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Young People and Sexuality Education

Rethinking Key Debates

Louisa Allen



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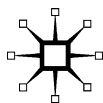
Young People and Sexuality Education

Rethinking Key Debates

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*To Bob and Lorraine
for the gift and luxury of 'imagination'*

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In a book about and for young people, I wanted a cover image that captured this focus. One day while skimming through my local newspaper I came across the cover photo taken by Elizabeth Corin. This image not only spoke of young people as sexual subjects but was taken by Elizabeth while she was still at secondary school. Thank you for permission to use this striking and artful reminder that while schools often try to deny the sexual, students continue to embody it.

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1

Introduction

How might we re-imagine sexuality education? This book attempts to answer this question with reference to empirical research with young people. In asking this question I attempt to reframe debates around the nature of sexuality education content and delivery. Traditionally, in Anglo-speaking countries these debates have hinged on the appropriateness of including 'safer sex' or more controversial topics like 'pleasure' within the curriculum. Decisions about such inclusions have been saturated by concerns of morality and propriety. Curriculum adoption of such topics is also influenced by the institutional context of schooling and its plethora of regulatory practices. This book is concerned less with the politics of the curriculum, than envisioning its possibilities. These politics have been comprehensively delineated by an important body of work which reveals numerous obstacles to sexuality education's development and delivery (Haywood, 1996; Irvine, 2002; Monk, 2001; Moran, 2000; Sears, 1992; Thomson, 1994). Such important insights are not dismissed by the ensuing chapters. However, it might be argued that curriculum politics have had a stultifying effect with regards to conceptualising and engaging sexuality education in radically new ways. This book is an attempt to move sexuality education debates beyond immobilising statements like, 'you won't be able to do that in schools'. Instead, it is concerned with how we might re-envision sexuality education in ways that reconfigure and exceed its current boundaries.

Implicit in this call to re-imagine sexuality education is an assumption that it requires re-imagining. From a conventional perspective, re-imagining sexuality education might be motivated by increasing its 'effectiveness' in relation to its stated objectives. These aims have been socially located revealing different foci at various historical moments. For example, programmes in the early 1900s in countries

like New Zealand were occupied with the moral and social hygiene of the population in a bid to encourage suitable marriage and stable family life (Smyth, 2000). Eighty years later, the first reported case of HIV sent the country into panic and sexuality education became a key prevention strategy for disseminating information about this disease (Davies, 1996). Despite these periodic emphases, there have been some enduring aims of programmes in countries like New Zealand, Australia, England and America. Predominantly, sexuality education has been a vehicle for achieving the sexual health of citizens and regulating their moral conduct (Sears, 1992). Subsequently, two key issues have prevailed over time: reducing rates of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). New Zealand for instance, has one of the highest rates of unintended pregnancies and STIs amongst OECD countries (UNICEF, 2007). Regional Chlamydia rates in New Zealand are 2–5 times higher than the national Chlamydia rates for Australia, the United Kingdom and United States (Institute of Environmental Science and Research, 2009). Given the significant role charged to sexuality education in curtailing these ‘problems’, a call for re-imagining them might be based upon improving such statistics.

The apparent ‘failure’ of sexuality education to reduce unintended pregnancies and STIs is not the basis upon which I call for a re-imagining of these programmes. At least, it is not the supposed ‘ineffectiveness’ of sexuality education in relation to these aims that warrants this re-thinking. Rather, I propose that it is these very aims that require re-imagining. Why does sexuality education have to be occupied with the sexual health and control of the population? Is the current framing of sexuality education actually antithetical to achieving these ends? How does this focus constitute students as sexual subjects and with what effect on a positive sense of their sexual selves? What might happen if we relinquish the disease and pregnancy prevention focus of programmes? These questions are engaged throughout this book with the latter providing the focus of Chapter 7. In this chapter a re-imagining of sexuality education rests on a critical interrogation of the foundational agendas and measures of programme ‘effectiveness’.

Why else might we wish to re-imagine sexuality education? Parker (2009) notes that over the past thirty years ‘we have seen a veritable explosion in the field of sexuality research’ (p. 252). One sub-category of this larger field has been research exploring the relationship between sexuality and schooling (Fine, 1988; Pascoe, 2007; Rasmussen, 2006; Renold, 2005; Rofes, 2005). Within this sub-category there has been a more specific focus on sexuality education (Allred and David,

2007; Allen, 2005d; Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford, 2003; Fields, 2008; Gilbert, 2004; Harrison and Hillier, 1999; Kehily, 2002b; Measor, Tiffin and Miller, 2000; Moran, 2000; Sears, 1992; Szirom, 1988; Trudell, 1993). A common theme in much of this literature is students' dissatisfaction with the sexuality education they receive (Alldred and David, 2007). These complaints traverse issues around the content of programmes with re-occurring references to information being too narrow, too little and too late (Forrest, Strange and Oakley, 2004; Hirst, 2004; Measor et al., 2000). Programme delivery is also an area of contention with students often describing classes as 'boring', a 'muck around' period, where disruption from other students interferes with learning (see girls' complaints about boys in their class in Measor, Tiffin and Fry, 1996). The failings of those who teach sexuality education also feature in students' criticism with many depicting teachers as disinterested, ill-equipped or unsupportive of their needs and interests (Lupton and Tulloch, 1996). Given the frequency of similar protestations about sexuality education across countries, it appears to be failing to meet the expectations of much of its target audience. If sexuality education is to achieve its aims (however those are conceived) then it must engage those it addresses in ways that meet their needs (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000). To do this successfully, we might argue that, sexuality education needs re-imagining.

Another justification for re-imagining sexuality education stems from a social/sexual justice perspective. Existing research reveals schools are heteronormalising spaces and sexuality education a heteronormative practice (Allen, 2007c; Epstein and Johnson, 1994; Epstein et al., 2003; Quinlivan, 2006). Coined by Warner, heteronormativity is a theoretical concept that describes an organising principal of social life which presumes desire, sexual practice and identity are universally heterosexual (Warner, 1993, pp. xxi–xxv). The way heteronormativity works is to construct heterosexualities as a compulsory norm thereby relegating all 'other' sexualities 'deviant'. As Britzman explains:

The term heteronormativity begins to get at how the production of deviancy is intimately tied to the production of normalcy. Normalcy can only be understood through the construction of its other, the deviant. In such a relation, normalcy must always make itself normal, must always normalise itself. (Britzman, 1998, p. 152)

Through its deployment of a diversity of heteronormative practices, schooling serves to re-inscribe the notion of heterosexuality

as 'normal'. These practices can be as habitual as holding a mock (heterosexual) wedding so primary school students might know and experience this ceremony. As Epstein (1997) reveals such 'educational' activities reinforce marriage as an 'ideal', expected and legitimated only for opposite gender couples. School dances and balls offer an institutionalised form of heteronormativity. Best (2005) describes the prom as an iconic event in American culture which through the deployment of discourses of sex, love and romance sustains heterosexual dominance and gendered inequalities at school. Similarly, heteronormativity is apparent when students in New Zealand schools report having to sign a declaration that they are gay in order to take a same-gendered partner to the ball (Allen, 2007c). Through this practice heterosexuality is rendered 'normal', because unlike same-gender attraction, it does not require special declaration to school authorities.

Sexuality education can also serve as a heteronormative instrument. This work is undertaken through a series of mechanisms which constitute queer attractions as 'abnormal/other'. The erasure of gay, lesbian and bisexual identities through lack of comprehensive inclusion in the curriculum is one means by which heterosexuality maintains its 'normal' status. One gay identified young man in Hillier and Mitchell's Australian study of 1,749 same-sex attracted youth aged 14–21 years, captures this failure in his comments about how useful he found sexuality education.

Not at all. It only covers heterosexual sex, it really doesn't cover anyone outside the heterosexual, gender binary type system... Perhaps they need to make note that there are others like us out there. – Josh 20 years. (Hillier and Mitchell, 2008, p. 220)

Another means by which queer identities and attractions are constituted as 'other' is through their pathologisation. In their research with gay and lesbian students in New Zealand secondary schools, Quinlivan and Town indicate the way in which gay identities were equated with disease. On rare occasions when students reported mention of queer identities these were often in the context of HIV/AIDs as one participant explained:

We were talking about AIDS and how the people who get AIDS are prostitutes, intravenous drug users and homosexuals. – Richard. (Quinlivan and Town, 1999, p. 249)

The message participants received about their sexuality was that any expression of it was potentially dangerous and for young gay men would inevitably lead to contraction of HIV. This sort of heteronormativity embedded in sexuality education can be detrimental for queer youth in establishing a positive sense of sexual self. Recent studies around the heterosexual bias of sexuality education indicate that despite some improvement, these programmes remain predominately heteronormative (Allan et al., 2008; Allen, 2007c; Hillier and Mitchell, 2008). As a heteronormative practice sexuality education perpetuates social/sexual inequalities by rendering heterosexuality 'normal' and homosexuality 'deviant'. To achieve social/sexual justice, the heteronormative basis of sexuality education offers another reason for its re-imagining.

Centring and valuing young people's perspectives

In order to re-imagine sexuality education this book centres the views and experiences of 1,261 young people aged 16–19 years. There are several reasons why canvassing these perspectives might be important. Sexuality education which addresses what young people define as relevant is more likely to engage students with its messages (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000). Programmes that fail to acknowledge young people's lived realities are less likely to capture their attention (Allen, 2005d). One of the arguments proffered against basing sexuality education on young people's views is that they are incapable of knowing what they need, because they lack life experience. This thinking positions young people as lacking the kind of agency and decision-making power necessary to experience their sexuality positively. If young people are never truly believed to possess these capacities, how can sexuality education aimed at responsible sexual decision-making expect to work? Recognising young people as good judges of what kind of sexuality education they need, positions them with the agency necessary to make positive sexual decisions (for further discussion see Chapter 8).

Historically, sexuality education has been an adult-conceived concept designed to meet wider social and economic agendas. However, a new era of acknowledging 'student voice' has heralded attention to young people's concerns and perspectives. This 'vogue' for student participation and consultation in education is revealed internationally. In the United Kingdom for instance, the 2002 Education Act requires schools to consult with pupils while Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) is charged with assessing the extent to which schools offer pupils a voice (Bragg, 2007). In New Zealand there has been a recent

flourish of documents outlining the need for consultation with youth around a number of issues, for example, local government participation (Ministry of Youth Development, 2008) and the sale and supply of liquor (Ministry of Youth Development, 2009). While consultation with youth is increasingly advocated it does not always influence the issue at hand. The New Zealand Health and Physical Education Curriculum (1999) which governs sexuality education, explicitly names 'students' as part of the school community which should be involved in developing policies and practices that support learning in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 53). Often the motivation for such consultation is to secure young people's investment in programmes in order to cement their effectiveness. While young people might be consulted, their relatively less powerful position vis-à-vis the institutional authority of schooling means sexuality education often remains essentially adult-conceived and directed.

Consequently, this book is an attempt to centre and value young people's re-imaginings of sexuality education beyond adult conceptualisations of 'consultation'. It attempts to redress adult-dominated discourses of sexuality education by offering young people's slant on international sexuality education debates. It draws on a critical youth studies perspective which recognises young people as social agents who are active meaning makers in their own lives, rather than simply the passive recipients of adult researchers' directives (Best, 2007; Fraser et al., 2004; Kehily, 2007). This theoretical understanding of young people has unfurled as the project has evolved. In my original conceptualisation of the research methodology it existed as a latent and under-theorised presumption about young people. As I began to analyse the findings, I became increasingly dissatisfied with how to reconcile data from different participants. In the original project I had undertaken interviews with key (adult) stakeholders in sexual health including health teachers, school health nurses and community organisations working with young people around sexual issues. My initial intention had been to use data from sexual health educators *and* students to create a more complete picture of future programme needs. However, when adult and student perspectives diverged over, for instance, the curriculum inclusion of 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners', adult perspectives would dominate. No matter how I endeavoured to 'write in the voices of students', these perspectives weakened in the face of the authorial narrative of teachers which mobilised dominant discourses of young people's sexuality. Instead of being centred, student interests became 'just another' and subordinated

perspective in debates. Trying to rectify this situation I decided to omit data from key stakeholders so young people's perspectives achieved greater prominence. This methodological reading of data, which I characterise as 'materialising' from Butler (1993) and Jones and Jenkins (2008) is explored in the next chapter. While adult narratives are not physically present in the ensuing chapters, paradoxically neither are they absent. They appear as the discourses to which young people's articulations about sexuality education debates are often addressed.

