and approaches staff could use when delivering such work and develop peer education initiatives. Particularly prominent during this phase of the work, across several of the organisations, was the promotion of 'respectful' and 'healthy' relationships between young men and women through group work in SRE lessons aimed at identifying what such terms might mean and role-playing strategies for handling various situations where violence was a possibility. In a number of schools, VAWG prevention work additionally took place in subject areas such as Geography (an extended project on the factors shaping women's lives in various parts of the world) and Drama (an assessed performance with the theme of teenage relationship abuse). However, once again, the main place within the curriculum that schools were most likely to agree to have additional input was within the sex and

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relationships education programme. Thus, although our work has strenuously argued for the need for a whole-school approach to raising awareness of and tackling gender and sexual inequalities to adequately address violence against women and girls (Maxwell, 2014; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014a), given the current pressures on the curriculum in England and schools' preferences for placing VAWG work within SRE, we consider further below how to do this most productively.

Integrating sexual subjectivity within SRE in efforts to challenge VAWG

In the following section, we intend to explore the tensions between embedding VAWG prevention work into the SRE curriculum and moving away from a risk-focused, moralising approach to SRE (Harrison and Hillier 1999; Ingham, 2005; Jones 2011). Instead, we stand alongside Fine and McClelland's (2006) view that it is critical to open up spaces for examining the sexual subjectivity of young women (and men) within schools, given that it is their bodies that 'bear the consequences of limited sexuality education' (Sundaram and Sauntson, forthcoming). We suggest that violence prevention work – which requires us to support young people in critically reflecting on gender and challenging previously internalised notions of male and female behaviour, sexuality, identity and practice – will be limited in its impact if we do not equip young people with the skills and confidence to articulate the existence and naturalness of their own sexual and intimate desires. It is the absence of 'discourse[s] of desire' (Fine, 1998; Allen, 2011) in current SRE provision that has the effect of reinforcing gendered norms of appropriate feminine behaviour, as passive, submissive and non-desiring and denies young women, in particular, access to a sense of their own sexual subjectivity. We argue that young men are equally restricted by the current provision where discourses promote very narrow forms of masculinity (the presumption of heterosexuality and desire for penetrative intercourse, within a context of sexual urges that at times appear uncontrollable), at the same time as calling upon them to act 'respectfully' toward their female partners. Without preparatory work that troubles normative expectations around gender and opens up discussions of a desiring sexual self, how can young men and women be expected to integrate notions of respect (which appears to act as a shorthand for the concept of equality)?

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The absence of an acknowledgement of 'pleasure', desire and sexual agency for young people within most SRE work has been argued to be problematic by a number of scholars across various national contexts (Ingham, 2005; Allen, Rasmussen and Quinlivan, 2013; Cameron-Lewis and Allen, 2013). It has been pointed out that it is female desire in particular that is subjugated within the curriculum and that young women are taught to see themselves as potential victims of assault and violence or as passive sexual objects of male desire (Lamb, 1997, 2010; Allen, Rasmussen and Quinlivan, 2014). As Ringrose notes elsewhere in this collection, when female sexuality is discussed, it is most frequently presented through the moralising lens of sexualisation and commodification of teen girls (McRobbie, 2008; Lamb, 2010; Egan, 2013). A discourse which focuses on the need to protect, manage risk and safeguard young people and children seems to predominate in efforts to 'educate' young people around sex and intimate relationships.

Sundaram and Sauntson (forthcoming) have examined whether and how pleasure is constructed within SRE government-issued guidance in England and young women's views on this. Their critical discourse analysis of the 2014[1] guidance document found that sex is associated with health or risk-management, with the word 'sexual' always being followed by terms such as 'health' and 'abuse'. There is no mention of pleasure, or even consent, despite the latter having been the focus in recent government campaigns aimed at young people. Where pleasure is implied, it is associated first with male sexuality and second with genital stimulation, with no recognition of the myriad other ways in which pleasure is possible (Lamb, 2010). While the young women involved in the research spoke of their frustration with the way sex and sexuality were presented within SRE – as risky and potentially scary – and that they would have liked to learn more about how to gain pleasure and enjoyment from sex, they were all too aware of the challenges and risks inherent in talking openly about sexual pleasure within the heteronormative space of the school.

In Australia, the new Australian Curriculum endorses SRE and acknowledges sexual pleasure and consent as important components of sexuality education (ACARA, 2013), and although there is a lack of specificity in relation to many other sexual health issues, the focus on respectful relationships is extensive, perhaps offering a model for empowering young people to act agentically and positively in relation to their relationships, thus maintaining a strength-based focus while

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tackling VAWG. The curriculum signals a clear focus on 'manag[ing] respectful relationships' and enabling 'students to access, evaluate and synthesise information to take *positive action* to *protect, enhance and advocate*' (our italics added). Emphasis is placed on the agency of young people to enact positive action for themselves and for others, and these are skills that have been identified as essential for violence prevention education (Flood et al., 2009; Tutty, 2014), The curriculum contains a very clear overview of the possibilities to focus on VAWG, which includes teaching about strategies to manage social and emotional change, help-seeking behaviours for self and others and the development of skills to build respectful relationships through 'describing, practicing and investigating' how 'respect, empathy and ethical decision making contribute to relationships'.

Understanding the role of emotion in teaching violence prevention is critical. While many young people's experiences of sex and relationships are not wholly positive and often abusive (Tolman, 1994), research by Maxwell and Aggleton (2012, 2013) has found that in the process of identifying moments that are perceived as positive, or critically, situations where the power relations between people within a sexual or intimate interaction were destabilised in some way, can create affective responses that may drive a new form of 'internal conversation', which in turn may alter the kinds of practices engaged in. In Maxwell and Aggleton (2012), we suggested that it is young women's realisation of their own sexuality and desire that could become desire that could trouble their understanding of gender and creating future possibilities for agentic approaches to their sexual and intimate relationships.

In seeking to identify programmes where some of this kind of work is being attempted, the Australian example offers possible ways in which such work could be started. Starting from a process of critical reflection on how 'personal attitudes, beliefs, decisions and behaviours' are influenced by media and digital sources, the Australian Curriculum assumes that a troubling of normative discourses pervading more intimate relations might become possible as programmes of work progress. Beginning with a focus on discourses reproduced by the media has been identified as best practice in education seeking to build respectful relationships and addressing VAWG (Ollis and Tomaszewski, 1993; Flood et al., 2010; Crabbe and Corlette, 2014; DEECD, 2014).

In interviews with young people in 2012 about their experience of RRE, Ollis found that critical analysis of the gender normativity, sexuality and

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violence in advertising and music videos raised awareness of Grade 9 students' understanding of the normalisation of VAWG. Students referred to 'hyper-sexualisation' and the pervasive nature of sexist and objectified images of women as 'just everywhere it's kind of normalised now'. Students self-reported that the curriculum had impacted on their language in positive ways by reducing their use of words like 'faggot', 'bitch' and 'slut', stating 'disrespect' and 'hurt' as the reason for the change. However, there was also evidence of the learning experiences reinforcing negative discourses that blame women for violence, rather than an examination of the girls' agency and right to wear what they want.

Beyond such activities, however, we would argue that fundamental to unsettling the normative discourses that justify violence against women and girls is to trouble essentialist ideas of the female/male binary. One way to tackle this, within the context of SRE, is to move away from the rather dated exercises which seek to highlight gender stereotypes in relation to sexuality and reputations to a more open, exploratory approach which discusses the embodied sexualities of young women and men. If we start from the proposition that we want young people to engage in agentic sexual practices, and that SRE should aim to support such a process, this would allow for the acknowledgement of young people as sensual, sexual people who are entitled to make choices within their sexual and intimate relationships. For Carmody (2009), the challenge for VAWG prevention is 'how to support young people in their use of power to shape their sexual lives and become ethical sexual subjects' (p. 9).

However, alongside the significant challenges of schools finding the space and time, and confidence, to integrate a programme of work that seeks to unsettle normative gender positions and take an agentic approach to young people's sexualities, without capacity-building, adequate teaching resources and senior leadership team support, teachers will feel unable and reluctant to cover such areas within SRE (Leahy, Harrison and Horne, 2005; Ollis, 2010, 2013) and in fact run the risk of reinforcing rather than challenging the binaries that are so fundamental to such preventive work. While in England many schools choose to bring in external agencies to do this work, the downside is that little or no follow-up support can then adequately be provided by the school to its students, and the ideas generated within SRE sessions are therefore rarely discussed in other parts of the curriculum or spaces within the school.

A study exploring the role of professional learning on teachers' inclusion of gender and sexual diversity in SRE (Ollis, 2009) showed the key

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role that professional learning and inclusive teaching resources could have on a willingness and ability to teach areas of personal discomfort (see also Francis' discussion of affective triggers for teachers elsewhere in this collection). A number of the teachers in Ollis' study (2009) maintained they would have not have taught about transgender, sexual diversity and power from a specified resource if the researcher had not requested them do so. Most of the teachers in the study found covering these issues 'quite confronting'. A number were concerned not only about 'how the students will respond but' whether they 'can handle the material well' (Ollis, 2009, p. 150). Yet being supported to teach these issues in a sex-positive framework was an enriching experience for the teachers. It was common for those teachers who were interviewed about their experiences to say that they felt that they had 'really achieved a lot and ... come out feeling a lot better about it and more confident in (themselves) ... and ... enjoying it' (p. 207).

In Australia and in England, there appears to be an openness to discussing respectful relationships, which includes a commitment to exploring positive as well as more negative and abusive aspects of intimate and sexual relationships. However, our experience and research suggests that without feminist post-structuralist informed training of practitioners, taking a respectful relationships approach may do little to challenge the discursive contexts that drive gender violence. In a recent small-scale study with teachers, Ollis (2014) found little awareness of the importance of gender equality or a commitment to a feminist analysis when teachers discussed their work around respectful relationships. In particular, several of the male teachers wanted a broader focus so that male violence more generally could be addressed. These teachers felt that a programme where more explicit mention about VAWG was made would alienate male students and teachers, whereas maintaining a gender-neutral focus on 'respectful relationships' was seen as enabling for male teachers and students (also found by Maxwell et al., 2010 in her study of such work in England). Thus, while positioning the work in a respectful relationships framework may make a difference to schools more openly and actively addressing VAWG, Ollis' (2014) and Maxwell's (2014) work suggests that this is not enough if a strong theoretical framework, which helps to explain why VAWG occurs and therefore how to begin to challenge it, is not used to inform such programmes of work.

In sum, we have argued – on the basis of cross-national data on gender violence and young people and programmes to address this – that

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violence prevention work in schools should fundamentally incorporate work that troubles normative understandings of gender. While critical gender and sexualities equality work should ideally be done across the curriculum, here we focus specifically on the potential of sex and relationships education as a curricular space in which to talk about gender violence. We expand on existing analyses of the tensions involved in teaching about such a challenging topic as violence by positing it be done within a positive framework for sex and relationships. Sexual subjectivity and sexual agency are key concepts for facilitating reflection which may better enable young people to understand their experiences and commit to different kinds of future practices. Work to develop such skills for young people does take place – albeit inconsistently and infrequently – in schools, and in this chapter, we have introduced some examples of work that has been started with the aim of improving the competencies and confidence of teachers and young people. However, such work usually falls under themes of 'respect' within sex and relationships education, personal development or life orientation curricula. We maintain a need to adopt a whole-school approach to gender and sexualities equality work, where gender equality is promoted through an explicit troubling of gender and sexual expectations and identities across various school (and potentially wider community) spaces.

Summary

In this chapter, we respond to recent debates in the UK and elsewhere regarding the role of schools in teaching violence prevention work. We use recent research from four projects to argue that gender is central to young people's understandings of intimate relationships and their acceptance of violence within relationships and that gender should therefore be centrally placed in violence prevention work. We further argue that introducing gender and sexual subjectivity as central concepts in violence prevention work (within SRE) can expand the predominant focus on health and risk-minimisation to one that is concerned with equality, rights and agency for young people. We offer some examples for taking forward gender equality and violence prevention in a strength-based framework for teaching about sex and relationships.

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Note

1 Department for Education. (2014). Sex and Relationships Guidance. A full link can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283599/sex_and_relationship_education_guidance.pdf\

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5

From 'no means no' to 'an enthusiastic yes': Changing the Discourse on Sexual Consent Through Sex and Relationships Education

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How sexual consent should be discussed with young people is the subject of current policy debates and contestations in the UK. While the current Westminster government violence against women and girls (VAWG) strategy (Home Office, 2011) and subsequent action plans recognise the importance of addressing consent, with no statutory relationships and sex education there are few contexts in which these conversations with young people routinely take place. Organisations that work with young people as victims/survivors of violence and through school-based primary prevention programmes have long identified sexual consent as an issue which requires specialist attention and intervention (see e.g. Coy et al., 2010; EVAW, 2011).