The research upon which this book is based was not undertaken so that young people's ideas about sexuality education might help shape these programmes. Instead, I wanted to rethink sexuality education through young people's perspectives without the confines of adult perceived barriers and prohibitions. This is the reason for paying less attention to institutional barriers to programmes and instead concentrating on what sexuality education might be beyond them. Of course young people are not ignorant of curriculum politics nor devoid of ideas that echo adult concerns about morality and propriety. By virtue of being young, neither are students immune from reproducing dominant discourses of sexuality which reinforce social/sexual inequalities. These discourses are antithetical to the possibility of re-imagining sexuality education in ways that encourage social/sexual justice. It is also a methodological impossibility to extract and represent students' perspectives exactly as they intended. Their representation in this book is precisely that, a (re-)presentation. In their work around girls' discursive positioning and construction of self, Currie and Kelly (2007) maintain that 'the transformation of "what girls say" into what researchers make of what they say is a theoretically mediated process that often remains under-examined' (p. 377). Some of the complexities around re-imagining sexuality education founded on young people's ideas are addressed in Chapters 2 and 8.

Conceptualising sexuality education debates: The New Zealand context

While grounded in young people's perspectives, this re-imagining of sexuality education engages and re-articulates key international debates in the field. In New Zealand where the empirical work in this book was undertaken, sexuality education has a long history as one of the most contested and controversial curriculum subjects. Rather than offering a history of sexuality education debates in New Zealand which can be read elsewhere (Smyth, 2000) here I broadly conceptualise their

configuration. This conceptualisation helps situate current key debates in sexuality education with which the ensuing chapters engage.

Early debates about sexuality education cohered around the appropriateness of schools offering a subject that draws attention to student bodies and sexuality. In terms of contemporary opposition to sexuality education's presence in schools, this retort to 'appropriateness' persists. When the inclusion of sex education, as it was previously coined, was first formally debated in New Zealand in 1912 its suitability as an issue for consideration at school was raised (Smyth, 2000). The social constitution of sexual and reproductive matters as private deemed their discussion in classrooms immodest and crude. While the proliferation of sexual texts (e.g. media) renders the immodesty argument impotent in contemporary culture, this sentiment is still apparent in conservative and right-wing opposition to programmes (Fields, 2008). Claims that the home is the best place for sexuality education where parents/caregivers can convey information in a moral framework aligned with family values offers a re-configuration of this private/public debate. In this instance, public talk about sexual matters are deemed *inappropriate* because this may be incongruent with family values. A private context for sexuality education is favoured on grounds that public discussion of these issues is more likely to be immoral/amoral.

Debates about the appropriateness of sexuality education's inclusion at school have also been tied to the valuing of particular aspects of student identity. The privileging of mind over body is a structuring feature of schooling which has implications for the treatment of students as corporeal subjects and their embodied learning opportunities. Paechter (2004) maintains that schools are considered the province of the mind, where student bodies and all associated with them (including sexuality) is relegated to secondary importance. With reference to a Cartesian dualism she explains that schools reflect and reinforce a mind/body split with the former ruling the latter. This Cartesian legacy is witnessed in the hierarchy of school subjects where those associated with the mind, e.g. science, maths, physics etc., hold higher status than those that invoke the body such as physical education, drama and health. The idea that the mind rules the body underpins many schooling regulations and educational messages. For instance, a central message in sexuality education is that safer sex is a matter of exercising responsible restraint in the face of (corporeal) desire (i.e. thinking to use a condom or 'say no'). This Cartesian structuring of schooling means that sexuality education's invocation of the body constitutes it as peripheral to 'the proper work' of education. Debates around the

presence of sexuality education often mobilise this Cartesian discourse. Those wishing to discredit such programmes do so by implying they are anti-intellectual and unlikely to benefit serious students wishing to enter higher education.

The parameters of sexuality education debates shifted in 1989 when all schools in New Zealand were required to teach the health syllabus. Now sexuality education was a formal part of the curriculum the questioning of its validity took a different form through examining its 'effectiveness'. For those who preferred sexuality education not to be taught at school, new ammunition was garnered to expose the failure of programmes to meet the aims of reducing unintended pregnancies and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). This strategy was fuelled by widespread media reports of escalating statistics around abortion rates, teenage pregnancies and STIs. Academia also spawned research documenting the effect of programmes on young people's sexual behaviour around condom use, incidence of STIs and numbers of sexual partners (DiCenso et al., 2002; Grunseit et al., 1997). Internationally, a highly influential piece of research was Kirby and Coyle's (1997) examination of the effects of 35 school-based sexuality education programmes on reducing sexual risk-taking behaviours. This synthesis revealed that despite moral right claims that sexuality education increases sexual activity no programme evaluations provided evidence of this (see Chapter 7 for further details). This concern with sexuality education's effectiveness prevails in contemporary programmes with broadly two camps engaged in this debate: moral conservatives, and what Thomson characterises as 'health pragmatists' (Thomson, 1994).

Having lost the battle to remove sexuality education from schools the moral conservative campaign has morphed into advocating for a restrictive form – abstinence education. This kind of education is predominant in the United States where in 1996 a provision inserted into the US Welfare Reform Act provided significant state funding to promote sexual abstinence (Pruitt, 2007). Sexuality education programmes are eligible for this funding if they promote abstinence-only. This kind of education teaches that sexual activity outside of marriage will have harmful social, psychological and physical consequences and fails to cater for students who do not want to be abstinent (Blake and Frances, 2001). Abstinence-plus programmes primarily promote the abstinence message, but offer additional information about condoms and contraception. For abstinence proponents, effective sexuality education encourages young people to abstain from sexual activity before marriage. Like early forms of sex education, abstinence programmes are concerned with morality

and social purity. The success of such programmes is witnessed in students' virginity before marriage.

On the other side of the effectiveness debate are those who might be characterised as 'health pragmatists'. This group's philosophy of sexuality education's effectiveness sits in alignment with historical and government objectives of securing the population's sexual health. These researchers measure successful programmes in relation to indices such as reducing unintended pregnancies and STIs. Effective sexuality education is that which lowers young people's sexual 'risk-taking behaviour', subsequently improving the population's sexual health and ultimately reducing the need for government expenditure. Some members of this side of the debate understand sexual health within a purely medical framework, i.e. the absence of sexually transmissible infections. However, this bio-medical notion of sexual health has been criticised for failing to take account of other more holistic factors such as a positive sense of sexual self. This view of sexual health is encompassed within the World Health Organization's definition of the term which states that sexual health is

a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing in relation to sexuality, it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Sexual health needs a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, and the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences that are free of coercion, discrimination, and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all individuals must be respected, protected and satisfied. (World Health Organization, 2006)

Those concerned with a more holistic view of sexual health may additionally judge the effectiveness of sexuality education on its ability to provide young people with essential skills such as negotiating relationships and developing a positive sense of sexual self (Holland et al., 1998).

International debates about sexuality education explored in this book are mobilised by those who hold a more holistic view of sexual health than simply absence of disease. These debates take for granted that sexuality education is an important and necessary part of schooling. Since the compulsory inclusion of sexuality education in countries like New Zealand, debates about this subject have shifted to how to optimise content and delivery. Such debates are premised on a notion of sexuality education that will support young people to avoid unwanted sexual

outcomes, maintain their sexual health and experience their sexuality in positive ways. With these aims in mind, current international debates have centred on such questions as: What are the issues sexuality education should cover? How does class composition in terms of gender affect learning? Who are the best people to deliver sexuality education at school? These are the debates with which this book engages and which young people's ideas are employed to help re-imagine sexuality education.

Conceptual framework

This book draws on a number of theoretical frameworks including feminist post-structuralism, critical masculinities, critical youth studies and Foucauldian ideas such as 'an ethics of pleasure'. Its pervading influence is feminist post-structuralism and it is from this theoretical perspective that an understanding of 'sexuality' is invoked. The notion of discourse is central to the way sexuality is employed in this book. Discourses are systems of understanding (constituted through language), which structure and make possible particular ways of thinking and being (Weedon, 1987). When applied to the realm of sexuality, this means that rather than being a biologically based and natural phenomenon, sexuality is seen as discursively constituted. This discursive constitution occurs through a plethora of practices across social institutions and fields such as law, medicine, health and education. Following Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford (2003) 'sexuality' is

not the property of the individual and is not a hormonally or biologically given, inherent quality... when we talk about 'sexuality' we are talking about a whole assemblage of heterogeneous practices, techniques, habits, dispositions, forms of training and so on that govern things like dating and codes of dress in particular situations. (p. 3)

This concentration on meaning and language does not deny the material or enfleshed aspect of sexuality. If, like Butler, we work at the limits of discourse, then corporeal sexuality can be seen as a product of repeated regulatory norms that 'congeal' to constitute a material reality (Butler, 1993). As such, sexual and enfleshed bodies are materialised through discourse.

The process of discursive constitution recognises discourses as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). This means that sexuality does not prefigure

discourse but is an effect of particular discourses relationship to power. Discourses both transmit and produce power as well as challenge it by providing spaces for resistance (Nixon and Givens, 2007, p. 453). As Nixon and Givens explain, discourses do not enjoy an equal share of power, as some achieve greater prevalence and significance than others. As a consequence, 'discourses that lend themselves to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status) and significant place in a hierarchical structure...[are called] dominant discourses' (Nixon and Givens, 2007, p. 454). Those discourses which do not enjoy a firm institutional base and/or wide circulation are more likely to be subordinate and/or resistant. For example, in relation to discourses of sexuality, the idea that heterosexuality is 'normal' is a dominant discourse not only because it is widely believed, but it is also securely entrenched in powerful institutions like the legal system.

When sexuality is recognised as discursively constituted it is possible to see the role schools play as social institutions implicated in this process. Schools are one of the social sites in which meanings about sexuality are discursively constituted and perpetuated. These institutions 'reflect and constitute the broader socio-political discourses in operation, including those that uphold the constructed superiority of heterosexuality' (Ferfolja, 2008, p. 108). Ball (1990) explains this function as follows:

Educational sites are subject to discourse but are also centrally involved in the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses, the 'social appropriation' of discourses. Educational institutions control the access of individuals to various kinds of discourse. (p. 3)

Discourses of sexuality are constituted and propagated through a multiplicity of schooling structures and processes. The sexuality education curriculum offers one schooling site in which this discursive constitution and selective dissemination occurs. At its crudest level, the knowledge included (and excluded) from this curriculum is a mechanism by which particular discourses of sexuality are promoted or relegated. To continue the theme of understanding heterosexuality as 'normal', as seen earlier in this chapter omitting information about gay, lesbian and bisexual students from this curriculum serves to marginalise these identities. Similarly, in those instances when it is included it serves to pathologise same-gender attraction by, for example, equating HIV with gay men. Such practices also serve to re-inscribe gay, lesbian and

bisexual identities as 'other' and 'abnormal'. In this book, debates about sexuality education are premised on the idea that this curriculum area is a key mechanism by which meanings about sexuality are constituted, circulated and perpetuated at school.

This curriculum is not the only way sexuality is discursively constituted at school (Kehily, 2002b). Sexual meanings are also discursively constituted in other sites such as the playground, staffroom, sports field, school camp, school ball and school bus. They are also produced by/in practices as varied as peer group talk, graffiti of school property, student and teacher embodiment as well as use of spaces like changing rooms and the school auditorium. All of these practices may be seen to comprise the 'sexual culture' of schools, which although internally diverse encompasses the totality of the discursive and material practices in which sexuality is implicated. Although it is only one of a multitude of mechanisms for the discursive constitution of sexuality, sexuality education is acknowledged as a primary site of 'official' sexual meanings, i.e. those meanings which are authorised and sanctioned by the school as part of its public 'persona'. By contrast 'unofficial' sexual meanings do not carry official sanction by school authorities and instead emerge informally in interactions and spaces less overtly governed by schooling policy (e.g. peer group and staffroom talk). The view that sexuality education is an important site for the constitution of sexual meanings is an underpinning conceptualisation in this book.

In accordance with Foucauldian post-structural thought, sexuality education is not only conceptualised as a discursive practice that produces meanings about sexuality. In its mobilisation of specific discourses of sexuality, this curriculum also offers students particular ways of understanding their sexual identities. From a theoretical perspective this occurs because discourses provide subject positions that offer individuals particular ways of thinking and being. Such subject positions contribute to subjectivity or how we understand ourselves in relation to others and the world (Weedon, 1987). Therefore, discourses of sexuality in sexuality programmes offer young people particular ways of being sexual subjects, which compete with discourses about sexuality in the wider sexual culture of schooling (and society). One example here is the discourse of 'safer sex', which predominates in many sexuality education programmes in New Zealand. In sexuality education students are repeatedly encouraged to use condoms and (if necessary – i.e. if they are heterosexual) other forms of contraception when engaging in sexual intercourse. Simultaneously, however, most schools do not distribute condoms or provide condom dispensing machines. This discursive

practice works to undermine the 'safer sex' discourse of sexuality education by positioning young people as preferably 'non-sexual' (Allen, 2007a). By advocating that young people practise safer sex, but failing to provide them with the means to do so, schools communicate a preference that students do not engage in sexual activity. Subject positions offered to students by such contradictory discourses are not as positively and legitimately sexual subjects, but as guilt-filled. In the 'logic' of these discourses, 'good' students should have no need for condoms because they are not having sex! Sexuality education, then, doesn't just offer meanings about sexuality, but also provides students with possibilities for understanding themselves as sexual subjects.

A feminist politics frames the analysis of empirical data in this book. In accordance with a re-imagining of sexuality education interested in sexual/social justice this politics seeks gender equity in sexual relations. There is a significant body of feminist sexuality research which documents gendered inequalities in relation to heterosexual sex (Roberts et al., 1995; Stewart, 1999b; Thompson, 1990; Thomson, 1991; Tolman, 2002). The findings of the Women Risk and AIDs and Men Risk and AIDs projects in England were amongst the first to reveal that a major barrier to practising safer sex was gendered power relations and traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity (Holland et al., 1998). Unequal power relations between young women and their male partners made it difficult for some to negotiate condom use. Conventional understandings of appropriate female sexuality as 'demure' and 'receptive' also made it problematic for young women to carry condoms and initiate their use.

A recognition of continuing power differentials between young women and men and sexuality education's role in perpetuating them underpins this book. In the context of understanding female sexuality Tolman reveals a similar interest in and centring of gender to her project: 'while I am not suggesting that gender is the sole dimension of significance in the development of...sexuality by any means, I am insisting that it is foundational' (Tolman, 2006, p. 73). In alignment with the theoretical understandings delineated above, I am interested in the way in which the sexuality curriculum constitutes students not only as sexual subjects, but as *gendered sexual subjects*. What types of femininity and masculinity are perpetuated by sexuality education? How do these position young people as particular masculine and feminine subjects? How useful is this positioning for young people's positive understanding of themselves as sexual? What potential does this positioning hold for achieving social/sexual justice?

To answer these questions I also draw on critical masculinities theories as expounded by researchers such as Connell (2005), Mac an Ghaill (2003), Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003), Renold (2005) and Epstein (2001). These researchers offer a critical understanding of masculinities as relational, diverse and with differing access to power. This conceptualisation of masculinities recognises that they are not essentialised, monolithic and immutable but contradictory, complex and capricious. The advantage of such a conceptualisation is that it highlights the problems with statements like 'young men are sexually predatory' or 'young men are sexually voracious'. These sorts of conventional constructions of young men's sexuality reify masculinity and fail to take account of the diversity which exists within this category. Such conceptualisations also have regulatory effects, which may deny young men other ways of experiencing and expressing their sexuality. Critical masculinities theorists' conceptualisations of masculinities open the possibility of more diverse, positive and fulfilling understandings of the male sexual self.

While the above concerns with gender are articulated within a feminist and critical masculinities framework this book also draws on more recent 'queer' theorising around gender. Queer theory is a body of thought that emerged from the late 1980s and early 1990s influenced by feminism, post-structuralism as well as gay and lesbian politics (Jagose, 1996). Epitomised by Butler (1990, 2004), Fuss (1989), Halberstam (1998), Jagose (1996) and Sedgwick (1990), a central concern is to destabilise all gender/sexual identities (Beasley, 2005). These theorists disrupt the notion of gender as a binary comprised of men and women who display antithetical characteristics. Instead, the very 'nature' of gender as a construct is called into question as something that precedes language and is stable. As a consequence of this destabilisation of identity (for example, masculinity and femininity), arguments about gender equity (in the form of equal access to power for females and males) are less consuming than those of gender justice. In the context of sexuality education this might involve attempts at dismantling assumptions about gender as a binary whereby opposites are necessarily sexually attracted. Gender justice in sexuality education would as its starting point, acknowledge and incorporate (without re-inscription as 'other') transgendered and queer identities (Kumashiro, 2002). A search for 'gender' justice in the re-imagining of sexuality education is another underlying conceptual concern of this book.

Structure of the book

In order to undertake a re-imagining of sexuality education this book is structured in terms of key international debates in the field of sexuality education. Each chapter addresses one of these debates by first undertaking a critical survey of existing research. Findings from the current research are then employed to re-configure the parameters of these debates and offer alternative conceptual and pedagogical approaches. The self-contained nature of these chapters means that after reading Chapter 2 readers might select a debate they are interested in without having to follow chapters sequentially. This 'pick and choose' approach aims to provide accessibility to key sexuality education debates (i.e. through a critical overview of issues) *and* new analysis (via empirical research). In this way, the book caters for both new students and advanced researchers of sexuality.

Before embarking on an exploration of these debates, Chapter 2 outlines the project's methodology. Ethical dilemmas and the logistical complexities of conducting research within the institutional context of schooling are highlighted. The chapter reveals the difficulties in accessing schools to participate when sexuality research is constituted as controversial and educational institutions are saturated with research requests. How the conceptual frameworks of critical youth studies, masculinities theories and feminist post-structuralism have shaped the research methodology are also delineated. Each data collection method is outlined and how these worked to extend findings from *Sexual subjects: young people, sexuality and education* (Allen, 2005d) is described. The final section examines the process of data analysis. Here I recount an experimental approach of combining traditional and post-structural analytic paradigms to interpret questionnaire answers differently.

What should be the content of sexuality education is an enduring question for sexuality educators, school management and policy-makers. Chapter 3 addresses this debate by first exploring how it is currently constructed and why it is so potent. I conceptualise perspectives in this debate as informed by a series of discourses which might be characterised as 'moral right', 'health pragmatist' and 'sexually liberal'. This examination of the landscape of content debates sets the context for discussion in the second half of the chapter. In accordance with a commitment to centring young people's perspectives, the focus shifts to examining topics participants indicated wanting to know more about. Young people's preferences provide a strong critique

of sexuality education. Their comments indicate that in omitting essential information such as 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners' sexuality education is de-eroticised. This critique also provides insights into how young people understand themselves as sexual and how they are positioned by existing curricula as sexual subjects. I argue that the way young people understand themselves as sexual, conflicts with schools' view of students as preferably *non-sexual* and could have negative implications for the achievement of conventional programme goals. The chapter reveals how some young people's perspectives about programme content diverge from adult-conceived directives. I contend that these student views encourage a re-envisioning of programme content and schools' perception of student sexuality.

Chapter 4 engages with popular debates about whether mixed or single gender classes are the most effective pedagogical environment for students. In examining this issue, the chapter addresses a wider call in the educational arena to educate boys 'separately' and 'differently' on the basis that they are the 'new disadvantaged' (Epstein et al., 1998a). This 'failing boys' discourse manifests within sexuality education in reports that boys are disinterested and disruptive in lessons. These debates are addressed by exploring gender differences in students' suggestions for sexuality education content and ascertaining whether these suggest single gender classes may be useful. In contrast to some existing research, findings reveal that on items a majority of participants selected, young women's and men's content preferences were largely similar. Underpinned by feminist, masculinities and queer theorists' concern with gender, the way responses position young people as subjects who conform to, or deviate from, 'conventional' heterosexualities is also examined. In addition, these findings are interrogated for what they offer debates about 'gender difference' and sexuality education.

Since Fine's (1988) seminal essay signalling 'a missing discourse of desire' in American schools, a significant body of international research has identified this omission in sexuality education. Many of these studies have indicated that young people have a personal investment in desire and sexual pleasure and would like to know more about this topic. Chapter 5 addresses debates about the inclusion of this discourse within sexuality education by examining young people's ideas about incorporating 'pleasure' in programmes. Young people's views identify the importance of this topic as a curricular component as well as the challenges of how to broach an issue constituted as 'natural', 'private'

and 'embarrassing'. The way in which participant responses draw on dominant discourses of sexuality and subsequently the challenges these signal for incorporating them within sexuality education are discussed.

Who make the best sexuality educators is the debate addressed in Chapter 6. I argue that young people's responses to this question point to the need to reframe this question. Young people's prioritization of educator qualities over aspects of identity, like gender and age, imply a need to reconsider how teacher identity is linked to 'effectiveness'. Within the existing literature, there is often an assumption that peers make better sexuality educators because they are the same age as students. Similarly, there is a belief that boys will respond better to male educators who are able to 'speak their language', 'identify with their concerns' and subsequently engage their interest better than a female teacher. This chapter takes a critical perspective on these claims by providing an analysis of the characteristics participants deem as essential to 'good' teaching, like being knowledgeable and relating to young people. How findings might have implications for teacher training and practice is also examined.

Premised on young people's calls for including desire and pleasure in sexuality education Chapter 7 re-imagines sexuality education. It explores why schools are invested in a disease and pregnancy prevention focus and the mechanisms by which this has historically endured. The chapter also poses the question: how useful is this focus in regard to the way it constitutes students as sexual subjects? I argue that this form of education serves to constitute young people as a 'problem to be solved', disempowering them, regulating their sexuality in negative ways and privileging heterosexuality. In the spirit of re-imagining sexuality education, I draw on Foucault's notion of an 'ethics of pleasure' as a means of experimentally re-conceptualising programmes. Foucault's concept of 'ethical pleasures' and its potential for producing social/sexual justice is explored.

The final chapter undertakes a summary of the research findings by re-visiting some of the book's central themes and arguments. These are not meant to be conclusive statements about the future direction of sexuality education or the final say. Instead, they are offered as points of departure for reconfiguring sexuality education in ways that respond to contextual features of specific classrooms/school environments and the needs of students. This chapter also engages with an issue which might represent a critique of this book, the fact that it is based on

young people's perspectives. In a pre-emptive answer to this critique, I critically explore the issue of whether sexuality education should be based on young people's perspectives. As the approach and content of this book attest, I argue that sexuality education *can* and *should* be re-imagined by young people.

2

Doing 'it': Researching Sexuality

Research which involves human subjects is often a difficult enterprise. When you add 'sexuality' and 'schooling' to this mix, it becomes a veritable minefield. This chapter explores some of the complexities of undertaking research about young people and sexuality in the context of schooling. School environments are distinct because of the plethora of power relations which govern these institutions (Halsey et al., 1997). This chapter will examine some of the challenges posed by these particular configurations of power. For example, how they impinge on accessing a sample and implementing a research methodology which seeks to disrupt normative understandings of sexuality.

The construction of sexuality research as 'sensitive' means it can receive increased scrutiny from institutional ethics committees as a means of dealing with perceived 'risk' (Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong, 2008). A key ethical tenet mobilised in 'sensitive' research is the voluntary nature of participants' involvement (Tolich, 2001). Some of the complexities created by the institutional power of schooling, around ensuring students' voluntary participation in sexuality research, are examined. In order to contextualise the findings discussed in ensuing chapters, details are offered about how the focus group and questionnaire methods were operationalised. The process of data analysis involving a seemingly antithetical combination of survey and post-structural approaches is also delineated.

Not for the faint-hearted: Researching sexuality in schools

Researching sexuality at school is almost always contentious because of the way 'sexuality', 'young people' and 'schooling' are socially

constituted and understood. As outlined in Chapter 1 Foucault (1976) describes sexualities as discursively constituted through a plethora of social institutions whose meanings are historically and culturally located. From this perspective, contemporary (Western) understandings of sexuality are shaped by discourses of 'privacy', 'shame', 'guilt', 'danger' and 'pleasure' in complex and contradictory ways (Hawkes, 2004). The idea that sexuality is something 'private' and therefore when addressed publicly potentially uncomfortable, renders it difficult to research in schools. To make sexuality the explicit focus of a research project contravenes notions of it as a personal and embarrassing phenomenon. Researching sexuality brings this discomfort into sharp relief in ways many schools would prefer to ignore.