In this chapter, we present findings from research with young people in England about their understandings of sexual consent. The study was carried out on behalf of the Office of the Children's Commissioner as part of their two-year inquiry into sexual exploitation in the contexts of gangs and groups. Our brief was to explore, not just how young people understood sexual consent, but the influences and contexts in which they negotiated it. Here, we also highlight two aspects of our wider discussions with participants – pornography and 'man points' – as significant contextual backdrops of young people's views. We conclude with the implications for sex and relationships education (SRE), including a brief overview of how young people we talked with reflected on school-based sex education.

Young women, young men and sexual consent

How young people make sense of and negotiate the meaning of sexual consent has emerged as a theme in research on sexual exploitation and through direct work with victims/survivors of sexual violence. Studies show that not only are young women subject to a range of forms of emotional pressure/manipulation but that they also experience high levels of sexual violence (Barter et al., 2009; Hoggart and Phillips, 2009; Firmin, 2010; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2010; Berelowitz et al., 2012). Somewhat less prominence has been given to the pressures some young men report in meeting the expectations of masculinity in their peer groups. Research has also highlighted that a significant minority of young people believe that certain contexts – being drunk, in an existing sexual relationship or perceived as 'easy' – are understood as legitimising

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pressure or coercion of young women into sex (Holland et al., 1998; Coy et al., 2010).

Burkett and Hamilton (2012) note that studies devoted to how young people negotiate consent is still rare, and that the focus in much SRE on women 'just saying no' presumes that young women are free and autonomous to do so. As a result, young women believe they should verbalise an explicit and incontrovertible 'no', that sexual assault involves physical force and while they are aware of pressure – 'being worn down' (p. 821) – for them, this still constituted consent. Yet when discussing how they actually negotiate whether or not to have sex, what emerged was that much of the communication was non-verbal: the active verbal refusal which the normative framework requires was, in everyday contexts and interactions, deemed 'unnatural'. These findings chime with Frith's (2009) argument that human refusals in many contexts are complex and often implicit; yet we expect, and even teach, the opposite with respect to sex.

The 'miscommunication' discourse remains a dominant framing for making sense of sexual coercion, yet research with young men reveals their sophisticated understandings of verbal and non-verbal sexual refusals (O'Byrne et al., 2008). This suggests the 'sexual miscommunication' trope operates as a new rape myth to explain and justify young men's use of pressure. Two recent books on consent from the USA (Powers-Albanesi, 2009) and Australia (Powell, 2010) also explore the gendered meanings that underpin sexual consent. One argues that men think women have more power than they do through their positioning as sexual 'gatekeepers' while on the other hand, young women think young men have more power through their role as the 'initiators' (Powers-Albanesi, 2009). Combined, these findings suggest that young men do register the reluctance of young women and use pressure to override it: this is less miscommunication and more a gendered (hetero) sexual script. The knowledge base thus suggests that young women find themselves within a nexus of contradictions (Thomson, 2004), trying to explore both sexual safety and agency in unequal relationships, within which there are a host of unwritten rules (Powell, 2010).

Legal frameworks

The 2003 Sexual Offences Act reformed legal approaches to consent from sexual conquest and reluctance to a statutory definition that aimed to

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achieve simplicity and clarity. The proposal was to define consent as 'free agreement' alongside a non-exhaustive list of situations where consent could be presumed not to be present. In the actual legislation, a more complex formulation appears: the Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that a person consents to sexual activity 'if he or she agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice'. Guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) elaborates further on how consent is to be understood and explicitly stipulates that 'the essence of this definition is the agreement by choice. The law does not require the victim to have resisted physically in order to prove a lack of consent' (CPS, 2012).

While the law constructs a clear boundary between consensual and non-consensual sex, experiential accounts are more complex; to reflect this in the accounts of adult women, Liz Kelly (1987) introduced the concept of a continuum of sexual violence – that in her participants' perceptions there was not a simple binary of rape and consent, but a more complex reality that includes pressure and coercion. Research with young people suggests that they are less likely to recognise pressure and coercion as potentially unlawful (McCarry, 2010). Jenny Pearce (2013) has developed a framework for exploring how young people (and practitioners) may view consent as freely given even in the contexts of pressure and coercion. Given that sexual crime is defined in law as the absence of consent – which does not require force – this is a significant issue. It is especially important as young people, and young women in particular, are the demographic group most likely to experience sexual violence (Ministry of Justice, Home Office and Office for National Statistics, 2013).

It is against this backdrop that we set out to explore young women and young men's understandings of sexual consent and the social and peer landscapes in which it is negotiated, including where and what they learn about sex and its gendered meanings.

The Give 'n' Get project

From the outset, we were clear that the project should engage young women and young men, and explore both *giving* and *getting* consent. Building on the notion of young people as 'digital natives', we developed an innovative approach to engaging them in research: creating eight short films, shot in the style of video diaries. All except one described a

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scenario where a young woman or man describes sex in circumstances that legally constituted rape, but introduced contextual elements that research shows often muddy judgements about whether or not consent was present: alcohol, a relationship, sexual attraction. There were in total seven stories, with one being told first from the point of view from the young woman who is raped and in another film from the perspective of one of the young men involved. The final video acted as a 'debrief' where the young woman described a mutual decision with her boyfriend not to have sex. A group of young actors refined scripts and language, and filmmakers from London Metropolitan University shot and produced the films. The films featured the following scenarios.

1. Josh, 15, has sex with his female partner at a party. She is asleep having drunk too much, and Josh does not understand why, when they 'do it' all the time, she is upset about this occasion.
2. Chelsea is 16 and recently homeless. She accepts an offer of an older man's sofa as she is cold and unhappy living on the streets, but he pressures her into oral sex. Later, she returns to his sofa when the inclement weather becomes too much and is again expected to have sex as payment.
3. Monique, 17, has been to a club and the next morning wakes up knowing that she has had sex. She cannot remember anything beyond dancing with a man she did not know and suspects her drink had been spiked.
4. Kate is 14 and went to the house of a young man she knows, wearing a top she thought flattered her breasts. Two of his male friends arrive, tease her, take her mobile phone, and then all three have sex with her.
5. Gavin, 15, is one of the boys involved in raping Kate and regrets taking part.
6. Sabrina, 13, sends an older boy, who she finds attractive, a photograph of herself. Later she goes to his house. They kiss and he makes her have oral sex.
7. Joey, 16, is a young man who is wondering if he is gay. Exploring his sexuality, he goes to a gay bar, accepts a drink from an older man who then follows him into the toilet and insists that Joey gives him oral sex.
8. Kelly is 14 and has just had a 'hot night' with her boyfriend, where he sensed her reluctance to have sex. They talked about it and decided not to.

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These films were then embedded into an online survey, with each followed by three statements for young people to respond to using a five point Likert scale: considering the scenes described, whether they thought that X [young person in the scenario] made sure that Y [other young person] was OK with what was happening; whether they thought Y [young person] was able to say yes or no. At the end of the survey, young people were asked whether each scenario counted as rape.

A link to the survey was distributed widely on social media and through schools and organisations working with young people. One telling obstacle was that in some schools, internet firewalls prevented access to the survey since it included the words 'sex' and 'sexual'. Quite how young people are supposed to seek information on sexual violence, where school might be the only safe or unmonitored place where they can access the internet, is an issue for all education settings.

In total, 497 young people completed the survey, 365 young women, 129 young men and three women and men who identified as transgender. The sample size enabled detailed analysis by age and gender, as we report below. Analysis of young people's responses was conducted in SPSS, and full findings can be found in Coy et al. (2013). In order to add depth to the survey findings, we also conducted focus groups with 87 young people in schools (49 young women and 38 young men) and individual interviews with 23 young people (12 young men and 11 young women) who were accessed through support organisations. These took place in three sites in England, and no regional differences emerged, although there was some variation in language. The films were used to spark conversation with young people and open up spaces to explore the wider landscapes in which they learn about and negotiate sex, including pornography, sex education and sexting, some of which are also reported here. These sessions were audio recorded, with young people's permission, transcribed and analysed thematically using Nvivo.

How young people understand sexual consent

Analysis of young people's responses to the survey revealed several key findings.

- Overall, young women were more likely than young men to identify the video scenarios as rape.

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- Young people aged 13–14 were least clear about whether or not the scenarios constituted rape. Fifteen appears to be a pivotal age where understandings change, possibly because it is the age when young people are likely to begin having sex, and understandings of consent shifts from the intellectual to experiential (Holland et al., 1998).

Table 5.1 shows the proportions of survey respondents who identified each scenario as rape.

Two paradoxes emerged which reveal the extent to which young people's focus is on the *giving* of consent, with the *getting* barely acknowledged. Firstly, across the scenarios, more young people said that consent could have been given than thought that it was not sought. When young people ticked 'no' to whether or not X had made sure that Y was OK with what was happening, they nevertheless said 'yes' to whether or not Y was able to say yes or no. What this reveals is that constraints to consenting to sex are not well recognised. In other words, the notion of 'freedom' enshrined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 definition of consent does not resonate with young people. For instance, in the scenario featuring Chelsea, only just over half of young women (54%) and young men (51.9%)[2] reported that she was not able to consent, although they acknowledged that she agreed to stay with the older man as a survival strategy.

> *She could say yes or no but she would be back on the streets again so easier just to do it* (Young woman, 17 years old, survey respondent).
>
> *You can't really call that rape because she's consenting to it, she's saying she will because she wants to live* (Young man, 16, SW-I9).

TABLE 5.1 *Young people's survey responses to scenarios*[1]

Scenario	Young people who identified this as rape (n=497)	Young women (n=365)	Young men (n=129)
Monique	93.2%	93.7%	91.5%
Kate	90.5%	91%	89.9%
Joey	85.9%	85.8%	86.8%
Chelsea	73.8%	73.4%	75.2%
Josh	72.6%	75.1%	65.1%
Sabrina	68.4%	71.5%	59.7%
Kelly	7%	6%	10%

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In contrast, 'capacity' to consent (read in law to refer to intoxication or diminished mental capacities) in the scenarios featuring Josh and Monique was more readily recognised. There is a normative discourse at play here: stereotypes of 'real rape' (Estrich, 1987) in which assaults by relative strangers were more likely to be defined as rape than those involving some form of existing relationship or connection. As Table 5.1 shows, the scenario that the highest proportion of survey respondents judged to be rape was the one in which Monique fears that a stranger spiked her drink and had sex with her, but she does not clearly remember what happened.

The second paradox was that fewer young people defined the scenarios as rape than thought the person who initiated sex had sought consent. So even where they identified that X had not made sure that Y was OK with what was happening, this was not recognised as rape. A reasonable belief in consent, according to the Sexual Offences Act 2003, includes a responsibility to take steps to ensure that consent is present (CPS, 2012). It is not surprising that young people were unfamiliar with these legal requirements; it is doubtful most adults would be aware of them. However, their responses, again, indicate how normative discourses around consent do not connect rape with a failure to *seek* consent.

The most significant theme to emerge from the survey and in-depth conversations with young people was the gendered lens through which behaviours and actions were viewed. Any sexual attraction placed young women's behaviour under particular scrutiny. For Kate, while 90% of young people identified what happened to her as rape, wearing clothing that flattered her breasts was taken as a sexualised invitation to her body.

> *It was a bit her fault for wearing that top. It is a bit her fault.* (Young woman, Year 11, SW-FG3)

> *You can also take into consideration she wore a certain top to make her boobs look bigger. So ... maybe because she dressed like that, maybe she wants it in a way.* (Young man, Year 11, LON-FG3)

Similar responses were evident to Sabrina's story, who recounted 'fancying' an older boy and sending him a photograph of herself. Here, the gender difference was apparent, in that young men were more likely to suggest that Sabrina 'could have said no' despite recognising the manipulation she was subject to.

> *She could have refused to do it... I don't think it would have been hard.* (Young man, Year 10, LON-FG7)

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Thus, even where men's actions were considered rape, young people blamed young women with extraordinary ease. The inevitability of 'boys behaving badly' meant that young women were held responsible for protecting themselves, and their 'refusal skills' become the focus of determining whether or not they consented (Kitzinger and Frith, 1999).

'Man points' and non-consensual sexual practices

Given the significance of gendered meanings of consent, and that non-consensual sex occurs across a continuum (Kelly, 1987), our in-depth discussions with young people in focus groups also explored their views on young women and young men's sexual behaviour, including the links between different forms of sexual activity. One core finding was that the well documented sexual double standard was clear and present in young people's accounts. Sexually active young women were devalued and labelled 'skets', 'sluts' and 'hoes', whereas young men attracted admiration as 'legends', 'dons' and 'players'. As researchers have repeatedly recorded, sexual reputations enhance the status of young men, but continue to shame young women (Lees, 1993; Holland et al., 1998; Marston and King, 2006; Powell, 2010).