When 'sexuality' as a research topic is coupled with 'young people' it becomes particularly contentious. This situation is partly attributable to social understandings of 'youth'. Young people in the current project were aged 16–19 years, a period characterised in Western cultures as mid-to-late adolescence. Contemporary discourses of adolescence have been influenced by the work of psychologist Stanley Hall, and his identification of this 'life-stage'. Hall characterised adolescence as a volatile period of psychological and physiological change, rendering youth at the mercy of their hormones without the 'stabilising influences of adult-experience' (Hall, 1904). As such 'youth' are understood as 'vulnerable' to their own uncontrollable desires and those (adult others) who may wish to take advantage of them. This situation creates a paradox where students are perceived as 'a danger' to themselves and 'in danger' from others. Sexuality is perceived a central source of this 'danger', manifested in students' own hormonally driven bodies and the perverse desires of adult others.

These understandings of young people's sexuality and their potential relationships with adults make research on sexuality in schools fraught. To focus on young people's sexuality brings these dangers to the fore, in a way that counteracts a multitude of schooling practices instituted to conceal and/or contain sexuality issues. As indicated in Chapter 1, schools are considered the province of the mind where student bodies and the sexuality they imply are deemed in need of management. By its mere focus, sexuality research flouts this idea, exposing an element of student subjectivity which many schools would prefer to overlook. The constitution of adolescents as also in danger from 'adults' who may wish to exploit their 'sexual inexperience' can pose another

barrier for sexuality research. In this highly risk-averse environment, schools must be suspicious of adults (in and outside its grounds) and instigate measures to protect students in their care (Jones, 2001). By virtue of their interest in sexuality, those who research in this area may already be deemed 'suspect' by some. They may therefore appear to pose a greater 'threat' to students than those without a declared interest in sexual matters. When I first began researching sexuality I would be invited to meetings with prospective schools and community organisations where the purpose was to ascertain if I was a bona fide and trustworthy researcher. Quite often this aim was explicitly stated at the end of the 'interview', where with relief at my having 'passed the test' those who had invited me would confess, 'we just wanted to check you out'. Fears about vulnerable students and suspect adults compound the difficulties of accessing schools and recruiting participants for sexuality research.

While researching sexuality in schools has always been a thorny undertaking, gaining access to participants has become increasingly difficult over the past five years in New Zealand. This observation is based on the time it now takes many sexuality researchers (myself and my post-graduate students included) to secure school participation. Without a prior relationship with a school or a sympathetic contact within them, sexuality research in this environment is incredibly difficult. One reason for this is the increasing marketisation of education which has encouraged schools to regulate and safeguard their reputations more stringently (Gewirtz, 1995). Educational success is now predicated on publicly recognisable forms of achievement like examination results, rather than less easily measured and intangible outcomes such as student health and well-being (Epstein and Kenway, 1996). To attract students and additional funding, schools need to invest time and money in a 'brand' that establishes their academic excellence. In this context, issues deemed 'controversial' like research into sexuality, can be perceived too risky. With a new emphasis on evidence-based policy and practice in educational settings schools are currently inundated with requests from researchers to undertake studies. This saturation and need to uphold an unblemished public image means schools are more likely to choose research that is innocuous and achievement focused. These studies may also be preferred because they are unlikely to produce additional workload for staff who may have to field enquiries and assuage parental anxieties about sexuality research. This environment also contributes to the challenge of conducting sexuality research at school.

Accessing schools and meeting resistance to sexuality research

Some of these barriers to undertaking sexuality research were evident in the current study. My strategy in approaching schools involved first contacting those with whom I had a prior relationship. By returning to 'known' schools I hoped to circumvent some of the above-mentioned reasons for delay in recruiting participants. This process entailed contacting the school principal and health teacher and providing them with written information about the research in the form of a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form. These documents invited the school's participation and outlined what this would entail. Once consent forms were signed by the principal and health teacher, student recruitment commenced.

As I was aiming for at least ten schools in diverse national locations it was necessary to extend the pool of schools I had previously worked with. Several more were recruited through a Health Education Association Conference where I presented findings from prior research around young people's sexual health. Colleagues in health education also recommended additional schools based on the institution's predisposition to support sexuality research. One of these referrals offers an example of the impediments that sexuality research can face because of the way sexuality is socially constituted.

Mr James was the health co-ordinator of a private, faith-based girls' school to whom I sent a research invitation. As was relatively common amongst health teachers I contacted, Mr James requested a copy of the questionnaire I proposed to distribute to students. This survey asked about students' existing experience of sexuality education at secondary school and their perception of what should constitute the content and pedagogy of future programmes. Several days after sending the survey I received a call from Mr James explaining that after discussion with the deputy-principal the school would be declining the invitation to participate. The reason proffered was the framing of a question pertaining to students' sexual identity in which 'heterosexual' had appeared after 'lesbian', 'homosexual' and 'bisexual' as response options. The deputy-principal opposed this ordering of sexual identities because of the way it made 'heterosexuality appear a choice rather than a fact of life'. By way of further explanation, Mr James revealed that the same deputy-principal had refused distribution of another questionnaire on the grounds it had failed to rank a particular religious domination first. In this case, the ordering was unacceptable because of the school's

own religious foundations. I enquired whether alteration of the sexual identity question would mean the questionnaire could be distributed. Mr James responded that 'if the options had been in alphabetical order or something like that', the questionnaire would have been more acceptable. The conversation closed with Mr James remarking that these objections were more a reflection of the deputy-principals' perspective than his own.

Changing the order of these responses was not an option I was willing to entertain. The sexual identity question had been designed to 'trouble heterosexuality' by exposing and disrupting normalising discourses of sexuality (Jackson and Scott, 1996). Typically, in survey construction the first option in a series is anticipated to be the most popular answer. Placing this option first enables the average questionnaire respondent (as conceptualised by the survey designers) to minimise completion time by locating the appropriate response quickly. By positioning the heterosexuality option after sexual identities that have traditionally been marginalised, I attempted to destabilise the normalising power of this identity. This move endeavoured to undermine the assumption that heterosexuality should/would 'naturally' be the first option, because the majority of people are presumed to be 'straight'. In terms of the logistics of questionnaire response, it meant that heterosexually identified participants had to actively search for 'heterosexuality', and it might encourage all participants to contemplate why it was not placed first.

Mr James's school's refusal is indicative of the anxieties invoked by research around youth, sexualities and schooling. The perceived 'danger' in this case was a fear of 'corrupting' students with homosexuality by failing to relegate it to a peripheral and demonised position. Inviting students to question the heteronormative social ordering of sexual identities undermines foundational understandings of heterosexuality as 'normal' and 'expected'. These heteronormative understandings are a stalwart feature of schools which mobilise and perpetuate them through their everyday structures and processes (Dempsey, 2001; Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Hillier and Mitchell, 2008; Quinlivan, 2006; Rasmussen, 2006; Renold, 2005). Mr James's school may have felt its students needed protection from this critical questioning of what is constituted as 'sexually normal' and in students' 'best interests' denied research access. What is particularly interesting about the phrasing of this school's refusal is the way it elides same-gender attraction completely. Mr James did not mention the word 'homosexuality', instead emphasising the predetermined and universal character of

heterosexuality and subsequently casting same-gender attraction as an impossibility. Implicit within this denial lies another anxiety around sexuality, a fear of homosexuality.

Despite such setbacks the final sample comprised 15 schools. These institutions were regionally diverse, from both North and South Islands and rural/urban locations. While the majority of schools were co-educational, two single-sex girls and one all-boys school took part. These schools ranged in decile from '1' to '10' with 8 schools with a decile rating of '5' or lower. In New Zealand, decile ratings are allocated by the Ministry of Education and indicate the extent to which a school draws its students from low socio-economic communities. Schools with a decile 1 rating are the 10 per cent with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, while decile 10 schools are the 10 per cent with the lowest proportion of these students (verbatim Ministry of Education, 2009). From these schools, 1,261 students took part in either the questionnaire or focus group methods detailed below.

The sensitivities of sex: Ethical considerations

Issues of consent

The research received ethics approval from the University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee. In granting this approval the committee emphasised the importance of ensuring young people's participation was voluntary, given perceived 'sensitivities' around a topic like sexuality. During the recruitment phase I employed several strategies in a bid to ensure the voluntary nature of participation. One of these involved providing students with copies of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent forms prior to my arrival at school. These were pre-distributed by teachers, with a view to enabling students to read this information at their own pace and prepare questions in advance. The Participant Information Sheet stressed that participation was voluntary, a point which I also verbally reinforced before distributing the questionnaire. As a means of legitimising possible refusals and making it easier for students to say 'no', I annotated this message with examples of reasons for not participating. Another technique for facilitating students' ability to opt out, was to emphasise they did not need to voice their explanation for non-participation to me.

Despite these measures, the repetition of a particular classroom scenario revealed that the notion of voluntary consent was somewhat precarious. Following my explanation of the research, the teacher in charge would invariably endorse the study by explaining its perceived

importance to improving the provision of sexuality education. While these comments were offered in support of the research, they may have inadvertently communicated the teacher's desire that students take part. Such endorsements were unlikely to be problematic for students who were adamant about their non-participation and unconcerned about their teacher's view of this decision. However, classrooms are places in which 'the good student' is someone who does things that please their teacher. Those wanting to construct/maintain this identity may have balanced their decision to participate on their teacher's eagerness for them to do so, rather than their independent sense of this.

Even before the teacher articulated their endorsement for the research this was signalled by my presence in the classroom, and more broadly the school. As a result of the way power is bestowed on teachers to determine what is 'right' and 'wrong' for students, any sanctioning of activity by them can render it 'the right thing to do'. This becomes a problem when students unquestioningly 'do the right thing' without critically examining why they are doing something. In fact, this is the foundation upon which much of the daily regulation of student bodies in schools is premised, an unquestioning acceptance of knowledge, processes, structures and directives. When taking part in research forms part of this daily schooling agenda, then any notion of this as 'voluntary' needs to be interrogated.

This operation of school authority might be understood by what Foucault calls 'disciplinary power'. For Foucault, power is not simply a monolithic force that works only from the top down, through repression or denial. In the context of the voluntary nature of research, a repressive exercise of power might be an overt command that students participate in the study, accompanied by a threat that failure to do so will result in a negative consequence, like detention. Foucault has argued, however, that power also works more productively by inciting the subject's desire to engage in certain behaviours, constituting particular modes of thought and embodiment. Disciplinary power is exercised invisibly and works through 'subtle coercion' producing 'subjected and practised bodies' whose regulation as such is achieved more effectively (Foucault, 1979). For students in this study, it occurred in the overt declaration by school and researcher that participation is not compulsory, even though students are aware that taking part promises certain benefits (i.e. pleasing the teacher or doing a good deed).

Disciplinary power was also in evidence in the way research participation had been scheduled into class time. As the survey took

approximately 40 minutes to complete, an entire 50-minute period was usually allocated for this activity. Often teachers assumed all students would participate, so no provision for alternative activities was made. On several occasions I overheard students ask what they would be doing if they did not want to be involved. The reply usually went something like, 'if you don't fill out the survey you have to get on with maths'. When faced with the choice of doing a survey or regular work, some students saw the former as the lesser of two evils. Structuring student options in this manner fell short of the notion of 'voluntary participation' because this decision was not an active and positive one. Instead, taking part may have occurred by default.

Providing students with more options than simply completing the questionnaire was made difficult by the physical composition of classrooms. Most I entered were usually comprised of a single space with desks and chairs in rows facing the whiteboard. Often there was just enough room to house students with no unoccupied areas or partitions that non-participants could withdraw to/behind. Whatever activity eventuated in the classroom occurred in close proximity to, and in full view of everybody else. This effect made it impossible for two distinctly different activities to occur in the same space without one posing a distraction to the other (e.g. watching a video and filling out a survey). The authority of the school is reflected in this kind of physical layout of the classroom, which dictates modes of student embodiment (Middleton, 1998). Power's action here is capillary in nature, working in/through classroom bodies so that particular modes of embodiment are easier to enact than others. In this instance, such power worked to make filling out a questionnaire an easier proposition than attempting to undertake an activity that might confuse the presumed class 'order'.

The institutional authority of schooling and the way this is mobilised by teachers and embedded in classroom geography, make the issue of students' voluntary consent problematic. Power's configuration in schools renders it difficult for students to consent to research in a way that is independent of the regulatory practices of this context. Continuing to search for ways that encourage student agency in this regard is a critical endeavour for ethical research in educational settings.