Linked to this was the notion of 'man points' (described as 'lad points' in one region). Defined as ratings between peers which afford young men 'points' where they are judged 'cool' and able to make others laugh, 'man points' was a vernacular term for what Ringrose et al. (2012) named 'competitive masculinity'.[3] Young people told us that the most effective way to accumulate man points was through demonstrating (hetero) sexual prowess: boasting of sexual conquest, collecting 'sexts' from young women, having sex with young women deemed ugly by peers. This echoes Michael Flood's (2008) exploration of how young men's relationships with each other shape both their 'sex talk' – sexual boasting and storytelling – and their practices: their standing and reputation being linked to having had frequent sex.

As part of our aim was to explore links between non-consensual sexual practices, the film where Sabrina sends a photograph of herself to an older boy opened a route to explore sexting. Previous studies have suggested that sexting is widespread and mundane in UK schools (Phippen, 2012; Ringrose et al., 2012). Young people we spoke with confirmed this, describing sexting as 'the new norm'. What this can lead

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to is young women being sexually harassed to send sexts. Some young men acknowledged the coercion present here.

> *They manipulate them into doing it because a lot of the time I don't think anyone wants to send them ... but they do because they like the person*. (Young man, 18, LON-I4)

For young women, being repeatedly asked to send sexts could be read as a sign they are judged desirable, an important measure of status in heteronormative peer groups where young women are expected to find reward in a sexualised sense of self. Yet it was nonetheless experienced as pressure and harassment, another way in which young women are expected to be sexually available, but judged negatively for this. Young women also report a sense of betrayal and shame when sexualised images are shared without their consent or knowledge. Three such patterns of distribution emerged: images being passed around on mobile phones, forwarding onto peers and, finally, posting to social networking sites as a deliberate humiliation in ways that mirror what is termed 'revenge porn' among adults. This tactic works as humiliation in the contexts of 'appropriate' femininity where transgressing social codes, particularly gendered permissions about private intimacy and public exposure, brings social opprobrium. These gendered codes reflect how young people understand sexual consent: scrutiny of young women's behaviour, while young men accord themselves and each other not only more freedom but also status. The pressure that some young men use to get sexts sent in the first place becomes rapidly invisible, along with their awareness of young women's reluctance. At the same time, young men experience pressure in the form of 'man points' that equate social constructions of masculinity with sexual conquest and position young women through the age old discourses of 'slags and drags'. Yet young women are also subject to additional pressures from individual boys across a continuum of non-consensual sexual practices. The spectrum of non-consensual sexual practices demonstrates why SRE cannot be taught in a vacuum but needs to be rooted in discussions of wider social inequalities between women and men, how these play out in expectations of sexual behaviour and how they connect to victim-blaming with respect to sexual violence.

Similarly, when we explored with young people the influences on their understandings of sexual consent, pornography emerged as a significant source of information. This raises significant issues for SRE and the teaching of sexual consent.

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Pornography: 'it's where most people learn'

Young people were the most animated when discussing pornography. This tells us both about its significance in their lives and the limited spaces where they can explore their experiences of, and responses to, it. The invasion of pornography into their everyday activities was immediately apparent; one young man quipped that a popular social networking site might as well be termed 'Pornbook'. Of most relevance to developing SRE programmes is that pornography served as a substitute for information about sex. One young man summed this up as 'it's where most people learn'. Our findings show that the gendered messages from pornography – men's entitlement to women's bodies for sex and the presumed sexual availability of young women – reflect those of how young people understand sexual consent. This in turn mirrors the practice-based evidence of specialist women's organisations working directly with young people (Coy and Garner, 2012). Unpicking this finding also demonstrates the importance of exploring meanings beyond face value. Many young men reported seeking pornography was 'just entertainment', but when we probed deeper into what was gained from this, it was evident that 'learning how to have sex, learning new moves' was both motivation and outcome.

> *You get to see the way it's done, and the way people do it. It's not like it trains you in a way but you have a kind of idea of how you might be able to do it.* (Young man, Year 11, LON-FG3)

Clear gender differences in young people's engagement with pornography emerged. That young men would use pornography was described as inevitable, although a few were critical (see Coy et al., 2013, for further discussion). Echoing a recent review of research literature (Horvath et al., 2013), young women were more likely to be upset or concerned by viewing pornography. The idea that young women would seek or look at pornography was greeted with squawks of mirth: this was 'weird' and 'disgusting'. Both young men and young women also identified gender patterns in terms of influences of pornography. Their key concern was that it leads young men to think that young women are 'easy' and sex should be 'aggressive' and 'forceful'. Some explicitly identified the implications of pornography for gender equality, describing young men becoming 'more sexist' as a result of viewing pornography. Young women reported feeling under pressure to behave like women in pornography.

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In short, young people perceived that pornography sexualises sexism and also that it filled a gap in information about sex because of patchy, inadequate or simply absent sex education. How pornography is used as an instruction manual for sex, and what young people report learning from it about how women and men should behave sexually, further underscores the need for SRE to be rooted in a gendered analysis.

Implications for SRE

Young people understand the principle of consent and frame it in terms of mutuality, approval and permission. However, when real life contexts are introduced – alcohol, a relationship, sexual attraction – the less clear young people are about the practice of consent.

Young people's views on SRE reflect those of the evidence base: that sessions were limited to the 'plumbing and prevention' approach, yet this is not what young people want or need (see e.g. Forrest et al., 2004; UKYP, 2007; Powell, 2010; Newby et al., 2012); what they seek is an open forum in which it is possible to explore questions, emotional conflicts and complex realities. Young people lamented the focus on risk and safety: 'only all the bad stuff', and 'they just literally focus on the negatives'. Not one of the young people who participated in focus groups could identify being taught about consent in terms of deciding to have sex or the circumstances in which agreement to have sex is sought or granted.

> *They aren't taught that it's okay to say no and that you don't have to do it*. (Young woman, Year 10, LON-FG1)

A minority referred to discussions about coercion – 'the pressure from boyfriends or sexual assault and rape and stuff like that' (Young woman, Year 10, LON-FG2) or 'what would you do if someone is forcing you' (Young man, Year 11, SW-FG1). However, it was clear from the accounts of both boys and girls that the focus here was on young women being able to *resist* pressure, entirely based on the notion that consent is *given* rather than *got*.

This jars with the legal framework in England and Wales which requires a reasonable belief in consent. It also reinscribes moral responsibility as carried by young women to police and maintain boundaries, to anticipate – and avoid – the possibility of pressure and coercion. As

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young people's accounts show, this slithers all too quickly into victim blame. SRE that truly aims to prevent sexual violence needs to enable young people to seek and understand consent as an enthusiastic and embodied 'yes'. A 'yes' which should be sought as much as it should be given.

Policy and practice contributions – summary

The implications for sex and relationships education (SRE) are multiple. As sexual consent cannot be separated from ideas about gendered codes of behaviour, it is essential that conversations with young people unpick the assumptions about women's and men's behaviours that lie underneath discourses on negotiating consent. This also requires willingness to engage with evidence about gendered patterns of perpetration and victimisation in sexual violence. A fundamental shift is needed for consent to be framed – and recognised – not as an absence of resistance, but as an enthusiastic and embodied 'yes'. Such a transformative shift can begin with conversations with young people in SRE, which must include unpicking and critical reflection on gendered codes of behaviour and particularly how young men are enabled to resist the predatory notion of 'man points'.

Notes

1. Responses to the survey scenario featuring Gavin are not included here since questions did not ask young people whether or not they thought what he described was rape. For details of responses to all the survey questions, see Coy et al. (2013).
2. These percentages are for the question after the first time Chelsea agreed to have sex with Steve. At the second point, when she returned to his flat, the proportions are very similar at 51% of young women and 55% of young men reporting that she was not able to consent.
3. In current popular culture, 'man points' has found its way into novelty card games, pages on social networking sites, an iPhone app and multiple websites.

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6

Discursive Silences: Critically Analysing the Presence/ Absence of Sexual Diversity in the Sex and Relationships Education Guidance for England and Wales

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The content, role and place of sex and relationships education (SRE) are under scrutiny in England and Wales. SRE has been described by Ofsted (2012) as 'weak'. Accounts of the current crisis in SRE provision flourish, with particular attention being paid to the focus on biological aspects of puberty, reproduction and sexually transmitted infections. Conversely, discursive silences persist around issues such as gender and sexual diversity and plurality (Sex Education Forum, 2013). The SRE guidance for England and Wales was updated in January 2014, but the new guidance does not profoundly address these issues. Fundamental issues around gender, sexuality and diversity remain invisible or only tokenistically addressed (sometimes inaccurately). This is despite robust evidence that young people's expectations and experiences of intimate relationships are mediated by their gender and sexual identities (Holland et al., 1998). In light of recent work which advocates the use of applied linguistics within work on sexuality and education (Nelson, 2012), we use the systematic linguistic analytical framework of critical corpus analysis (Baker et al., 2013) to investigate these issues and to examine the linguistic practices which function to construct ideologies and discursive silences around gender and sexuality. While previous thematic analyses of SRE guidance (e.g. Alldred and David, 2007) have been helpful for revealing overarching discourses and prevalent themes, the advantage of using linguistic analysis is that it reveals systematic patterns (including absences) in language use which cannot always be identified through thematic analysis alone.

A further dimension incorporated into our analysis is a consideration of *absence* and *silence*, as well as examining what is clearly present and identifiable in the data under scrutiny. It has been argued that schools are sites in which heterosexuality is constructed as normal, and sexualities which transgress this norm are silenced, often tacitly rather than actively (Epstein et al., 2003). Previous work by Sauntson (2013) uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) to argue that, in school environments, homophobia and heterosexism are discursively realised as much through what is not iterated as through what is explicitly stated. We develop this work further by exploring how linguistic presence and silence operate in the SRE guidance document to construct particular discourses of sexuality. In England and Wales, SRE is delivered within the compulsory science curriculum, and in personal, social and health education (PSHE), which is not a statutory subject in schools. A curriculum and standards 'guidance document' makes suggestions for how to deliver

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sex and relationships education within PSHE. The guidance suggests the main topics to be covered, some of the ways in which they may be taught and particular issues which teachers may need to bear in mind when delivering the subject. The statutory nature of PSHE varies widely across the UK member states. A link to the full guidance documents is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283599/sex_and_relationship_education_guidance.pdf. Although the guidance purported to be 'updated' in 2014, it remains almost identical to the previous 2000 version. This means that it is now over 14 years old and is still considered 'fit for purpose' by the Department for Education, yet it continues to be challenged and contested by many educators and organisations involved in sex education (such as the Sex Education Forum).

The research findings have significant implications for our understanding of the problems that persist in the updated SRE guidance. We also argue that the problems identified through our analysis could perpetuate, rather than challenge, homophobic bullying, gender-based violence and exploitation and do little to enhance young people's lives more broadly. The findings are intended to make a contribution toward informing future SRE policy and teacher education in England. In terms of methodology, we also hope this chapter can further illustrate some of the contributions that applied linguistics can make to understandings of sexualities and education.

Data and methods

In order to explore the discourses constructed through the language of the SRE guidance document as comprehensively as possible, we use the analytic tools of critical corpus linguistics. Critical corpus analysis combines the linguistic approaches of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001) conceptualises language as a form of social practice and sees any 'text' as both reflecting and affecting the social and interactional contexts in which it is produced and received. Fairclough (2001) argues that exploring the relationship between texts, interactions and contexts is a key principle of CDA, with a specific focus on how power is enacted and reflected through language. Ideologies which prevail in the wider social context in which texts circulate become inscribed in texts, often in subtle ways.

A concern which has been levelled at CDA is that the analysis can be biased (Baker et al., 2013). If analysts set out to find evidence of particular kinds of discrimination or inequality in texts, this potentially leaves the analyst open to the criticism that they will simply find what they are looking for and will make the analysis fit their own political agenda. Analysts may also be selective in terms of only presenting texts which support and illustrate the kinds of inequality they have been focusing on. Baker et al. (2013) suggest that one way of reducing this potential bias is to combine CDA with more 'objective' methods of analysis, and this is the primary rationale for incorporating some corpus-based analysis within CDA in this chapter. Corpus linguistics is a largely quantitative method which involves using a computer-held body of naturalised texts and a range of computerised methods to explore aspects of language use. An advantage of using corpus linguistics is that it enables us to make observations about language use which go beyond intuition, and because it is computer-based, it allows the exploration of patterns of language use which are not observable to the human eye.

Another limitation of CDA that has been noted is that it relies heavily on what is present in the text. As Baker et al. (2013, p. 23) note, 'the corpus cannot reveal what is not there' (2013, p. 23). Absences in texts are potentially as significant and meaningful as what is present. Sauntson (2013) has argued that 'illocutionary silences' around sexual diversity routinely occur in various aspects of schooling. The analysis of absence is, of course, difficult and susceptible to analyst bias. What is *expected* to appear in a text but does not may be subjective. It is difficult to overcome this issue, but the incorporation of researcher reflexivity and the addition of corpus-based analysis goes some way to supporting the claims made about linguistic absences in the texts.