Keeping students' responses confidential

As the project's sole researcher it was not feasible to distribute a questionnaire to 1,180 students in 15 diverse locations throughout New Zealand. As a consequence, for some schools outside Auckland (where I live), the questionnaire was distributed by health teachers. Conscious of

confidentiality issues and ensuring students' responses were not read by teachers, a special protocol was employed for these questionnaires. This involved providing teachers with step-by-step instructions about how the questionnaire should be distributed, including a verbal assurance to students that their responses would only be read by the researcher. This guarantee was also written in the Participant Information and Consent forms teachers and students had received. In addition, I provided schools with envelopes which participants could place their completed questionnaires in and seal. As the questionnaire was also anonymous, I hoped these measures were sufficient to protect students' confidentiality.

Despite these precautions subsequent interactions with teachers indicated that some had not adhered to the written instructions. This was apparent when one school's questionnaires were returned without the supplied envelopes. Upon enquiring about this, the teacher involved explained they had not been necessary as she had a 'good relationship' with students. In another instance, questionnaires were returned in individual envelopes but these were not sealed. Someone (presumably the teacher) had also censored participants' responses by using a black bold marker to erase any 'offending' language or scribbled comments. This person may have been concerned I would be offended by these jottings and/or wanted to ensure 'the right impression' of students was conveyed. These comments were actually a feature of surveys from almost all schools and I considered them an important data source. I eventually used them as the basis for an article on students' perception of information that is missing from sexuality education (see Allen, 2006b). What these practices indicated however, was that not only had the research protocol been breached but more importantly so had student confidentiality.

Evidence of a more disturbing form of this violation emerged during a discussion with a teacher. At one school completed questionnaires were being held by the school counsellor in her office for me to collect. When I arrived to pick them up she enquired what I thought of the 'quality of the answers' from questionnaires received so far. She explained her interest stemmed from looking at the responses of a student who she thought would complete the questionnaire well and was surprised that 'although there were some good things written she had not bothered to finish it'. In this instance, the teacher had tracked/matched an anonymous questionnaire to a student and read her responses which were supposed to be confidential. Another complicating factor was that this staff member had been working with this student in her capacity

as a school counsellor. Not only was this student's confidentiality infringed, but personal responses made in the questionnaire could have potentially been used without her knowledge or consent, to inform a counselling context. Arguably, this may have been beneficial for the student; however, it was not what she had consented to in participating in the research. This is another example of the way the institutional authority of schooling works against the rights and agency of students as research subjects. The power bestowed teachers in this context to decide what is in the 'best' interests of students undermined the research process and its promises of participant privacy. Configurations of institutional authority are not easily usurped by researchers even when schools promise to adhere to research protocols. The entrenched nature of these power relations means that research can be appropriated in ways that make a mockery of the notion of voluntary consent and confidentiality.

In the field, data collection

Methods in the current study were designed to build on findings from a previous project around young people's sexual subjectivities, knowledge and practices. This prior research, outlined in the book *Sexual subjects: young people, sexuality and education* (Allen, 2005d) provided useful insights into possible reasons for a conceptualised 'gap' between what young people learn in sexuality education and what they do in their sexual practice. The research sought to understand why given good knowledge about the necessity of condoms to reduce sexually transmissible infections some young people do not always use them. This research utilised focus groups, individual and couple interviews and anonymous questionnaires to explore how young people understand this perceived knowledge/practice 'gap'.

One of the insights to emerge from this previous research was young people's critique of the sexuality education they received at school. Comments about sexuality education were unsolicited and appeared consistently across participants' written and spoken narratives. A predominant theme was a disjuncture between the way young people conceptualised their sexual subjectivities, knowledge and practices and how these were constituted by sexuality education. These findings pointed to the need to rethink sexuality education content, design and delivery in ways that better meet young people's understandings of these issues. With this in mind, the current research was conceived to provide further insights about the sort of sexuality education

young people deem useful. It aimed to capture the characteristics of sexuality education which young people had so far found helpful in their experience of this schooling subject. It also endeavoured to garner ideas about what was currently missing from sexuality education with a view to designing future programmes and educational resources to redress these omissions. These aims were reflected in the design of the methods.

As interviews with 16–19-year-olds from the previous research had generated rich qualitative data from individuals around this topic, methods which would broaden these findings were employed in the current study. Part of this broadening involved the inclusion of the voices of teachers and community health educators who have an investment in sexuality education. To glean these views, open-ended interviews were conducted with 31 individuals from organisations and agencies providing sexuality/health education in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Eight individual interviews were also undertaken with teachers responsible for the design and provision of school-based sexuality education. Three of these teachers were from decile 10, three from decile 4 and two from decile 1 schools. As findings from these methods are not reported in this book (see section ‘Thinking sex: data analysis’ for explanation) this method is not described. To ascertain whether views about sexuality education from students in the previous study were reflected more widely, an anonymous written questionnaire was distributed. Focus groups were also conducted with young people to examine in greater depth some of the previous research’s insights about sexuality education and to obtain a ‘public’ production of knowledge about these.

Questionnaires: A method with disruptive potential?

An eight-page, 30-item questionnaire was designed to elicit what young people felt sexuality education had already effectively covered and changes they desired in future programmes. Questions were devised around unprompted themes concerning sexuality education which had emerged from the previous research. For instance, interview participants often referred to the clinical and technical approach of much sexuality education, effectively submerging issues like desire, pleasure and emotions in relationships. To incorporate this concern in the current research, ‘desire’ and ‘pleasure’ appeared as options participants could elect as issues for future inclusion in sexuality programmes (see Chapter 5).

In accordance with a critical youth studies approach, the survey sought to centre young people's perspectives in two ways. At the development stage where it was based on themes that emerged in young people's narratives from previous research, and through the piloting process. The questionnaire was piloted with 47 students in three schools with diverse decile ratings (either 1, 4 or 10). The piloting process involved students completing the draft questionnaire and then participating in a focus group to comment on its content and design. Suggestions for revisions typically cohered around language, with participants indicating that some words like 'menstruation' and 'consulted' required an explanation or substitution with a more comprehensible alternative. Other comments focused on the survey's aesthetics with suggestions for colour and graphics that would appeal to youth. In all but one instance participants' revisions were incorporated into the final version of the survey. The only suggestion which could not be accommodated was printing the survey in colour, as the project budget did not allow for this possibility.

As part of designing methods which sought to disrupt normative understandings of young people and sexuality the questionnaire was formulated to unsettle common assumptions about gender. When initially devising the questionnaire, I also consulted members of the New Zealand transgendered community to discern how it could acknowledge and accommodate 'gender diversity'. This concern resonated with the research's 'queer' underpinnings and desire for social/sexual justice.

As a structuring principle of society, gender is understood in terms of a dualism whereby all human beings are thought to belong unequivocally to one of two discrete biological categories. As Edkins and King reveal, this 'natural attitude' specifies that every body must be either male or female and that 'a body cannot be both male and female, or neither' (Edkins and King, 1999, p. 583). The relatively recent emergence of transgender politics and influence of queer theories have challenged gender as a concept and its manifestation as a dichotomy (Butler, 1990; Grosz, 1994). Butler's (1990) work proposes that gender does not follow automatically from sex, and offers the possibility that expressions of gender may not necessarily be only 'male' or 'female'. If, as Butler suggests, there is no pre-given essential sex and we become gendered through continuous performances through which masculinity and femininity are consolidated, then the fiction of gender renders it perpetually unstable. As a consequence, masculinities and femininities are never fully realised and the potential for 'incongruent' expressions

of gender from sex, resulting in the blurring of male/female and other gender identities, is ever present.

In an attempt to reference these theoretical insights and deconstruct binary notions of gender, participants were able to identify their gender in the survey in non-traditional ways. Instead of only the options 'female' or 'male', participants could also choose to designate their gender as 'something else'. If participants selected this option they were asked to indicate how they wished to name themselves with the request, 'Please specify'. Some example descriptors were supplied to assist in this task, 'e.g. both male and female/neither female nor male, transgender, transsexual'. These options were not meant to be restrictive (i.e. the participant could reject them and employ their own terminology) nor were they mutually exclusive (i.e. a participant could identify as male and transgendered).

Rather than collecting accurate data about transgendered youth, this question was politically motivated (Allen, 2005a). Including the 'something else' choice served to acknowledge a sector of the youth population that have traditionally been invisible within generalised samples. However, it was recognised that this inclusion would represent more of a political statement about the possibilities of gendered identity than an accurate means of collecting data about these youth. This is because these young people may not have wished to identify as transgendered or preferred not to be political about this aspect of their identity. Another problem with the accuracy of the category 'something else', was that as a third option it lumped all transgendered youth together, failing to highlight the multiple categories and gender ambiguities that the concept transgendered comprises.

This survey question produced some poignant fieldwork episodes which highlight how the institutional authority and processes of schooling shape research. One of these moments occurred when I entered a Year 13 statistics class. Upon arrival Miss Daniels explained to me that my presence was fortuitous because students were learning the importance of statistics. She explained that after completing the questionnaire she planned to conduct a lesson around how data collected could form the basis for statistical analysis. While participants filled out their questionnaires, I watched Miss Daniels transfer the questions from the survey I had given her to the board in anticipation of class discussion. As she began to write out question 2, asking participants to identify their gender, I noticed her hesitate. Instead of writing down all of the named options, which were 'female', 'male', and 'something

else', Miss Daniels simply noted the first two. By not transferring the question in its entirety to the blackboard Miss Daniels erased the possibility of transgendered youth from the discussion agenda. This omission effectively dismissed transgendered youth as an insignificant gender category. With the stroke of a piece of chalk, or rather the lack of one, the transgressive potential of the presence of a gender that was 'something else' was undermined.

What occurred here cannot simply be seen as the teacher's 'fault'. Miss Daniels was actively engaging with the sexual content of the questionnaire in her bid to teach about statistics. This in itself is a transformative act, in an educational context where sexuality is habitually denied, curbed or de-eroticised. It is especially so, in a maths class where associations with logic constitute this subject as removed from issues of sex and sexuality. Instead of simply an individual act of discrimination, this episode symbolises the power of normative gender discourses to define what is thinkable, and perceived as probable, regarding gender identity in the classroom. Miss Daniels's decision to disregard the option of 'something else' reflects wider social discourses which constitute gender as a binary category and which schools have been seen to sanction and institutionalise. This is richly documented by a multitude of researchers who have provided empirical evidence of gender differentiation through schooling processes and structures such as the curriculum (Davies, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1994), methods of punishment (Connell, 1995) and peer culture (Kehily and Nayak, 1997). Arnot captures some of this analysis when she explains that:

through classroom encounters where boys and girls experience different degrees and types of contact with the teacher, through curriculum texts and the structured relations of the school, limits are set to the degree of negotiation of gender that is possible within the school. (Arnot, 1994, p. 110)

These meanings about gender (re)produced through the school (in this case by Miss Daniels's actions) made the possibility of an expression of gender which does not conform to normative binary categories 'unthinkable'. Such practices are the mechanisms by which schools contribute to the constitution of discourses in which gender is understood as dichotomous. They are also practices which curb the potential of employing transformative sexuality research in this context.

Focus groups

Focus groups were undertaken to examine insights gleaned from individual interviews in the previous research in order to explore young people's public production of knowledge about sexuality education. This public production of discourse is a feature of focus groups which involve participants discussing a chosen topic collaboratively rather than engaging in a two-way conversation with the researcher (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). It is this collective interaction that generates a rich source of data about the 'public' production of discourse. This occurs because focus groups reveal information about 'how accounts are articulated, censored, opposed and changed through social interaction and how this relates to peer communication and group norms' (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999, p. 5). When participants question each other, ask for clarification, laugh at or contest a remark, it is possible to see how knowledge is constituted in a group context.

Ten focus groups involving 81 participants were conducted with young people from school and community settings. Those at school were recruited from five secondary schools in rural and urban locations in the North Island. Two schools were designated a decile 10, two a decile 4 and one a decile 1 ranking. The heteronormative culture of schooling often makes it difficult to capture the voices of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth in this context (Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford, 2003). Some students are not 'out' at school and participating in a group discussion represents a vulnerable enterprise for them. To ensure the interests and concerns of this group were included, participants were also recruited from community organisations supporting gay, lesbian, bisexual and Takataapui¹ (Aspin, 2007) youth. Two of the ten focus groups were subsequently comprised of young people who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual. All focus groups were conducted with me and participants were volunteers. Young people chose how focus groups were comprised with all opting to talk in mixed gender groupings on the basis of friendship or convenience (i.e. the assigned time for discussion suited them).

Focus groups involved two parts, with the first comprising general open-ended questions about experiences of sexuality education. For instance, participants were asked their opinion about what makes a really good sexuality education programme and some of the most useful things they have learned. The aim was to encourage participants to think about sexuality education generally in readiness for a more pointed discussion about programme content. In the second half, more

comprehensive information was sought about the topics students felt were covered well or inadequately. Young people sorted 25 issues on cards under the following headings: 'good quality coverage', 'average quality coverage', 'poor coverage' and 'not taught'.

These topics were chosen from findings in the previous research. They involved issues interviewees felt they would like to know more about, such as 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners' and 'what sexual activity is – how to have sex and what it feels like'. They also included topics which might be seen to constitute a subordinate discourse of sexuality. These issues were unlikely to feature in students' current sexuality programmes. Issues in this category included: 'physical disability and sexuality', 'transgendered people' and 'bio-technologies such as In-vitro Fertilisation and sex change operations'. The aim of including these topics was to ascertain whether young people had any interest in knowing about them despite often having no previous knowledge in these areas. To determine those issues pertinent to senior school students, participants then categorised the same topics into piles of 'Should be Taught' and 'Not Relevant at Senior Level'. As the following chapters testify, discussion generated around the placement of cards provided useful insights into a public production of meanings about sexuality education.

Thinking sex: Data analysis

Setting aside the health educator data

While it had always been my intention for this research to prioritise young people's ideas, the challenge this posed was not realised until the data analysis stage. Interviews with sexual health workers and educators produced hundreds of pages of transcripts and a wealth of material about what adults deemed important regarding current and future sexuality education. These perspectives had been collected in order to complement young people's ideas and offer a more complete picture about the triumphs and flaws of programmes. As I sat literally immersed in pages of sexual health educator interviews and student focus groups transcripts, I realised I was faced with an ontological and political dilemma.

This quandary emerged from how I would present the words of sexual health educators and young people. Far from providing me with a more complete picture, I found significant discrepancies between what young people and many sexual health educators desired for sexuality education. This disjuncture was especially apparent in interviews with teachers who delivered sexuality education at school. While the

inclusion of pleasure had received the highest rating as a topic for future inclusion in student questionnaires, it was not a favourite for teachers. Most declared unease about the utility of discussing pleasure in class and indicated they would not feel comfortable with this proposition.

At the time of this revelation I was attempting to write a paper about including pleasure in sexuality education based on the current research findings. In endeavouring to represent both teachers' and students' perspectives I wrote about young people's desire for this topic and their teachers' reservations. Despite my best efforts to prioritise young people's perspectives by arguing that opening up spaces for consideration of pleasure might be useful in sexuality education, the paper read as if including pleasure was too problematic. The teachers' 'reasoning' tapped into powerful discourses about sexuality as dangerous and private that made young people's narratives appear frivolous and their ideas impossible. This result sat in direction tension with a research methodology which had endeavoured to centre young people's perspectives. I realised that no matter how I wrote up the findings, the voice of health educators carried an authority born from their status as 'responsible, experienced and paternal' adults that diluted the potency of young people's narratives. For this reason, I decided to set aside the data from health educators.

The theoretical premise for this decision is founded on the work of Jones and Jenkins (2008) and their interest in the politics of method. These researchers are concerned with the possible effects of what different approaches to text allow us to think. While the site for Jones and Jenkins's work diverges from the current study, the methodological dilemmas they face bear similarities. Jones and Jenkins's research is centred around understanding the educational relationship between indigenous and settler peoples in New Zealand and how to make sense of the archival materials documenting what are constituted as key events in this regard. The problem as these researchers deem it, does not lie in discerning the truth of what happened from conflicting accounts, nor delineating multiple explanations so they may sit alongside one another. What Jones and Jenkins are interested in is the ontological and political effects of 'foregrounding an entirely different material reality' (Jones and Jenkins, 2008, p. 126). This process isn't about radically reinterpreting the past in order to bring to light different indigenous and settler narratives. Rather, Jones and Jenkins (2008, p. 126) ask a question about method:

what occurs when we strategically foreground the material events over their interpretation? To put [it] another way, we have a deep

curiosity about whether the language of the *material* and *materialisation* might have different epistemological and political effects from the language of interpretation and the subject.

Rather than present their analysis of archival materials as just another interpretation, these researchers seek a reading that takes seriously the viewpoints of indigenous people and 'the real'.

To make this materialising reading Jones and Jenkins (2008) employ Butler's (1993) concept of 'materialisation' developed in relation to gendered bodies. Working at 'the limits of discourse', Butler contends that the material effects of 'sex' are a product of repeated regulatory norms. Jones and Jenkins (2008) apply this notion of reiteration to archival accounts of educational encounters in their own project. They explain that as they read numerous archival texts, talked with Maori about the events depicted and discussed their findings together:

we experienced a dramatic morphing of the textual scenes; a new *reality* materialised before us, peopled by characters who did not exist in the archive ... what we call a materialising scene appeared, producing not only another *interpretation* of the two events, but an entirely different and new set of *material events* in their place. (p. 129)

These researchers are careful to signal this reading is not about inserting a Maori perspective into essentially white settler accounts of educational encounters in order to claim a Maori 'voice' (Hertz, 1997). Instead, it is about endeavouring to allow 'the real' to enter debates about early educational events in ways that populate these stories with embodied people and material spaces.

The decision to put aside the health educator data rests on the idea of a materialising reading in several ways. What appeals to me about this approach is that it helps avoid the political impotence and stalemate of interpretative accounts. One way I could have approached these data was to offer health educators' *and* young people's views of sexuality education. This would have provided different interpretations of these programmes and in their entirety constituted 'the truth' or 'reality' of this subject. To fulfil my desire that young people's voices were prioritised, I might have utilised them as a critique of health educator views or employed them to 'fill the gaps' in adult accounts. Yet this approach was politically unsatisfactory for me. Social/structural relations of power mean that despite presenting health educator and

student perspectives as 'equal', they are not read as such. These power relations also mean that attempts to valorise and prioritise young people's perspectives become empty gestures, because they fail to rest on any 'potent' foundations of power.

From a materialising perspective, discarding the health educator data was not simply about valuing one interpretation over another. Instead, it was about creating a new *material* reality, based on my reading of these data. The morphing which Jones and Jenkins refer to above occurs at multiple research moments in the current study: my original perception of sexuality education based on findings from my prior research, interviewing health educators, listening to young people offer their accounts in focus groups, reading students' written survey responses, informally teaching and observing students and teachers at school and writing findings into this book. It might be argued that instead of a new reality, this morphing is simply the evolution of a particular interpretation of the research data. In the case of my research it is an interpretation that prioritises young people's views. However, like other social scientists (Arnot and Reay, 2007; Bragg, 2007) I believe a pure representation of young people's perspectives is an impossibility and in a materialising account a redundant undertaking. Like Jones and Jenkins, I want to contend that reading of data is not just a discursive process. Sexuality education has an irreducible materiality which exists in classroom practices and student/teacher embodiment. It is with this materiality that new realities can emerge, and by which the findings of this research are conceptualised.

And one final note. Health educators' thoughts are not missing from this book; they are inextricably part of it. The sixty-plus hours I spent interviewing this group cannot help but effect the morphing process that contributes to what these data about sexuality education mean. In some instances, the ideas of young people and health educators were commensurate. One example here is around who made the best sexuality educators, with both groups predominantly indicating that it's not who the educator is (i.e. their gender, age, professional status) but what they are like as people which is most important.

Doing 'it' differently: combining traditional and post-structural analytic frameworks

At face value, the methods employed in this research are relatively conventional. It was in their conceptualisation, application and the process of data interpretation that I hoped they might offer something more surprising. Debate about the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative

methodologies continue to rage in the social sciences and their combination is still viewed by some pure scientists with suspicion (Flick, 2006). With this divide in mind, I aimed to push the limits of quantitative analysis in the exploration of the current research's survey data.

Given the research's theoretical underpinnings of feminist post-structuralism, it may seem incongruous to employ a quantitative method like a questionnaire. However, there can be good reason for including statistical data which has currency in influencing governmental policy as a preferred source of evidence. Including a questionnaire was not only about broadening understandings from previous research, but held the potential to be more influential at the level of programme development and policy. However, I did not want to sacrifice the feminist post-structural underpinnings of the research and wished to experiment with how this framework might offer different insights about quantitative data. The result was the application of a feminist post-structural analysis of quantitative answers outlined below.

Feminist post-structuralism views young people's written and spoken responses as discursive texts (Weedon, 1987). The discourses contained within such texts offer socially organised frameworks of meaning 'that enable participants to "take up" discursive positions (e.g. as subject or object) in relation to other people, events and activities' (Willig, 1999, p. 114). It can be argued that this 'taking up' also occurs during the completion of questions in a survey. When participants select survey answers, they 'choose' discursive meanings which position them as subjects in particular ways. For instance, in response to the question, 'What topics would you like to know more about in sexuality education?', a participant might tick the option 'how to make sexual activity more enjoyable for both partners'. This answer discursively positions the participant as an 'active sexual subject' who might legitimately engage in sexual activity and give and/or receive sexual pleasure. The claim that by choosing certain answers participants take up particular positionings which offer insights about their sexual subjectivities is premised on the questionnaire design. As previously indicated, survey answers were formulated with the help of young people in a two-step process: firstly, by utilising the emergent themes from participants of the same age, in a previous project undertaken by the author (Allen, 2005d); secondly, through the piloting process which enabled survey answers to be revised in terms of issues included and reworded to reflect young people's interests and modes of expression.

This form of analysis enabled the achievement of dual methodological and political goals. It produced politically useful quantitative data and a more nuanced and complex analysis of survey respondents' answers. Discourse analysis of the survey answers could also be compared with talk generated in focus groups. For instance, it was possible to see whether the traditionally gendered sexual subjectivities implied by students' questionnaire answers were reflected in focus groups. This could occur in the way students undertook particular identity-work during focus group discussions to position themselves as masculine or feminine subjects. It could also be deduced in the kinds of discourses they drew on in the course of discussion to portray male and female sexuality in general. Like survey responses, focus group discussion produces particular discursive meanings about sexuality and the constitution of young people's sexual subjectivities. In this instance, positioning occurs through the 'purposive uptake of subject positions by speakers' who may 'deploy discursive constructions which afford positionings that help them meet objectives' (Willig, 1999, p. 114). Despite the disparities in the structure of qualitative and quantitative methods, the way in which young people's narratives constituted them as sexual subjects was predominately similar across focus groups and survey methods.

Employing post-structural analysis to closed-ended survey questions is not without its flaws. There is no guarantee that how I read the subject positions offered by a discourse an answer draws on is also the way the respondent has interpreted it. For example, take the question 'Do you think year 12 and 13 students (6th and 7th formers) should continue to receive sexuality education? Students could tick 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know'. In selecting 'yes' the respondent could be constituted in a number of ways. Some possibilities are: as sexually ignorant and needing more education on this topic; as sexually knowledgeable but concerned for fellow students who they deem need more education; as sexually knowledgeable but wanting to learn more deeply about this subject. While this question provided space for students to explain why they had selected their answer, this did not always elucidate their own subjectivity. The fluidity of discursive positioning also means that how a participant answers in one closed-ended question may contradict the way they are positioned in another. What this means is that there are no definitive answers about how young people view themselves as sexual. These conundrums, however, are not confined to discursive analysis of closed-ended survey questions, but are an issue with which discourse analysis grapples more generally (Willig, 1999).

In the ensuing chapters data generated from these methods are explored. What this chapter has hoped to demonstrate is the way the institutional context of schooling, social ideas about sexuality and youth, and the research methodology, shapes what emerges in the pages that follow.

3

‘They Think you Shouldn’t be Having Sex Anyway’: Young People’s Critique of Sexuality Education Content

This chapter addresses the debate about what should constitute the content of sexuality education. It begins by providing an overview of the nature of this debate and how perspectives within it are configured. The first part of the chapter attempts to understand why this debate exists and how it is conceptualised. I acknowledge the potency of this debate, its implications for other aspects of sexuality education and the constructed and political nature of curricula generally. How this debate is conceptualised is addressed by delineating a series of discourses which constitute various positions articulated within it. I argue that existing academic literature and other voices in this discussion (i.e. school management, caregivers, community organisations) draw on a series of discourses conceptualised as the ‘moral right’, ‘health pragmatism’ and ‘sexual liberalism’. Such discourses mark the existing landscape of content debates, against which young people articulate their own content preferences.