In this chapter, the specific corpus techniques used are the examination of word frequencies, keywords and collocations, available using the software Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 2014). This enables the identification of some of the key themes, processes and patterns of representation in these texts which can support the critical analysis of the text. The combination of these approaches also enables a critical analysis of language *patterns* to be conducted. Baker (2008) has written extensively on the combination of corpus linguistics and CDA and argues that 'numbers count' in the sense that the frequencies with which speakers use particular linguistic features can be used to uncover the 'cumulative effects of language' (2008, p. 77). Critical corpus analysis, therefore, is a helpful way of

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revealing particular discourses around sexuality as they are embodied in the SRE guidance rather than relying solely on what researchers *perceive* to be salient discourses.

Analysis and discussion

The first step in the analysis was to compile a word frequency list. This is a useful starting point for word-based corpus analysis as it can begin to reveal information about themes within the texts. The second stage was to conduct a keyword analysis. Scott (2014) defines a keyword as a word that occurs in a corpus more often than would normally be expected when compared to another corpus. Examining keywords can highlight unexpected or marked frequencies, rather than just the high frequency words, and this can be revealing in terms of the more unusual meanings and trends presented in the texts. A keyword analysis requires the corpus under scrutiny to be compared with a 'reference corpus' which is a larger and more general corpus. In this case, the keywords lists were generated by comparing the SRE guidance with a word frequency list from the British National Corpus (http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/). The word frequencies and keywords are presented in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 respectively.

The results above show that many of the keywords are similar to the frequent words, and these are linked to the main topic that the document deals with (i.e. sexual health education) and the key social actors involved

TABLE 6.1 *Word frequency list*

Word	Number of occurrences	% frequency
School*	176	1.82
Sex	154	1.59
Relationship	150	1.55
Education*	143	1.48
Parent*	91	0.94
Pupil*	88	0.91
Child*	76	0.79
Teacher*	76	0.79
Young*	68	0.70
People	60	0.62
Policy*	55	0.57
Health	44	0.46
Sexual	44	0.46

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TABLE 6.2 *Keywords*

1. sex	2. education	3. relationship	4. school/s
5. PSHE	6. pupil/s	7. parents	8. sexual
9. young	10. teacher/s	11. relationships	12. policy
13. STIs	14. confidentiality	15. child/ren	16. health
17. framework	18. contraception	19. teaching	20. learning
21. professionals	22. guidance	23. key	24. puberty
25. inappropriate	26. need	27. people	28. ensure
29. secondary	30. appropriate	31. issues	32. effective
33. develop	34. educators	35. peer	36. primary
37. protection	38. delaying	39. teenage	40. support

(pupils/students, parents and teachers). In this sense, the frequent words are not particularly revealing about ideologies. But there are some interesting keywords a little further down the list in the 20–40 positions. For example, keywords such as *STIs*, *confidentiality*, *contraception*, *puberty*, *in/appropriate* start to reveal discourses around disease and risk emerging as well as an emphasis on the physical dimensions of sexual activity and relationships. It is also perhaps worth noting that the words *HIV, delaying* and *abuse* also occur just outside the top 40 keywords at positions 41 and 43 respectively. These words also contribute to a discourse of sexuality as associated with risk and disease.

Notable absences in both lists (or appearing very low down) are words to do with consent, love, pleasure, emotions and the social dimensions of sexuality. There is nothing which indicates anything to do with the promotion of equality, respect and non-violence. We argue that these are concepts that it is essential to include. There is no mention of gender or about the pressures that young people (girls in particular) may find themselves under in relation to sexual activity and sexual identity. And there is very little which suggests a positive semantic prosody being constructed around sexual identity and sexual activity. Our recent work on this issue which combines linguistic and qualitative analysis (Sundaram and Sauntson, forthcoming) indicates that young women feel resistant to their discursive positioning as passive, potential victims for whom SRE is about avoiding pregnancy, infection, physical and sexualised violence. They note that female sexuality, arousal and pleasure are rarely mentioned, while erections and male orgasms are included as part of SRE teaching (albeit primarily in relation to reproductive sex).

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In sum, the word frequency and keywords lists suggest that both documents construct sexuality as predominantly physical, heterosexual and reproductive. It is also constructed as associated with disease and risk. There is notable under-wording and absence around love, consent and issues of homophobic violence and violence between young people.

Collocations and semantic profiles

The next stage in the analysis was to consider the semantic environment of some lexical items by examining their collocations. Sinclair (1991, p. 170) defines collocation as 'the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text'. Examining a word's collocations can help to build up a semantic profile of that word which can contribute to revealing any underlying discourses and ideologies. Collocation can be either lexical or grammatical, with lexical collocation involving an exploration of the lexical words co-occurring with the node word in question, and grammatical collocation involving looking at the grammatical categories of words found in the semantic environment of the node word (the 'node word' refers to the specific word under investigation). Using word frequency and collocation analysis together can provide a good overview of the main themes, discourses and ideologies prevalent in the document. In keeping with a critical discourse analysis approach, we also examined the collocations of some words which were not necessarily frequent or key but were felt to be 'ideologically-contested' (Fairclough, 2001) in some way. In all stages of the analysis, a consideration of what the analysts considered to be notable absences is included, alongside a commentary on what is present in the text.

The words *sexual*, *pupil* and *STIs* appear as both frequent and key in both documents. It is unsurprising that *sexual** is both a high frequency word and a keyword given that the document focuses on sex education. The sample of concordances below show *sexual* is often followed by *activity* and *health*. On the couple of occasions when it co-occurs with *orientation*, it is usually within a negative construction which discourages or forbids teachers from 'promoting' sexual orientation. This is a problem which is explored in more detail below. *Sexual* and *abuse* also co-occur a number of times. None of the co-occurrences indicate anything about pleasure or consent or about sexual diversity. The collocation patterns (like the keywords) construct sexual activity as purely physical, as having

implications for 'health' and as being risky through the co-occurrences with *abuse*. Thus, what emerges is a restricted view of what 'sexuality' is and what the key issues are which need addressing.

TABLE 6.3 *Sample concordance of* sexual*

of infection, through delaying	**sexual**	activity and teaching
know how the law applies to	**sexual**	relationships. National
sex; access confidential	**sexual**	health advice, support
in the form of inappropriate	**sexual**	relationships. The new
sexually active or contemplating	**sexual**	activity. This will
contemplating having, sex. If	**sexual**	abuse is suspected, tell
is not about the promotion of	**sexual**	orientation or sexual
should be no direct promotion of	**sexual**	orientation.

*Pupil** is both a frequent and keyword. Left-collocate verbs in the concordance lines include *help*, *encourage*, *protect*, *make sure*, *guarantee*, *reassure* and *ensure*. To the right, we see frequent occurrences of phrases which indicate pupils needing support or being at risk. The frequent co-occurrences of these verbs and phrases helps to construct a discourse of pupils as being 'vulnerable' and in need of care, protection and reassurance. While this may be the case to a degree, it is worth noting that the collocation patterns indicate nothing about empowerment, agency or the construction of pupils as active subjects.

TABLE 6.4 *Sample concordance of* pupil*

pupil of the ground rules. If the	**pupil**	needs further support,
a teacher is concerned that a	**pupil**	is at risk of sexual abuse
for learning as it encourages	**pupils**	to consolidate what
education groups can all help	**pupils**	discuss sensitive issues
avoid embarrassment and protect	**pupils'**	privacy by always
procedure; making sure that	**pupils**	are informed of source
confidentiality; reassuring	**pupils**	that, if confidentiality
Schools should ensure that	**pupils**	are protected from teaching
developing sexuality. Some	**pupils**	will be more vulnerable

The discourse of young people as passive 'victims' in need of protection is reinforced through the semantic profiles of *abuse**. The collocation patterns of *abuse** show that young people are always constructed as victims of abuse. The possibilities of young people behaving negatively toward each other in terms of their sexuality is entirely absent. The collocation patterns also indicate nothing about teaching young people not

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to be abusive and do not address the idea of young people being active agents of their own sexuality (either in a positive or negative way).

TABLE 6.5 *Sample concordance of* abuse*

That: all staff should be alert to signs of	**abuse**	and know to whom they should
to believe that he/she is at risk of	**abuse**	, they should be aware of the
suspects that a child is a victim of	**abuse**	or they have reason to believe
or contemplating having, sex. If sexual	**abuse**	is suspected, teachers should
appropriate; if there is any possibility of	**abuse**	, following the school's child
children's welfare and protect them from	**abuse**	and neglect. Confidentiality
Some pupils will be more vulnerable to	**abuse**	and exploitation than their peers
to recognise and avoid exploitation and	**abuse**	. knowledge and understanding
that a pupil is at risk of sexual	**abuse**	, they should follow the school's
class, or raises concerns about sexual	**abuse**	, the teacher should acknowledge

STIs appear as both frequent and key. There is nothing particularly remarkable about the collocation patterns, other than STIs tend to co-occur with HIV/AIDS. It would appear that HIV/AIDS is still singled out for attention. The very fact that STIs are frequent and key is the most interesting and important findings and this contributes to the discourse of 'risk' around sexuality that both documents arguably construct through their language choices.

TABLE 6.6 *Sample concordance of* STIs

to be aware of the risks of	**STIs**	including HIV and know
the incidence of HIV/AIDS and	**STIs**	and it has particular
their knowledge of HIV/AIDS and	**STIs**	; teaching them assertive
or teaching about HIV/AIDS and	**STIs**	should include: helping

Although *safe** itself does not appear as a particularly frequent word or as a keyword, there is a discourse of 'safety' constructed through the high keyness of words such as *ensure*, *need* and *support*. These kinds of verbs are also frequent collocates of *pupil**. Therefore, it is potentially interesting to examine *safe** itself as a way of gaining deeper insight into how the safety discourse operates throughout the document.

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TABLE 6.7 *Sample concordance of* safe*

to enable them to negotiate	**safer**	sex. 2.20 STIs are major
to expect schools to provide a	**safe**	and secure environment.
different types of contraception,	**safe**	sex and how they can access
a responsibility to ensure the	**safety**	and welfare of their pupils
of unwanted pregnancies.	**Safer**	Sex and HIV/AIDS and
people about condom use and	**safer**	sex in general; young people
(STIs) 2.17 Teaching about	**safer**	sex remains one of the

Collocates of *safe** suggest that 'being safe' is constructed only as avoiding pregnancy and disease (through collocates such as *contraception*, *HIV/AIDS* and *STIs*). There is under-wording and absence about safety against sexual violence, coercion or non-consent. The co-occurrences of *safe** with *environment* also function to give the impression that school is a safe environment. The possibility of school *not* being a safe environment is not indicated through the collocations. But school may be a place which is experienced by some students (and staff) as unsafe in relation to issues around sexuality and relationships (e.g. bullying, actual sexual violence or threats of sexual violence, casual sexism and homophobia).

*Protect** appears as key (mostly in its nominalised form of *protection*). Patterns around the verb *protect** are dominated by left-collocations of *child* followed by *protection*. Phrases such as 'child protection issues' and 'protect* from inappropriate teaching materials' which appear a number of times in the concordances above are vague and unsubstantiated, as in the following typical examples:

> This guidance also sets out advice on how schools can set in place arrangements so pupils can be protected from inappropriate teaching and materials.
>
> Schools should ensure that pupils are protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate, having regard to the age and cultural background of the pupils concerned.

This vagueness is potentially problematic and it is not clear what children need 'protecting' against, what might constitute 'child protection issues' and what are considered to be 'inappropriate' teaching materials. This again suggests that SRE constructs young people as in need of protection, particularly from 'inappropriate teaching' and 'inappropriate materials' but, notably, much less so from inappropriate *behaviour* both from adults and other young people. Notable absences around *protect**

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include protection from discrimination and bullying, including bullying because of actual or perceived sexual orientation. This is something that potentially could fall under the remit of SRE but which does not feature at all.

Some words in the guidance are, arguably, 'ideologically-contested' (Fairclough, 2001) even though they do not appear on the word frequency and keyword lists. *Marriage**, although not key or frequent, does appear a number of times. Marriage is arguably an ideologically-contested term, especially given the recent legal and social changes concerning same-sex marriage in England. Marriage also behaves in a rather ideologically-contested way as indicated by examining the concordances. *Marriage* collocates with *stable* and *family* which constructs the idea that marriage is always stable and, by implication, that other kinds of relationships are either less stable or not stable. *Marriage*, *stable* and *family* all repeatedly collocate with each other. *Importance* and *significance* also collocate with *marriage*, thus marriage is clearly ascribed positive attributes throughout the text, as can be seen in the extract below:

> Within the context of talking about relationships, children should be taught about the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and for bringing up children. The Government recognises that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside marriage. Therefore, children should learn the significance of marriage and stable relationships as key building blocks of community and society. (p. 11)

Presumably, heterosexual marriage is being referred to in such examples, although this is not made explicit. Although same-sex couples can have children, this is not something that can happen 'naturally'. Therefore, the inclusion of 'children' in the same sentence as 'marriage' and 'family life' implicitly constructs marriage as heterosexual. It is not acknowledged anywhere in the guidance that marriage is also legal in England and Wales for same-sex couples. The idea of marriage being emphasised as important and significant and as being associated with stability and family life, conflicts with how the verb 'promote' operates (discussed below). By implication, non-marital relationships are rendered less important and 'marriage' continues to be valorised. A further absence is the possibility of children being safe from abuse within their families. This is not suggested at all through the collocation patterns – 'family' and 'marriage' are only ever presented as positive and 'safe'.