While the first half of the chapter contextualises and locates young people’s preferences for sexuality education content, the second explores these in detail. Such preferences have traditionally been ignored in public discussion of this debate (Allred and David, 2007; Powell, 2007). For this reason, the second half of the chapter focuses on what senior school students determine as important and relevant programme content from focus group and survey data. Participants’ suggestions provide a critique of current sexuality education provision that is clinical, de-eroticised and didactic. Young people’s calls for content about emotions in relationships, teenage parenthood, abortion and

how to make sexual activity pleasurable, offer insights into how they understand themselves as sexual subjects. Student responses position them as having the right to make their own decisions about sexual activity. These narratives also assert their right to access knowledge that will foster their engagement in relationships that are mutually physically and emotionally pleasurable. This positioning sits in conflict with the preferred non-sexual identity young people are offered by the official culture of many schools (Allen, 2007a). It is proposed that this tension has implications for how programmes constitute student sexuality and their effectiveness in empowering young people to view their sexuality positively and make positive sexual decisions.

The 'nature' of content debates

The question of what should constitute the content of programmes remains the most potent of debates surrounding sexuality education. Prior to sexuality education's more permanent inception in schools, the most fervent issue was whether it should be part of the curriculum. Now a routine part of school curricula in countries such as England, Australia, New Zealand and the United States the issue of whether sexuality education should be taught is redundant (although at which age it should be introduced is still contested; Alldred and David, 2007). The controversy which beleaguers this curriculum area is now channelled in a new direction. Debate subsequently transpires over what issues should be covered. This question raises concerns around the appropriateness of topics for particular students, in terms of age, ethnicity and gender and the form this content should take. For example, should students be taught about 'pleasure' in discussions of sexual activity that have traditionally been confined to reproductive matters?

The potency of this debate is partly attributable to the way 'content' has ramifications for other features of sexuality education. What is taught as part of this curriculum influences debates around, for example, who are the best people to deliver sexuality education and the composition of classes. The decision to separate girls and boys in sexuality education has often been premised on the kind of material being delivered. If topics are seen to have more relevance to girls, or deemed to invoke modesty, then classroom composition maybe organised accordingly. My own experience of sexuality education in New Zealand in the early 1980s saw girls and boys separated for what was colloquially termed 'the period talk'. This involved a female representative from a tampon

manufacturer explaining why periods occur and how to 'manage' them. More recently, there have been renewed calls for gender separation for at least some programme components (Hilton, 2007; Measor, Tiffin and Miller, 2000; Strange et al., 2003). Single-sex groupings are advocated on the grounds they facilitate more open discussion and can be less embarrassing (see Chapter 4 for a more extensive consideration of this debate). Type of content may also dictate who is regarded most appropriate to deliver information. Some students prefer certain content to be delivered by a teacher of their own gender (Biddle and Forrest, 1997). For instance, some boys identify a preference for male teachers to traverse issues around shaving, the voice breaking and erections because women have not had these experiences (Blake and Brown, 2004). The type of content in sexuality education has repercussions for how other debates around delivery of programmes are articulated.

Debates about the content of sexuality education are fought in diverse arenas. There is an enduring interest in this topic at the levels of policy, school management, school community, within academic literature and the media (Thomson, 1994). The media's depiction of content debates often highlights certain topics as 'inappropriate' and 'obscene' (Simey and Wellings, 2008). Several years ago the British media expressed concern that oral sex was being 'promoted' in sex and relationships education to those under sixteen (see 'Government urges under 16s to experiment with oral sex', *The Times*, 21 February 2003, p. 1). Recently in New Zealand, sexuality programmes designed for 9- and 10-year-olds were criticised for discussing 'actual sex' (McLeod, 2009). Such reports call programmes' effectiveness into question by drawing links between the appropriateness of this content and the continuing rise in incidences of STIs and unintended pregnancy.

Thinking theoretically about content debates

Like any area of school curricula sexuality education is 'not simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge' (Apple, 1993, p. 222). As Apple explains, 'it is always part of a *selective tradition*, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political and economic conflicts, tensions and compromises that organize and disorganize people' (Apple, 1993, p. 222). Who makes these decisions and on what basis is a complex issue. The knowledge which appears in sexuality education is that which is socially valued. How such knowledge becomes 'socially valued' is a consequence of historical circumstance, social, cultural and economic context and the

exercise of power. As Harrison and Hillier note, 'sexuality education is not taught in a vacuum...what is taught and the ways in which it is taught reflect larger cultural norms' (1999, p. 283). This point is evidenced by the fact that the type of sexuality most readily assumed and discussed in sexuality education is heterosexuality. Heteronormativity (Warner, 1993) renders heterosexuality the socially valued sexuality, resulting in the dominant interests of the heterosexual majority being reflected in programme content.

When something is constituted as 'legitimate knowledge' through its inclusion in the curriculum, knowledge which fails to make an appearance is simultaneously de-legitimised. The inclusion of some knowledges at the expense of others has the effect of subordinating and devaluing that which is left out. Thomson and Scott (1991) contend that 'the power of school sex education may be in what it omits rather than what it includes and consequently the boundaries which it draws between areas of sexuality which can be spoken about and those which remain shrouded in silence' (p. 9). Students do not simply learn from that which is directly taught in sexuality education, i.e. the officially prescribed curriculum. They also learn from silences, which communicate the unspeakable nature of some subjects. In the American context, Fine argues that, 'The naming of desire, pleasure, or sexual entitlement, particularly for females, barely exists in the formal agenda of public schooling on sexuality' (Fine, 1992, p. 35). This silence, or 'missing discourse', fails to convey young women's entitlement to sexual pleasure (Fine, 1992, p. 32). As demonstrated later in this chapter, what is left out of the curriculum not only communicates to students what is valued but can have repercussions for their sexual subjectivities and practices.

The *selective tradition* of sexuality education is intensified by the minimal time it is afforded in academic timetables. Teachers often lament that too few hours are granted to sexuality education because other subjects enjoy greater status and subsequently more attention (Alldred, David and Smith, 2003; Strange et al., 2006). With negligible time to teach students, the knowledge that sexuality education might potentially contain is further restricted. These time constraints often mean that more controversial content gets discarded because it is difficult and subsequently more time consuming. Content selected for inclusion in sexuality education is clearly impacted by temporal constraints.

The content of sexuality education is always subject to contestation by groups with diverse agendas and contradictory perspectives about

the purpose of this education (Bilton et al., 1996, p. 330). Unlike less controversial areas of the curriculum such as physics, sexuality education seems to invite public opinion and engagement. This situation is partly attributable to the social constitution of sexuality as something 'private' and 'controversial'. The insertion of a subject considered 'private' into the public context of schooling makes it vulnerable to public scrutiny because it transgresses the public/private divide. As sexuality is seen as controversial, it also appears to warrant attention that a subject deemed benign escapes. Community engagement with sexuality education is mandated at a policy level in New Zealand. Sexuality education is one of the few curriculum areas in which the school must consult with its external community to determine content and delivery (see section 105C of the Education Act 1964). As a consequence of this consultation competing interests are brought to bear on the matter of curriculum content.

Contesting the curriculum: diverse perspectives

Sexuality education is a site of competing political interests comprising parents/caregivers, teachers, school management, educational policy-makers, civil liberties organisations, conservative and liberal groups. Members within each group do not always display a consensus about content preferences (Kirby and Michaelson, 2008). Conversely, individuals from different groups may share some perspectives about these debates. In recognition of this complexity, I conceptualise particular content debate perspectives as drawing on a series of discourses. While these discourses might be variously conceptualised, I refer to them as the 'moral right', 'health pragmatist' and 'sexual liberalism'.

Given this discursive conceptualisation it might seem incongruent to dedicate the second half of this chapter to examining the perspectives of young people. In isolating young people *as a group*, I do not want to imply a consensus in their preferences for sexuality education. Clearly, young people draw variously on discourses of the 'moral right', 'health pragmatism' and 'sexual liberalism'. For an exploration of the way young people's ideas about sexuality education are themselves diverse and can reflect dominant social norms see Allen (2007b). As outlined in Chapter 1, the history of sexuality education debates is one in which young people's voices recede relative to those adult-defined pronouncements regarding programme design and delivery. My intention is to address this adult-youth binary embedded within sexuality education design, by privileging the conventionally silenced

voices of young people. To do this it is necessary to address them as a group while simultaneously recognising internal diversity and complexity in their perspectives.

Discourses of the moral right

Discourses of the moral right assert that ultimately sexuality education is best undertaken by the family at home. If sexuality education must occur at school, then its aims should be consistent with political conservatism and/or religious doctrine. Accordingly, certain issues such as birth control, abortion, homosexuality and extra-marital or pre-marital sex should not be broached (Kirby and Michaelson, 2008). If they are mentioned, they should be decreed 'wrong' and discouraged (Rolston, 2004). As an example of this moral right discourse, the Catholic Church in Ireland describes homosexuality as a tendency towards 'an intrinsic evil'. When the government requested schools begin developing policies around Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in 1995/1996 the Church as patron of the majority of schools, responded:

In the formation of its policy [the Catholic School] should reflect the Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters. Even more fundamentally, it needs to be specific in excluding approaches which are inconsistent with the very foundations of Catholic moral thought. (Irish Bishops Conference, 1997, 3, cited in O'Higgins-Norman, 2009, p. 382)

Those who draw on discourses of the moral right often view sexuality education as a means of promoting religious teachings around marriage, sexuality and relationships. With this purpose in mind, sexuality education content should conform to these teachings with the aim of spreading political conservatism and/or religious doctrine.

For those who mobilise a moral right discourse, abstinence-only programmes are endorsed as the solution to content debates. The focus of abstinence-only programmes is, 'teaching the social, psychological and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity' (Rose, 2005, p. 1208). While abstinence-only programmes operate all over the world, they have been especially prevalent in the United States where under the George Bush administration only programmes with this focus received government funding (Rose, 2005). Danger and fear are the primary tools used by abstinence-only education to persuade students of the benefits of saving sexual activity until (heterosexual) marriage (McClelland and Fine, 2008a). Rose describes how this tactic

is employed within the abstinence-only video *No Second Chance*, which juxtaposes discussions of having sex outside of marriage with images of gay men dying of AIDS (Rose, 2005, p. 1208). Also popular in these programmes is the recounting of condom failure rates as a means of promoting 'the only safe sex, is no sex' message. The only 'legitimate' content in sexuality education for those who draw on the moral right discourse is that which advocates abstinence.

Discourses of health pragmatism and sexual liberalism

A discourse of health pragmatism also permeates debates around the content of sexuality education. This discourse is primarily concerned with securing the health of the population by ensuring it is free of sexually transmissible infections and sexual health related problems. The aim of sexuality education as constituted by this discourse is to contribute to the sexual health of the population by informing them about the negative effects of sexual activity. The logic encompassed by this discourse is that if students are provided with the right knowledge about how to avoid these (so-called) negative consequences, then incidences will be reduced.

Governments have often favoured this discourse because it promises economic and social benefits (Monk, 2001). Sexually transmissible infections are costly for governments, in terms of treatment and the development of new antibiotics (Ministry of Health, 2001). Incidences of sexually transmissible infections can also have implications for population growth, with some infections producing infertility or pregnancy complications that require expensive treatment or long-term post-natal care (Ministry of Health, 2001). From a health pragmatist perspective, sexuality education acts a preventative against sexual disease and 'negative' sexual outcomes of sexuality deemed economically draining and counterproductive to nation-building.

When the discourse of health pragmatism is mobilised in debates on programme content, it reflects this preoccupation with promoting students' sexual health. Appropriate content therefore constitutes learning about 'safer sex' and condom use, in order to avoid sexually transmissible infections. Unlike discourses of the moral right, content around contraception such as what forms are available, and how to use them, is not deferred on moral grounds. Rather, within a health pragmatist discourse, this information is considered health enhancing, even life-saving, as in the case of HIV/AIDS.

The focus on sexual and reproductive health in discourses of health pragmatism is buffered by medical and scientific discourses. As a

consequence, the content of sexuality education advocated within this discourse is technical and scientific. For instance, students are expected to learn 'facts' about sexually transmissible infections in ways that are disembodied and sanitised. This medical and scientific influence is seen in classroom activities which involve matching names of sexually transmissible infections with their symptoms, or recalling statistics around incidences of HIV/AIDs (Allen, 2005d).

Like the content advocated by a moral discourse, a health pragmatist approach may resort to fear to impress upon students the health dangers of such infections. It is common practice in many sexuality education programmes in Western countries to provide students with photographs of sexually transmissible infections (Burns and Torre, 2004). Despite displaying genitals, these images are distinctly un-sexual in their magnification of sores and pustules. The point of these garish images is to repulse, and subsequently incite fear of contracting an infection. A discourse of health pragmatism advocates a 'facts-based' and medicalised approach to sexuality education content, supported by science.