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TABLE 6.8 *Sample concordance of* marriage*

the value of family life,	**marriage**	, and stable and loving
should learn the significance of	**marriage**	and stable relations
understanding of the importance of	**marriage**	for family life, stable

There is also an absence of explicit references to either same-sex or opposite-sex marriage resulting in an implicit assumption that 'marriage' refers to heterosexual marriage only. This actually contradicts the meanings created through *promote** – another ideologically-contested term. *Promote** only occurs twice – one in relation to protecting children's welfare and once in relation to promoting sexual orientation. The latter appears in a short section on 'sexual orientation' and is quoted below:

> Young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs. The Secretary of State for Education and Employment is clear that teachers should be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support. There should be no direct promotion of sexual orientation.
>
> Sexual orientation and what is taught in schools is an area of concern for some parents.

Although the opening sentence seems accepting of sexual diversity, there are echoes of the 'section 28' legislation which was repealed in 2003. Section 28 of the Local Government Act was introduced in 1988 and stated that a local authority 'shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality' or 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'. The idea of being able to 'promote' any sort of sexual orientation is highly contested and the phrasing of this part of section 28 has a long history of being critiqued. In this sense, it is arguably the most highly ideologically-contested verb in the whole document. Given that the SRE guidance was reviewed as recently as 2013, it is alarming that the section 28 echo of 'promote sexual orientation' has been retained. For a reader who knows the history of the legislation, this phrase clearly means 'do not 'promote' homosexuality' in the teaching of SRE. This conflicts with the fact that schools are now governed by the Equality Act (2010) which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. However, the phrase also sits in tension with the fact that heterosexuality appears to be 'promoted' all

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the way through the guidance. As discussed above, the collocations of *marriage* with words such as *stable* and *family* function to prioritise and promote monogamous, reproductive heterosexual relationships. This type of heterosexuality is therefore presented positively while other possible forms of heterosexuality are marginalised and devalued through their absence. The directive to not 'promote sexual orientation' is therefore is confusing and problematic in a number of ways. We argue that any future policy developments in SRE need to move away from the idea that any kind of sexual orientation can be 'promoted'. We can therefore deduce from this that when the document prohibits teachers from promoting sexual orientation, heterosexuality is, in fact, exempt from this. Thus, the semantic profiles of *marriage* and *promote** together function to effect a discourse of heterosexism and arguably homophobia. In the extract above, 'sexual orientation' is ascribed a negative prosody through the inclusion of 'concern' within the same sentence. It avoids stating that, for many parents, addressing sexual orientation in sex education is viewed as important and something to be welcomed and encouraged. The discourse of heterosexism constructed also starkly contrasts with the final statement in the SRE 'sexual orientation' section:

> Schools need to be able to deal with homophobic bullying. (p. 13)

This is the only mention of homophobic bullying in the entire document and the statement is not elaborated on at all. The irony here is that the wording of the rest of the 'sexual orientation' section may actually play a part in contributing to the perpetuation of homophobic bullying in schools through its prioritising of heterosexuality and its retention of the section 28 directive not to 'promote' sexual orientation. A further irony is that schools are explicitly asked to 'deal with homophobic bullying' when no actions are taken to teach young people about sexual diversity and plurality within SRE. This means that homophobic bullying in schools which arises from ignorance and fear are not being combatted via SRE as it is currently provided.

Conclusion

In sum, the critical linguistic analysis has revealed that the current SRE guidance constructs sex as risky and dangerous, rather than pleasurable and empowering. As part of the language of section 28 has been retained

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in the guidance, this potentially sends out confusing and contradictory messages about how issues of sexual orientation are to be dealt with in the context of SRE. From these findings, we argue that there is an urgent need to revise the SRE guidance document in a way which redresses these issues. We call for particular attention to be paid to addressing the current linguistic absences in the guidance.

Summary

Given the scrutiny that SRE is currently under in England (Ofsted, 2012; Blake, 2013; Sex Education Forum, 2013), especially in relation to the persistent invisibility of issues around gender, sexuality and diversity, it is hoped that the insights from the research presented in this chapter can contribute to future sex education policy making in England (and elsewhere). We hope it reveals to policymakers that the inclusion and exclusion of particular words and phrases can contribute to the discourses of sexuality being constructed in particular ways which have an effect upon pupils' learning and well-being. Furthermore, the way that particular words collocate with others in systematic ways also helps to construct particular discourses of sexuality. Therefore, we argue that policymakers need to pay close attention to changing the language of the SRE guidance in order to make it as positive, inclusive of diversity and unambiguous as possible.

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7

A Radical Plurality: Re-thinking Cultural and Religious Diversity in Sexuality Education in Aotearoa, New Zealand

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How might sexuality education respond to cultural and religious diversity? Increasing cultural and religious plurality of nations means this question continues to engender debate within the field of sexuality education internationally. In Aotearoa, New Zealand[1] where this chapter is written, it is a pressing concern as recent migration trends deliver greater cultural and religious diversity to our population (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014). The issue of how to honour Maori indigenous knowledge within the *Health and Physical Education Curriculum*, where sexuality education sits, has been a historical question which remains unresolved (Tasker, 2004). Increasing numbers of new immigrants from China, India and Afghanistan bring new complexity to the perceived 'challenge' of addressing cultural diversity in sexuality classrooms. Alluding to the instrumental aims of sexuality education, the 'necessity' of this task has been fuelled by media attention to so called 'high Asian abortion rates' (Simon-Kumar, 2009) and increased prevalence of HIV/AIDs in some immigrant populations.

One way cultural diversity is approached in sexuality education is via the *vision*, *principles* and *values* outlined in The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). This document establishes the official policy relating to teaching and learning across all elements of the curriculum and directs schools in the design and review of their sexuality programmes. Delineated in this document is a vision '... for young people who will work to create an Aotearoa-New Zealand in which Maori and Pakeha[2] recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring' (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8). Similarly, 'Diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages and heritages' is identified as a core *value* schools must reflect in every aspect of curriculum, including sexuality education. It is stated students will learn 'their own values and those of others' as well as 'Different kinds of values, such as moral, social, cultural, aesthetic, and economic values' (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 10). While religion is not explicitly named in this document, it is referenced in this values statement about 'morals'. It is also implicit in the concept of 'culture' where religion plays a prominent part in membership for many ethnic groups. Despite the space given to cultural diversity in educational policy, how these provisions are interpreted and applied within sexuality education is less straightforward (Quinlivan, Rasmussen, Aspin, Allen, and Sanjakdar, 2014).

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In order to contribute to current debates and future directions concerning cultural and religious diversity in sexuality education, this chapter seeks to conceptually reframe what is often presented as 'the problem of diversity' for classroom pedagogy. This contribution is largely philosophical, as our aim is to *think* the concept of cultural and religious diversity differently. Rather than posit how cultural and religious diversity might be addressed in sexuality education, we propose an ontological shift in *how this diversity* is understood. To undertake this work, we *think* cultural and religious diversity *through* the work of feminist philosophers Sharon Todd (2011) and Karen Barad (2007). While their work emanates from distinct disciplinary traditions of quantum physics (Barad) and educational philosophy (Todd), we attempt to draw their ideas *into relation* (see explanation next paragraph). Specifically, we read the concepts of 'plurality' (Todd, 2011, 2011a, 2011b) and intra-activity (Barad, 2003, 2007, 2012) into each other to experiment with what they might generate in terms of understanding cultural and religious diversity differently in the context of sexuality education.

Due to the theoretical density of these ideas we offer our argument upfront. Todd (2011) writes of the way '... it can be seen that cultural diversity is frequently synonymous with a view of individuals as the aggregate of their cultural attributes ...' (p. 102). Our aim is to move away from a language of diversity that rests solely on a series of socially conceived attributes by which difference is marked (e.g. being Christian, Muslim, Pakeha or African). Instead, we gesture toward a notion of 'plurality' which Todd (2011) conceives as offering 'a central place to the uniqueness of persons as they come together in specific contexts' (p. 104). This uniqueness is not an essence born of a series of identity characteristics (i.e. being Muslim or Christian) which Todd sees as reducing a person to 'what' they are. Rather, it is a uniqueness that appears when human beings come *into relation* with each other, a moment in which *who* (not what) they are *is made*. Todd (2011) conveys this notion of our coming into existence via plurality when she writes, 'Encounters are not simply about two people meeting, but a calling forth of our very existence in response to another, to others. Encounters with others are an indelible part of both making and living a life' (p. 510). Reading Barad's notion of 'intra-activity' through the concept of plurality, we can see how Todd's idea of relating between humans might extend to the material world. Within Barad's 'new' materialist (Coole and Frost, 2010) account, the 'others' Todd refers to can comprise objects and other non-human matter. For Barad, existence or what she calls *becoming*,

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entails an inextricable entanglement of human and non-human in which the non-human is seen to exert force. This means that matter, such as the clothes someone is wearing, the spatial arrangement of classrooms and material objects within them have volition in the 'who' someone *becomes*. Subsequently, 'things' can be seen to take an active role in the making of what we understand as cultural and religious difference. They are not separate entities which humans activate as symbols of their difference. Instead, they form part of a process of intra-active becoming or the 'who' we are, that lays at the heart of Todd's notion of 'a radical plurality'. These ideas are explained in greater detail below. Here we preface the argument they might reconfigure our current ontological understandings of cultural and religious diversity as the aggregate of our discursively and biologically constituted differences.

As an entry point for these philosophical ideas we provide some classroom observations and excerpts from an interview with a 13 year old female Muslim student (Carol) in Year 9 at a North Island secondary school. These were collected as part of a two-year *Australian Research Council Discovery Project Grant* on which the authors worked with Australian colleagues (Rasmussen, Sanjakdar, Aspin, Allen and Quinlivan, 2011). We do not offer these findings in the traditional empirical sense. That is, as data providing evidence of a reconfigured ontology of cultural and religious difference. Instead, this example acts as a way of accessing (rather than representing) a reconfigured understanding of cultural and religious diversity. Given this purpose and the theoretical emphasis of our discussion, we do not delve into the study's methodological details (see instead Allen, Rasmussen, Quinlivan, Aspin, Sanjakdar and Bromdal, 2013). What we provide is methodological information that gives discussion around Carol's context. Subsequently, only a brief description of the study occurs next, followed by a more substantial consideration of the theoretical concepts underpinning our argument.

The extent to which cultural and religious diversities are engaged with in sexuality education formed the focus of our larger project. Four schools participated, two in Melbourne and two in the North and South Island of Aotearoa-NZ. Carol attended Pacific High, a decile 4,[3] co-educational North Island secondary school that was ethnically and religiously diverse. Almost 40% were students from the Pacific Islands, 16% Maori, 16% Pakeha while the rest were of Asian, Middle-Eastern and African descent and representing a range of faiths (e.g. Christian, Catholic, Morman and Muslim). When we met Carol, she stood out in

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the Year 9 health class of 25 students. She was the only student wearing the hijab with her school uniform and exhibiting Afghani physical features amongst a sea of Maori and Pacific faces. In her interview, Carol explained she was a refugee who had arrived with her family three years ago. For six weeks, the first author observed the sexuality education unit Carol was taught and found herself drawn to her as a figure epitomising difference, not only because of Carol's perceived physical disparities in this class, but because she was the only female to persistently ask the teacher questions. This initial sense of Carol's difference was based on an understanding of *what* an individual represents and not what Todd (2011b) calls '*who*' they are. We now examine this idea more fully and what we see as Todd's and Barad's contribution to re-thinking the ontology of cultural and religious difference.

Todd's concept of plurality

Todd (2011) references the thinking of Hannah Arendt (1959) and Adriana Cavarero (2005) in the development of her idea of 'plurality' as an alternate way of thinking about diversity. She launches this concept via a critique of intercultural education promoted by 'The Council of Europe' in its bid to achieve democratic education. Deconstructing the way 'diversity' is understood within this educational paradigm she explains it is defined broadly in relation to social structures, identity categories and individual traits such as 'culture, gender, age, social situation, geographical origin, interests, beliefs, physical and intellectual characteristics, etc. There are differences between individuals and there are differences between groups' (Batelaan, 2003, p. 2, cited in Todd, 2011, p. 102). There is much, however, which Todd (2011) finds problematic about this depiction.

> *Diversity is thus rendered in terms of attributes or characteristics of differences. Diversity is shorthand for naming precisely those differences that need to be 'managed' since they create the conditions for conflicts to arise. Thus what undergirds such articulations of cultural diversity is the assumption that diversity is a problem and a source of social tension that needs to be remedied by intercultural education.* (p. 102)

In this rendering, difference is a product of 'what' we are and a consequence of our alignment with recognisable cultural differences (e.g. being Afghani). Todd identifies the subject as tethered here to general

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categories of cultural difference while there is simultaneous recognition of personal difference. This thinking is evidenced in Batelaan's (2003) quote above where it is acknowledged there are differences between individuals in groups, as well as differences between groups of individuals. For Todd, though, while these differences might be perceived as personal/individual, they do not capture a sense of difference as encapsulated by the notion of 'uniqueness' (see below). As a consequence of this elision, 'the individual becomes a generalized figure read through her attributes' (Todd, 2011, p. 103). This kind of ontology of difference is seen above when what draws the researcher to Carol is her difference. This difference is based on Carol's categorisation as Muslim and Afghani, when the rest of the class is Maori or Pacific Islands. It is also a sense of individual difference within the category Muslim women, as when the researcher interprets Carol's avid questioning of the teacher via a generalised (and westernised) perception of Muslim women as passive and quiet. For Todd, this view of difference establishes these cultural and religious characteristics as a source of tension and conflict which necessitate management. Examples of this approach are international debates about wearing the hijab in non-Muslim schools (Todd, 2003). This is also an understanding of difference that encourages a misreading of the subject through a failure to take account of the contextual nature of being.

It is against this backdrop that Todd reconfigures 'difference' with the notion of 'uniqueness', an idea integral to the condition of 'plurality'. Instead of viewing what makes us diverse in terms of *what* individuals represent, Todd argues for an understanding based on *who* we are. This 'who' following Arendt and Cavarero, 'emerges in the context of a narrative relation that ... cannot be reduced to social categorizations' (Todd, 2011, p. 104). With the generalised individual above, difference is seen as something carried (via group or category membership) that reveals itself when we 'bump' up against others who exhibit other differences. *Uniqueness,* however, is not something we carry (like an essence), but it emerges in the 'in-between space with other human beings; it reveals itself in speech and action' (Todd, 2011, p. 105). It is therefore always contextual and specific. For Todd, this uniqueness emerges predominantly via narrative relation revealing itself in speech and action and coming 'to the fore where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness' (Arendt, 1959, p. 160). Difference (as uniqueness) is not ontologically prior to our human

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relating, as per a characteristic we hold that shows itself when we come into contact with others. Instead, *difference is made in the moment of our relating*, which means it is not an individual quality that can be known in advance. Drawing on Cavarero, Todd (2011) explains:

> *One's uniqueness is not entirely known to oneself and therefore depends upon another to tell 'her' story back to her. Uniqueness, therefore, both emerges as a presence to which others respond, and requires that others return, as a gift, one's own sense of uniqueness. It is this back and forth narrative trajectory that is threatened when the one who speaks is seen to be merely an aggregate of her cultural background.* (p. 107)

Todd contends this conceptualisation leads to a better understanding of cultural conflict and contestation in education (Todd, 2011), one that does not misread the subject of difference via generalised cultural categories and which attends to the context of difference's making.

Reading Barad through Todd

The concept of 'plurality' for which uniqueness is a condition, reconfigures conventional understandings of difference's ontology. If, as a notion of uniqueness implies, what we have previously understood as difference comes into being via relation with human others, how do we understand the mechanism for this becoming? Barad's (2007) work around intra-activity offers one way of conceptualising this process and extending its parameters beyond human relating. Situated within the field of 'new'[4] materialisms, Barad posits an understanding of the world which breaks down the conventional nature/culture divide. Knowledge, for Barad, is not simply accessed via discourse as socially constituted within language. This approach as epitomised by the 'linguistic turn' does not take account of the liveliness of matter and its forcefulness in knowledge's production. As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) explain, 'For Karen Barad, the new material is grounded in an ontoepistemology, or *knowing in being,* that presents a shaking up of the privileging of the discursive in postmodern thought without a re-centering of the material that preceded the linguistic turn' (p. 119). This means that practices of knowing and being are not separable as encapsulated in the famous Cartesian phrase, 'I think, therefore I am'. Subjects cannot stand outside the world they know, they can only know the world because *they are of it*.

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> *There is an important sense in which practices of knowing cannot fully be claimed as human practices, not simply because we use non-human elements in our practices but because knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part. Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated.*
> (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 121)

From this perspective, the conventional distinction between human and non-human disintegrates as each side of the divide melds into a metaphysical understanding of human and non-human as matter (what Barad calls phenomena). In this conceptualisation, things and people do not remain distinct and separate entities which *inter*mingle but instead *come into being* via their relation. Barad explains this process utilising the physics term, *intra-activity* '... referring to relationships between multiple bodies (both human and non-human) that are understood *not* to have clear or distinct boundaries from one another; rather, they are always affecting or being affected by each other in an interdependent and mutual relationship as a condition for their existence, (Barad, 2007, p. 152). The process of intra-activity has resonances with Todd's conceptualisation of 'uniqueness' proposing a way to draw its mechanisms into sharper relief. In addition, it suggests such relating can involve the material world which *gets caught up* in the ontological moment of the making of difference (that Todd calls our uniqueness).

For Todd, our being (difference) is not the product of an individual coming in contact with another individual as captured by the notion of *inter*-activity or *inter*cultural education. Instead, difference is made in the moment of our relating with another, a phenomenon Barad would extend to include non-human phenomena and characterise as intra-activity. Both Todd and Barad describe this moment as one of 'openness' between humans (and non-humans for Barad) invoking an ethics and orientation to social justice. Such openness is a feature of this relating which breaks down discursive and material boundaries and involves, 'the ongoing practice of being open and alive to each meeting, each intra-action, so that we might use our ability to respond, our responsibility, to help awaken, to breathe life into ever new possibilities for living justly, (Barad, 2007, p. x). With reference to Arendt (1959), Todd sees this radical openness as manifesting as sheer human togetherness, whereby people are *with* others and neither for nor against them (p. 160). What *becomes* (as uniqueness) is a consequence of intra-action contingent upon the phenomena (humans-non-humans) that are relating. For Barad, via an understanding of matter and things as having force, that intra-relating

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is always entangled with the material world. This way of thinking has implications for understanding cultural and religious diversity, not simply as something that occurs in the moment of humans relating, but as a uniqueness that is inextricably *materialdiscursive (naturalsocial).*

Carol

To offer another opening into these theoretical ideas with relevance for re-thinking cultural and religious diversity in sexuality education, we now turn to a discussion of Carol. We explore two small moments, one from classroom observation and one from an individual interview, in which we perceive Carol's cultural and religious difference surfacing. After describing these moments, we interpret them first, as *inter*-action and then enfold this reading into an *intra*-active understanding. By using this format, we aim to show how the emergence of Carol's 'difference' might be understood to occur in ontologically different ways.

> *[Field diary observations] There is an air of excitement in the classroom. Today the lesson is going to be different because it will be taught by peer educators from an external sexuality education provider. This group specialises in culturally appropriate sexuality education that matches the dominant student ethnicity (Pacific Islands). In accordance with Pacific cultural protocols (i.e. that talk about sexuality occurs in separate gender groups) we have been divided by gender into different classes, and I am sitting with the girls. The lesson has opened with a currently popular song by Bruno Mars (Just the way you are), sung by the two female sexuality educators, one of whom is playing the guitar. She has just put the guitar down and asked us to introduce ourselves and include our favourite food as part of that introduction (to break the ice). The introductions begin ...*

STUDENT: *My name is Lita, I am Samoan and my favourite food is chocolate.*

STUDENT: *I'm Kelly and my culture is Samoan, and my favourite food is fish and chips.*

STUDENT: *My name is Christine, I'm from Britain and my favourite food is grapes.*

SEXUALITY EDUCATOR: *nice*

STUDENT: *My name is Carli. I am from India and my favourite food is ice-cream.*

STUDENT: *My name is Sina and I am Indian and my favourite food is burgers.*

STUDENT: *My name is Carol I'm from Afghanistan, and my favourite food is, I don't really have one.*

SEXUALITY EDUCATOR: *Pick one, anyone*

CAROL: *Afghan biscuits*

[INTRODUCTIONS CONTINUE]

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[Following this lesson Carol undertakes an individual interview where the following moment transpires]

RESEARCHER: *Could sexuality education offer any other things that would be about your culture or religion that you wanted to know more about or have recognised or even mentioned?*

CAROL: *Well, I mean, that's a hard thing to say, because New Zealand isn't an Islamic country. It seems very Christian-based or something-based and our school is mainstream ... It's not really faith-based ... because even if they [the teachers] did mention it ... or they say it out of context that's just going to give misunderstandings. Imagine if there wasn't actually a Muslim [teaching it] who knew the same thing and they said something else. It would just be like ... difficult*

Reading these moments as evidence of cultural and religious differences that emerge between subjects as they *inter*-act requires an interpretative approach. Within such a paradigm, the scene above assumes participants 'can voice coherent narratives that represent the self in the very telling of their experiences' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. ix). Subsequently, Carol's words offer insights into her sense of cultural difference which manifest in the classroom observation in relation to favourite foods. An Afghani presence in Aotearoa-NZ is recent, meaning this community's customs, ways of life and even foods are not well known by other sectors of the population. What most people in Aotearoa-NZ know about Afghani's is reducible to media coverage of the war in Afghanistan and is saturated with images of violence, poverty and 'terrorism'. As the only Afghani in this class, Carol is positioned as 'exotically' different from indigenous Maori and Aotearoa-NZ born (as well as immigrant) Pasifika and Pakeha students. It is unlikely her classmates have heard of her favourite food and if she names it, her appearance/sense of difference will be magnified. Given this, instead of naming her actual favourite food and risking her peers' ignorance and alienation, Carol says, 'Afghan biscuits'. This choice cleverly references her actual cultural origins and is one other students are likely to be familiar with. Interestingly, Afghan biscuits are a traditional Aotearoa-NZ recipe, with no known connection to Afghanistan, something Carol may or may not know.

In an *inter*-active account of the interview above, the researcher marks Carol's religious and cultural difference by asking whether she feels these differences are attended to in sexuality education. This line of questioning discursively constitutes Carol as 'other' positioning her as Muslim and Afghani and distinguishing her from the rest of the class, who are not. The

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researcher assumes Aotearoa-NZ's secular educational foundations, and the fact that Christianity is the prevailing school faith, mean that Carol's cultural and religious needs will not be met. Rather than unconditionally taking up this positioning as 'other', Carol's response reconfigures her difference. Her answer implies she does not expect, nor want her Muslim faith to be represented or catered for within sexuality education. Her reasoning is she fears its (and by association her own) misrecognition in this representation, especially if those who teach it are not Muslim, or not the same kind of Muslim as she is. In an unexpected turn, Carol does not mark, nor embrace her difference in the way this line of questioning encourages.

An interpretive approach to these research moments limits what we can know about Carol's difference to human voices, interpersonal interactions and her discursive constitution in this context. In this account Carol's difference manifests as a series of identity characteristics; being Afghani and Muslim which lend themselves to specific curriculum needs. Difference is understood as something Carol bears as a distinct individual which reveals itself against other distinct individuals (her classmates) who hold their own differences. Her classmates disclose their difference in naming their cultural identity as 'Samoan', 'Indian' and 'British' and against a schooling culture that is predominately Christian with secular foundations, attributes Carol does not share. In Barad's (2007) words, this form of 'Difference relies on an ontological separateness between identified categories, positions or identities, most often in an asymmetrical relation to each other' (pp. 86–87).

How then does an *intra*-active reading of this material give rise to thinking an alternative ontology of difference? What happens when we understand what occurs between Carol and her classmates not as a scene of *inter*-connections between distinct entities but as an entangled engagement of material and discursive phenomena that includes humans and non-humans? Jackson and Mazzei (2012) invoke such a reading this way:

> *The implication for how we think data differently, given this entangled state, is to move away from thinking the interview and what is 'told' discursively, toward a thinking of the interview and what is 'told' as discursive, as material, as discursive and material, as material <-> discursive, and as constituted between the discursive and the material in a posthumanist becoming.* (p. 126)

To undertake this approach necessitates a flattening of the research scene and rearrangement of what counts as actors within it. Carol and her classmates are no longer distinct and separate entities standing out (as

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higher status) from the material conditions of the classroom in which they relate. While Carol is still identifiable as Afghani and Muslim, her physical and discursive borders (along with those of her classmates) are considered porous. Carol's difference as Afghani and Muslim is not carried by her and displayed via contact with others. Rather, this difference is made in the moment of intra-action with her classmates. This ontology of difference is not hers alone but *becomes* and is contingent upon others in her classroom as well as the material features of schooling which are seen to have volition. Difference in this case is made via the entanglement of her corporeality (skin, facial features, voice) materiality (hijab, Afghan biscuits, classroom architecture) in intra-action with the humanness of her classmates (and their skin, facial features, voice, etc.). In this instance, it is not that the hijab is a symbol used to mark cultural difference, but the hijab as a material entity becomes a material force in the making of cultural difference. *The difference that becomes* engenders a uniqueness as proposed by Todd (2011) which is contextual, specific and not Carol's alone because it is made intra-action with others.

Closing thoughts

So what is opened up by this way of thinking difference with Todd (2010) and Barad (2007)? Might we understand that there is no 'other' but rather we are entanglements of selves – our borders become porous so that our difference is a consequence of those human and non-humans whom we encounter. This is not to deny that there is Afghani or Muslim identity (or any other type of cultural and religious identity for that matter), but how this difference plays out is a consequence of relational *intra-active becomings*. What this understanding of difference allows is a recognition of cultural and religious identity that is not essentialised as a distinct set of attributes but which recognises the material and non-human in a non-essentialising way. The 'other' and its denigration becomes redundant in such an understanding because *who* we are is a consequence of our relations with others. One individual does not pre-exist the next in any moment. *Who* we are in terms of culture and religion is contingent upon our intra-relations with others.

This uniqueness, as Todd (2011) calls it, as the condition for plurality, offers ethical possibilities in its refusal of difference as individually born and contained. An ontology of difference as seen as an aggregate of cultural characteristics which an individual (and groups collectively)

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bear, invites conflict. It is also an ontological understanding which presupposes difference in advance and presumes to know what it wants. For example, when the researcher assumed Carol's culture and religion made her different from her classmates and these characteristics lent themselves to a sexuality education that addressed Carol as Muslim and Afghani. Instead, in the kind of plural context imagined via the work of Todd and Barad, there is a never ending series of human-non-human enfoldings the uniqueness of which cannot be known in advance.

Summary

This chapter engages with debates around addressing cultural and religious diversity in sexuality education. It argues a concept of radical plurality (Todd, 2011) and offers a reconfiguration of the pedagogical encounter for students of sexuality education. It disrupts a view of cultural and religious diversity as a set of identity characteristics which inevitably engender classroom conflicts and which might be overcome via dialogic techniques. Instead, the idea of a radical plurality sets a different pedagogical scene. In Todd's (2011a) own words, 'Educationally speaking, it means attending to pedagogical space in a way that treats education neither as a means to an end, nor an end in itself, but as an unpredictable site, where we cannot know with any certainty what the future holds and what subjects will unfold in its midst – subjects both unique and different, in relation' (p. 511). As a new form of pedagogical ethics, it may well constitute a radical proposition for the future of sexuality education.

Notes

1 Hereafter Aotearoa-NZ.
2 In Aotearoa-NZ, Pakeha refers to non-Maori people of European descent.
3 In Aotearoa/NZ, 'decile rankings' indicate the extent to which a school draws its students from low socioeconomic communities, with decile 1 schools containing the highest proportion of these students and decile 10 the lowest (verbatim Ministry of Education, 2009)
4 That these ideas are 'new' is contested. As Hoskins and Jones (2013) argue perceptions of the world as an entangled continuity of the human-natural have always been part of traditional Maori thought in the Aotearoa-New Zealand context.

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8

'I felt confused; I felt uncomfortable ... my hair stood on ends': Understanding How Teachers Negotiate Comfort Zones, Learning Edges and Triggers in the Teaching of Sexuality Education in South Africa

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Introduction

> *I felt confused; I felt uncomfortable and my hair stood on ends ... Now I am not prepared to be a psychologist or social worker in the classroom. I just want to give them the facts and prevent the discomfort for everyone. Sexuality Education is too complex and emotional and I don't want to get caught up in all of the difficult dramas ... It will just be emotionally charged for everyone and I don't know whether I want to deal with that part.* (Ms. Anderson, 46CW3)

The quotation above is from a South African teacher who describes a triggering experience after a class discussion on sexuality education. She has redefined her position to provide the learners with information about sex and sexuality and nothing more. She intends that her classroom is not a place for therapy or drama where the learners' (and her own) emotions and questions about sexuality are expressed and contested. Giving the learners 'just' information works with her level of comfort. Opening up any meaningful discussion about sexuality is not safe for her as it comes with its own 'difficult dramas' and 'discomfort for everyone'. Her anxiety is real and characteristic of the vast challenges sexuality educators face (Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mukoma, and Klepp, 2009; Francis, 2011; Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mukoma, and Klepp, 2011) and is indicative of teacher reluctance to address the teaching of sexuality and HIV/AIDS education in South African schools (Mbanaga, 2004; Francis, 2011, 2013). Sexuality education in South Africa has become synonymous with HIV prevention and is the cornerstone on which most HIV and AIDS prevention programmes rest. With the high HIV and AIDS prevalence rates amongst 14–24-year olds, there is an urgency to provide accurate information about the disease (Pettifor et al., 2004). Accordingly, sexuality and HIV and AIDS education are a key content area in life orientation (LO), a programme that was introduced as a learning area in schools in the late 1990s (Department of Education, 2002; Francis, 2010). Yet, within the South African context, there is a paucity of research exploring what triggers teachers in the teaching of sexuality education and HIV/AIDS education and how they can manage these triggering experiences. My chapter begins with a review of the literature related to teacher discomfort in the teaching of sexuality education. I move on to discuss the interrelated concepts of comfort zones, learning edges and triggers. I then present an overview of the study, including descriptions of the research methodology. Following this, I draw on illustrative interview dialogues and observations to argue that if the teaching of sexuality education has to shift from discomfort to

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comfort teachers will, in addition to deepening content knowledge, have to take an introspective look at their own socialisation about their own sexuality and relationships.

Literature

Teacher discomfort in the teaching of sexuality education abounds in the international literature (e.g. Haignere, Culhane, Balsley, and Legos, 1996; Buston, Wight, and Scott, 2001; Giami et al., 2006; Allen, 2014). In fact, there is a call for more support for teachers and other adults involved in sexuality education with young people (Aggleton et al., 1998; Aggleton, Ball, and Mane, 2000). In South Africa, teacher discomfort around the teaching of sexuality education is high. Teachers' cultural perceptions often mean that basic sexuality education content such as safe sex is not delivered effectively as teachers are more concerned that learners are sexually active than they are about learners practising unsafe sex (Helleve et al., 2009; Francis, 2012). Furthermore, teachers try not to challenge existing norms and values and tend to adapt their curriculum content to avoid 'difficult' sections such as the sexuality education component of LO (Deacon, Morrell, and Prinsloo, 1999; Francis, 2011, 2013). The findings of Mathews, Boon, Flisher, and Schaalma (2007, p. 395) demonstrate that teachers' decisions to implement HIV/AIDS education are more likely to proceed if they feel comfortable and confident in their ability to overcome possible barriers in transforming an intention into practice. They will anticipate being successful when they feel confident about talking frankly with students about sexuality, adapting the content and activities to suit students' interests and applying the requisite strategies for classroom management while they guide interactive learning activities. Using in-depth interviews, Reygan and Francis found that teachers who experienced discomfort with teaching about sexual diversity had inherited bitter knowledge about non-normative sexual and gender identities and experienced strong negative affect when discussing the topic. They report that rather than consciously and proactively engaging in a pedagogy of discomfort, the teachers experienced discomfort about sexual and gender diversity and generally distanced themselves from the topic. A study by Mukoma et al. (2009) on a sexuality and HIV/AIDS intervention programme, delivered as part of LO curriculum in South African schools, noted that teachers were often not comfortable teaching safe sex

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and preferred to teach abstinence. In some cases, teachers skipped the lesson that included a condom demonstration. Rooth (2005) also reports that many teachers did not feel comfortable with certain parts of sex education, such as the use of contraception. Pattman and Chege (2003) also describe research that shows teacher discomfort about teaching safe sex and HIV/AIDS education. Francis (2013) explored the distinction between comfort and values and the overlap of each in relation to whether and how different aspects of sexuality education are taught. He concludes that teachers choose what to teach in terms of their own comfort zones. One of the teacher participants in Francis' (2013, p. 71) study talks about the degree of discomfort felt when his personal views conflicted with the requirements of the curriculum:

> *It's hard because we are not comfortable talking about sex and it's hard you know ... What makes it even harder to accept is that they (the learners) are sexually active. It's hard and uncomfortable when they are staring at you.*

Francis and DePalma (2013, p. 11), in making an argument for South African teachers to approach sex education from the perspective of positivity and pleasure, argue that there will be stumbling blocks to adopting such an approach due to 'teacher perceptions and objections to content which could be seen to encourage sexual activity in youth, personal discomfort with certain sensitive topics and lack of adequate teacher training to effectively and openly deliver such a comprehensive programme'.

South African research on the teaching of sexuality education in South African classrooms describes a format that seems to prioritise teacher comfort, rather that reflecting youth's own sexual comfort and experiences. As the literature discussed above shows, teachers who teach sexuality education are subject to anxiety, fear and distress, all of which are premised on teacher comfort or discomfort. In what follows, I offer a conceptual framework of comfort zones, learning edges and triggers as a way to understand how teachers teach sexuality education.

Comfort zone, learning edges and triggers

In this section, I explicate three interlinked concepts – comfort zone, learning edges and triggers – that I appropriate from the literature of social justice education (Hardiman, Jackson, and Griffin, 2007).

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Hardiman et al. (2007, p. 54) explain comfort zones as referring to topics, conversations and activities we are all familiar with or have lots of information about. When within our comfort zones, we are rarely challenged and we may learn nothing new. In fact, it is very likely that when new information is presented we may withdraw or resist new information subsequently losing the opportunity to learn.

Learning edges emphasise the need for educators and students alike to move outside their comfort zones as the best place to learn and to gain new perspective. When we are on the edge of our comfort zones on a learning edge, it can be signalled by feelings of 'annoyance, anger, anxiety, confusion, or defensiveness' all of which are signs that our way of seeing things is being challenged (Hardiman et al., 2007, p. 55). As Zembylas and McGlynn (2012, p. 41) state:

> *Pedagogically, this approach assumes that discomforting emotions play a constitutive role in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities and in creating possibilities for individual and social transformation.*

There is more literature and empirical work conducted on triggers than on comfort zones and learning edges (see Weinstein and Obear, 1992; Obear, 2000, 2007, 2013; Hardiman et al., 2007). The concept of triggers, commonly used in the social justice parlance, is used to describe an unexpected intense emotional reaction that seems disproportionate to the original stimulus. In other words, as Obear (2013, pp. 152–153) and Zembylas and McGlynn (2012, p. 41) explain, people can feel so overwhelmed and thrown off balance that they are consumed by their triggered reactions and lose touch with the comments and actions occurring around them. A triggering event can take many forms, including a learner's comment or facial expression or even the silence of the class. Triggers may immediately stimulate the defences of the teacher and can sometimes lead to the shutdown of group discussions in stifling silence or volatility (Weinstein and Obear, 1992, p. 44). It is an uncomfortable situation for a teacher and one that is testing to manage.

The concepts of comfort zones, learning edges and triggers can serve to help us understand how teachers experience their reactions to classroom teaching and learning and learner perspectives and questions. Sexuality education teachers, like teachers of social justice education, bring to the learning environment their social identities (Baxen and Breidlid, 2004; Baxen, 2008; Bhana, 2012; Msibi, 2012), fears (Francis,

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2011, 2012), prejudices (Francis and Msibi, 2011; Msibi, 2012; DePalma and Francis, 2014), values (Francis, 2011, 2013) and life experiences (Baxen, 2008; Masinga, 2009). There is much literature that shows that sexuality educators have experienced a wide range of emotions such as anger, frustration, defensiveness, fear, anxiety, sadness, embarrassment, guilt and shame. Critical competencies for teachers are the ability to recognise the common actions, surprises and comments of others that hook them, as well as knowing how they typically react when triggered (Obear, 2013; Stern, 2013). This is where my study adds to this body of knowledge by exploring how comfort zones, learning edges and triggers relate to the teaching of sexuality education: how do sexuality education teachers negotiate comfort zones, learning edges and triggers in the sexuality education classroom and what specific possibilities does such a framework offer sexuality educators in terms of pedagogical practice?

Methodology

To collect data, classroom observations and in-depth interviews were conducted with 11 LO teachers from schools in Durban, South Africa. I spent three lessons with each participant, observing Grade 10 lessons on sexuality education. In most schools, Grade 10 learners are between the ages of 16–17 years old. However, in some schools I found there were learners who ranged from 16–20 years of age (see Mukoma et al., 2009; Francis, 2011). During observations, I paid attention to how teachers engaged the learners, how teachers responded and handled the hard questions, how they dealt with issues that were impromptu and how teachers managed their triggers. Observation enabled me to gain a glimpse of the organic classroom space with its own particular interactions, sounds and movements. All the observations were video recorded. There is no doubt, I was an intrusion in the space and learners frequently looked at me to see my own reaction to some of the questions and more so when the teacher or a learner seemed uncomfortable, triggered or silent. Nonetheless, I tried to be very unobtrusive. The observations gave me a good understanding of the classroom context and teacher-learner interaction. After the three classroom observations, I scheduled an in-depth interview with each participant. I was able to use what I had observed in the classroom to focus these in-depth interviews which lasted between 55 and 75 minutes. The discussion reported here focuses predominantly

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on teachers' personal experiences about when they felt overwhelmed or thrown off balance in a sexuality education classroom – in other words, when they experienced a triggering episode.

To enable the reader to get an overview of the participants' age, race, gender and number of years of teaching LO, I have tagged each transcript with an identity marker. For example, in the following description, Ms. Krone (35WW3) means that Ms. Krone is a 35 year old white woman who has been teaching LO for three years. All 11 teachers were teaching in a cross section of urban state schools, in close proximity to Durban. All appropriate ethical considerations were applied at all stages of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from each of the participants prior to the interview and confidentiality of both participants and their schools was assured through the use of pseudonyms.

Findings

From the in-depth interviews and classroom observations, there were many examples of triggering episodes where teachers felt awkward, overwhelmed or off balance. The first is from an observation of Ms. Mdunge's (41AW4) lesson on sexuality education. The discussion was on the appropriate time to have sex when it steered toward same-sex sexuality.

Ms. Mdunge (41AW4): Enough of all these questions. Why do you want to know about this stuff? What has all of this got to do with the appropriate time to have sex?
John: Miss, but how do the lesbians have orgasms without penetration?
Ms. Mdunge (41AW4): I said enough!
John: Have you tried that, Miss?
Ms. Mdunge (41AW4): I said enough of those questions!

During the in-depth interview session, I broached what had happened in the incident when the lesson was going reasonably well with good questions and engaged learners.

Ms. Mdunge (41AW4): I don't know what took over me. I think I just snapped when the learners got personal.
DF: Personal?
Ms. Mdunge (41AW4): Yes, when they were implying that I was a lesbian (laughter) ... Me, a lesbian? I suppose I felt like I was on the spot and that I had to come up with an answer ... I felt uncomfortable.

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Despite her discomfort during the lesson and a fairly homophobic reaction, Ms. Mdunge (41AW4) later acknowledges her trigger and points to potential learning edges for learning and gaining new perspectives.

> *Ms. Mdunge (41AW4): I suppose I could have asked them to do a research paper on same-sex sexualities ... I could have just said I don't know and asked the learners whether they knew ... I suppose I could have done a bit of research or spoken to my lesbian friend and picked this up in the next lesson.*

Ms. Mdunge (41AW4) could have exonerated responsibility for that moment but as she says, 'at that moment you just cannot think straight'. Another observation from Mr. Maistry's (43IM9) introductory class on sexuality education:

Mr. Maistry (43IM9): One of the sections we have to cover is sexuality education ... to start, I want to know what you have done in sexuality education in grade seven and eight?

Thabane: What do you want to know, sir?

Laughter in the class

Mr. Maistry (43IM9): (very loudly) When you want to speak, I want you to raise your hands.

Thabane: (raising his hand) I want to know what you would like to know about sex.

(Laughter from the class)

Mr. Maistry (43IM9): Where are your manners. You stand up. How is that going to help us understand what you have done in the previous year? You think you know too much and you are too smart to be in this class ... I will not tolerate this kind of behaviour from anyone of you is that clear? (To Thabane) For the rest of this lesson you will stand. Anyone else?

(There are no responses and a long silence)

Mr. Maistry (43IM9): Now we can move on ...

Again, after the lesson, in an interview with Mr. Maistry (43IM9) I asked about what happened and about his response to Thabane.

DF: What happened when Thabane asked the question?

Mr. Maistry (43IM9): These learners know everything. It scares me what they know ... it really scares me that this is what they are doing, and am I supposed to be quiet about it? He was just being rude. This has also happened before.

DF: Happened before? And so tell me about why you think you responded in that way?

Mr. Maistry (43IM9): I don't know. I just snapped. Didn't I? (Laughs) I don't know why... Maybe I was feeling that Thabane was undermining me. Trying to grand-stand. I don't know ... I just felt like I had enough of his silly comments.

DF: What do you think would have happened if you had let him continue? What do you think would have happened for the teaching and learning process?

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Mr. Maistry (43IM9): I don't know. Maybe he would have shared something useful, but on the other hand I think he was trying to embarrass me you know.
DF: You felt as though he was trying to embarrass you?
Mr. Maistry (43IM9): Yes, you don't know these kids they seem to know everything, and they think we have nothing to contribute.
DF: Contribute?
Mr Maistry (43IM9): To teaching about sex and sexuality.

Mr. Maistry (43IM9) 'snaps' because he feels that the learners do not think he has anything to contribute in the class. There seems to be a very clear message that he thinks he is experienced and therefore he knows more about sex. For him, the learners do not, and if they know anything about sex and sexuality, it is not important. His awkwardness to talk openly about what learners know about sex triggers him, and he shuts down the discussion.

In many ways, teachers feared these triggering episodes and chose never or rarely to use pedagogical practices such as problem-solving exercises, role-plays, small-group discussions or debates. When the teacher appeared triggered, he or she shut down the classroom discussion, role play or debate. In these scenarios, the teacher appeared uncomfortable in managing the situation and overwhelmed by the discussion as Ms. Jarvis (27IW6) reports when I interviewed her on why she stopped the role play that seemed to be going reasonably well until Xolile started to speak very graphically about anal sex:

> *It is always a gamble you know ... you never know where the class will go with the lesson and what the consequences will be for me. So I just felt unsure when Xolile was using such crude language to describe you know ... the sexual acts. It was just too graphic for the learners Ms. Jarvis.* (27IW6)

Ms. Jarvis's reflection illustrates how teachers impose their own values and emotions on the content of teaching and at the same time regulate learners' expressions and understandings about sexuality.

In another example, during a debate on premarital sex, Thandi made a strong argument that when 'two people love each other and are confident about their relationship, it is fine for them to express their love by having sex ... with protection ... and maybe not necessarily penetrative sex'. Ms. Mazibuko (35AW3) seemed distressed with this view. She stopped the debate and took a critical stance on Thandi who argued in support of 'having sex when the time is right for you and your partner'. After a long speech on the dangers of premarital sex, Ms. Mazibuko

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(35AW3) concludes by saying that 'in the end it is your choice Thandi'. Ms. Mazibuko (35AW3) individualises and constrains the discussion to the personal situation of Thandi. 'At the end of the day it is your choice, if you want to get pregnant and have children and get AIDS, then it is your choice'. Ms. Mazibuko (35AW3) expresses her triggered position expressing a dual message that young people like Thandi can make choices, but the choices they make are not necessarily 'good choices'. From the data, it seems that even though learners are given a space to articulate thoughts and desires in the classroom through activities such as role-plays and debates on sexuality and relationships, the discussion is guided in line with the teacher's level of comfort and not the possible learning edge for the learner.

There were also many examples of learners who were triggered and these occurred mostly in discussions on gender roles, the use of contraception, masturbation and homosexuality. In a classroom discussion on homosexuality, one of the learners shows her discomfort:

NICOLE: I think that this discussion should stop as it is against my religion.
MS. GRAY (24WW1): Yes, Nicole?
NICOLE: It is clear in the bible that homosexuality is an abomination ... and all homosexuals will go to hell ... It is a sin.
MS. GRAY (24WW1): It's not my intention to upset you, but the constitution is ...
NICOLE (STORMING OUT OF THE CLASSROOM): Well I also have rights and the right not to be part of this discussion.
(THERE IS LONG SILENCE AFTER NICOLE LEAVES)
MS. GRAY (24WW1): Well, let's turn to the exercise in front of us ...

Unlike many teachers in South Africa who shy away from teaching gender and sexual diversity, Ms. Gray (24WW1) is willing and open in her discussion on homosexuality until the triggering episode. Although the potential learning edge for a discussion on how homophobia is learned, Ms. Gray's (24WW1) response, or lack thereof, shifts back to her and the learner's comfort zone by redirecting the class to the exercise.

There were also instances where teachers did respond to their triggering episodes differently by pushing these into powerful learning edges as Ms. Krone (35WW3) states:

> *Sometimes the discussion can be get heavy, and you are never going to get agreement from everyone. So I just say, 'okay, it is time to write down a paragraph on how am I feeling right now and why?' This usually opens up a good discussion on why they (learners) are so troubled on certain issues and not so bothered on others.*

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Far from dealing with overwhelming situations within the classroom, sexuality education teachers also face challenging situations in which they find themselves balancing the lesson content and learners' personal stories when these are raised. As teacher Ms. Ngcobo (26AW2) says:

> *Sometimes the learners will say 'I am having sex' or 'I am gay'. This can create very tense moments ... And so I set up some really clear guidelines for our discussion such as maintain confidentiality, getting people to share talk time, to listen respectfully, to be honest and open to new learning, etc. So when someone is upset with what is said or disagrees, I remind them of the guidelines we have set together. This usually helps in our discussion when there is disagreement or when someone shares something personal.*

Conclusion

Baxen (2008, p. 208) writes that the sexuality education classroom in addition to being filled with positives and laughter involves anxiety, confusion, anger and pain. This chapter has focused on how sexuality education teachers negotiate comfort zones, learning edges and triggers and what possibilities such a framework offers in terms of pedagogical practice. For the most part, teachers in the study work within the realm of comfort zones, drawing on a didactic and punitive structure that privileges information giving, maintaining strong control and avoiding possibilities for new perspectives and learning. From the data, we can glean that sexuality education is not a neutral activity. The content is complex and emotionally charged for both teachers and learners as it is translated into pedagogical practice in complex and unexpected ways. Although my research is based on a small sample and more research is needed to better understand how triggers manifest in the sexuality education classroom, I would suggest the following.

First, as triggers are a recurring feature in the sexuality classroom, a starting point for teachers would be to first understand themselves as sexual beings, their own tribulations and triggers about sex, sexuality and relationships before they enter the sexuality classroom. In other words, how do we get teachers to critique their own learning, comfort zones and triggers? This understanding has to take into account teachers' socialisation, beliefs and values they have learned as separate from the sexuality education content. If this is not done, as Masinga (2009) noted in her reflection on her own experiences as a sexuality educator, it will

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lead to teachers being triggered when certain aspects of the curriculum are in conflict with their own beliefs and values.

Second, for the most part, in South Africa, teachers lack training to address adequately the interplay of values, sexuality and relationship education (Francis, 2010, 2013; Francis and DePalma, 2013). The result, as the findings in this study have shown, is that without training, teachers turn to their own socialisation, beliefs and values for guidance, which might not always meet their learners' needs for information. This can lead to the triggering episodes and a shutdown of classroom discussion and other activities. Weinstein and Obear (1992, p. 48) offer guidance for managing triggers. They suggest taking a brief time out, journaling the triggering response, pausing and allowing the learners to share their own response with one another or ask for suggestions from the class. These strategies are to assist the teacher when pushed out of the comfort zone, to gain perspective and to make a conscious effort to stay on the learning edge. Programmes for in-service and pre-service teachers, therefore, need to focus on content pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1987) as well as pedagogical strategies (Weinstein and Obear, 1992; Obear, 2000) to respond to triggering discussions.

Third, teacher use of laughter and humour to dilute triggering episodes did not emerge in the research described in this chapter. It is often claimed that humour is a desirable characteristic of teaching and learning. Work by Allen (2014), for example, explores the role of humour in the sexuality education classroom and how it can be productively employed for reducing apprehension around potentially triggering moments. Although beyond the scope of this discussion, there needs to be greater exploration of how teachers might creatively use humour in the classroom as a way to manage discomfort and anxiety.

Finally, the teaching of sexuality education is affectively loaded for both teachers and learners. Several studies show that some teachers view sexuality education as an affective, value-laden and moral issue that does not have any place in the classroom. Teachers also grapple with their own sexualities, anxieties and misconceptions about what youth want. If teachers are to teach about sexuality in any meaningful way, then we need to plan more purposefully for the challenges they will experience. This may, for example, involve creating a classroom environment that provides safety and trust so that the teacher and learners can participate in an honest, non-judgemental and inclusive manner that is conscious of the learning edge.

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Summary

Researching teacher discomfort, through the lens of comfort zones, learning edges and triggers, certainly has implications for the teaching and learning of sex and relationships education (SRE). First, as triggers are a recurring feature in the sexuality classroom, a starting point for teachers would be to first understand themselves as sexual beings, their own tribulations and triggers about sex, sexuality and relationships before they enter the sexuality classroom. Second, programmes for in-service and pre-service teachers must focus on content pedagogical knowledge as well as pedagogical strategies to respond to discomfort and triggering discussions. Finally, there needs to be greater exploration of how teachers might creatively use humour and other strategies in the classroom as a way to manage discomfort and anxiety.

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