It is out of a critique of this medicalised approach to sexuality education content that a discourse of sexual liberalism emerges. Deemed 'progressive', this discourse works to distinguish itself from what it constitutes as the repressive and medicalised concentrations of moral right and health pragmatist approaches. Those who expound a discourse of sexual liberalism maintain the aims of sexuality education are to promote students' sexual health in the broadest sense. This means education that attends to the needs of the whole person, including their psychological, emotional and social welfare in order to foster 'sexual well-being'.

This discourse is found in the New Zealand Health and Physical Education Curriculum in the distinction it makes around a shift in terminology from 'sex education' to 'sexuality education'. 'Sex education' is seen as 'generally referring only to the physical dimension of sexuality education', an approach historically adopted by New Zealand programmes. In contrast, 'sexuality education' encourages students to 'consider how the physical, social, mental and emotional, and spiritual dimensions of sexuality influence their well-being' (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 38). The implication of this change is that programmes no longer simply draw on discourses of health pragmatism where only biological aspects of sexual health are addressed. Instead, the teaching of sexuality education must now recognise sexual health as encompassing other dimensions of self, such as those that are emotional and spiritual.

Where a discourse of sexual liberalism views health pragmatism as deficient is in its inability to cater for the embodied and emotional aspects of human sexuality. Health pragmatists critique existing sexuality education content for its concentration on a physical and technical approach to sexuality (Giami et al., 2006). This emphasis can be seen in diagrams of sexual organs which only label parts related to reproduction, rather than those purely associated with pleasure. Until recently, for example, the clitoris has been missing from many depictions of female genitalia in sexuality education (Diorio and Munro, 2003). These pictures have conventionally been line diagrams rather than photographs, the latter of which are more embodied and sensual (Brewster and Wylie, 2008). The effect of line diagrams is to disembodify and de-eroticise bodily portrayals in sexuality education materials. A discourse of sexual liberalism constitutes this as detrimental to sexual well-being as it fails to recognise the whole person (i.e. it reduces corporeal sexual understanding to reproductive capacity) and denies pleasure which can have health benefits (Tepper, 2000).

The kind of content which those drawing on a sexual liberalism discourse argue for is that which is characterised as 'sex-positive' rather than 'sex-negative'. A sex-positive approach renders sexuality as something that is normal, rather than shameful as it is posited in some moral right discourses. Like moral right discourses, sexuality maybe understood as an innate characteristic, but this is viewed positively as something to be enjoyed rather than denied or repressed (Ingham, 2005b). Expressions of sexuality are also free to be experienced in all circumstances that do not involve coercion, violence or abuse. This view of sexuality translates into programmes that should positively address 'sexual pleasure' and 'sexual diversity' and provide students with essential skills to maintain their emotional and social well-being (Buston, 2004; Fine and McClelland, 2006; Kiely, 2005; Selwyn and Powell, 2006). For instance, those who draw on a discourse of sexual liberalism in content debates argue that sexual activity should be discussed within the context of relationships and other social circumstances, rather than in isolation (Forrest, Strange and Oakley, 2004; Sinkinson, 2009). Providing students with skills to first access and then employ different forms of contraception as well as sexual negotiating skills is another focus (Abel and Fitzgerald, 2006). Those drawing on a discourse of sexual liberalism are also likely to argue for the inclusion of topics deemed controversial like 'abortion' and 'teenage parenthood'. These calls are made on the grounds young people have a right to such knowledge and to make

their own decisions about whether or not they employ it (Alldred and David, 2007; Allen, 2008; Measor et al., 2000). The aim of a sexually liberal approach to sexuality education is to produce sexual subjects who are sexually healthy and competently skilled to experience their sexuality in responsible and pleasurable ways.

The content debate: young people's perspectives

This section shifts from conceptualising content debates in sexuality education to a focus on young people's perspectives about what topics programmes should contain. I examine what 16–19-year-olds deem relevant for senior level sexuality education drawing on questionnaire and focus group data. This section begins with an analysis of sexuality issues participants wanted programmes to include, and why these were identified as important. An examination of topics young people specified as unnecessary at senior level and justifications for these omissions is also undertaken. From this analysis, young people's critique of sexuality education emerges in a way that positions them as *sexual subjects* who are legitimately sexual, instead of preferably non-sexual.

Topics students wanted to know more about

How to make sexual activity more enjoyable for both partners

The above topic was selected by the greatest number of survey participants (56 per cent) as something they wanted to know more about. Focus group participants identified talk about 'pleasure' as missing in school sexuality education. Young people demonstrated an awareness that official discourses of sexuality education were dominated by a biological and risk management approach which denied pleasure as important or mentionable. The following discussion between young people in a community focus group indicates this deficit and its consequences for young people's experiences of sexuality.

Rosemary: ...you do get a couple of teachers who say well, you know sex is supposed to be fun but it's not always and you shouldn't be having it anyway (*all laugh*)

Aleisha: It's supposed to be after you're married

Rosemary: Yeah

Louisa: So what would you have wanted to know about pleasure and desire?

Paul: That it's an okay thing, that everyone experiences it

Rosemary: Yeah

Paul: And there are ways to get it

Louisa: And you want to know the ways?

Paul: Well...

Rosemary: They should actually mention the word orgasm at least once

David: Yeah

Rosemary: Because they don't...I, this is weird, I don't actually, and this is truthfully, I'd never heard of the word orgasm until I was like fourteen...

Aleisha: Me neither

Rosemary:...I didn't even know what one was. No one told me that there was a pleasurable side to this that you could actually do this...

Aleisha: Yeah I heard about your boyfriend blah, blah, blah orgasm...

Rosemary: Or the internet, I found out on the internet on a, on a...

David: Oh yeah, I find out about everything on the internet...the internet, what would we do without it

Rosemary: You know you never get told about it

Paul: Yeah it's stating basic human wants and needs

Louisa: And what do you want to know about pleasure?

Rosemary: It's not a bad thing, telling you that pleasure's not a bad thing

Paul: Yeah, exactly

(Community Focus Group, ages 16–19)

Participants indicated 'pleasure' was an absence in their sexuality education, or only mentioned, and subsequently legitimated, with reference to marriage. If acknowledged, pleasure was cast as 'something bad', a characterisation dating back to early Christianity where sex was equated with sin (Hawkes, 2004). For Rosemary, this deficit resulted in not knowing what an 'orgasm' (a term she conflated with sexual pleasure) was until she was fourteen. While a lack of positive references to 'pleasure' were reported across focus groups, their obscurity was intensified for this group because they identified as gay and lesbian. When Aleisha did hear the word orgasm, it was with reference to 'boyfriends', making this difficult to equate with lesbian experience. Positive references to pleasure are scarcer at school for same-gender attracted youth. Same-gender attracted students are already cast as 'deviant' and therefore invisible within schooling cultures, making the possibility of their sexual pleasure even more unfathomable in this context (Hillier, Turner and Mitchell, 2005).

The importance young people placed on knowing about sexual pleasure is glimpsed in the above discussion. When this information was not obtained at school, or presented in a way that failed to reflect participants' sense of lived reality, they were motivated to seek it elsewhere. In the above case, Rosemary and David turned to the internet. According to Hillier, Kurdas and Horsley, (2001) this can be a valuable source of support for youth who are denied information from more conventional avenues. Two-thirds of same-gender attracted youth in Hillier et al.,s (2001) Australian study specified the internet an 'important' or 'very important' source of sexuality information. Similarly, research in New Zealand indicates that heterosexual youth (particularly young men) are increasingly using the internet to locate information about sex and sexuality (Allen, 2001). Seeking information about sexual pleasure beyond school reveals young people's sense of its importance in their lives.

Details of what young people wanted to know about sexual activity and pleasure emerged in focus groups. Not all focus groups talked about pleasure candidly. Some references were more implicit or nuanced, conveyed through humour or innuendo. These conversations may have been difficult due to the social perception that young people should be preferably non-sexual (Monk, 2001; Silin, 1995) and the fact that talking about pleasure can expose intimate details about the sexual self. As these inhibitions were more apparent in the institutionalised setting of schooling, the most candid and articulate discussions occurred in community focus groups. These participants expressed a need for schools to acknowledge that sexual activity could be pleasurable and indicate how pleasure could be attained.

Louisa: Okay, pleasure and desire, what do you want to be taught about in terms of pleasure and desire?

Rosemary: That it can be pleasurable...

David: Yeah

Rosmeary:...and that it's not just you know reproductive...

Aleisha: Like where everything is that you can get pleasure from

Rosmary: Yeah

Louisa: You mean like on your body?

Rosemary: Yeah, oh definitely

Aleisha: Like the g zone stuff

Paul: Yeah, and maybe if like someone talked about it like they've actually done it, instead of talking about it like it's some kind of scientific thing that they...

Aleisha: Yeah

Paul: You look at them and you wonder if they've ever done it you know like but if you hear people talking about 'I do this blah, blah, blah' like you know, snap on a video like of just some normal person talking about it that...

David: I mean who ever knew the neck could be so, such nice stuff

Aleisha: And the ears...

David: Oh the ears (*to Aleisha*) I told you about that aye (*pause*) god (*said as if in raptures*)

Aleisha: Yeah, ears

(Community Focus Group, ages 16–19)

Participants critique sexuality education which presents sexual activity 'like it's some kind of scientific thing' for being de-eroticised and disembodied. Their calls to include 'real' experiences of pleasure seek to embody sexuality education in a way that programmes which favour a technical and risk management approach negate. These participants assert they desire knowledge about how bodies might engender pleasure as when Aleisha says she'd like to know, 'where everything is that you can get pleasure from'. David also infers his own experience of embodied sexual pleasure when checking he's told Aleisha how he'd discovered 'ears and necks' as highly pleasurable. This talk positions young people as embodied sexual subjects. Desiring to know how sexual pleasure is achieved invokes a sexual and embodied self that casts sexual activity and a right to experience sexual pleasure as legitimate pursuits for young people.

This positioning stands in stark contrast to how some teachers in the research perceived young people's sexuality. As a means of reciprocating information shared by participants with the researcher, reports of research findings were individually prepared for schools. These comprised analysis of data intended to support health teachers to design and deliver future sexuality programmes. Teachers' reactions to the first place ranking of 'how to make sexual activity more enjoyable for both partners' conveyed their perceptions of student sexuality. A common response was, 'I'm sure they do want to know more about that', in a tone implying this request could not be taken seriously. Young people's interest in this information was sometimes judged as inappropriate (in some cases insolent) and too controversial for proper consideration. These responses positioned young people as preferably non-sexual, without entitlement to information about how to make sexual activity pleasurable. Monk (2001) explains this attitude echoes a dominant sexual discourse which 'upholds the "impossibility" of child sexuality¹ ... [that] reflects not so much the needs of young people, but

rather, the sensitivities and anxieties of adults' (Monk, 2001, p. 279). The implication that interest in sexual pleasure was mischievous and therefore inappropriate positions young people as unable to be taken seriously and not trustworthy to determine their own needs and interests. This constitution of student sexual identity sits in tension with participants' presentation of self as legitimately sexual and interested in achieving positive sexual experiences.

Abortion and teenage parenthood

Two other issues which appeared in the top five participants wanted to know more about were abortion (ranked second, with 54 per cent of participants ticking this option) and teenage parenthood (ranked fourth, 51 per cent named this). When talking about abortion participants described this topic as rarely mentioned in sexuality education. Some received information in other subjects like biology or religious education but generally there was dissatisfaction with this coverage. A main criticism was the biased nature of material, where the prevailing message was that abortion was morally wrong and should never have to be contemplated. As the following young women reveal, the 'evil' of abortion was often portrayed as an inevitable and direct outcome of sexual intercourse being 'wrong' for young people.

Louisa: What kinds of messages did you get around abortion?

Chelsea: It's bad and evil and don't do it

Kylie: Yeah negatives, so don't get into the position where you have to do something like that

Ruth: Yeah, don't have sex so you don't have to have an abortion and kill your baby and all the rest of it

(Decile 10, Private, Co-educational School, ages 16–17)

A participant in another focus group indicated that her class had watched an anti-abortion video showing this procedure. The film had left such an impression on her that she could still recall its title, *The Silent Scream*. Some resentment was detectable in participants' accounts of being denied or given partial information about abortion. One-sided approaches were sometimes interpreted as denying young people the right to choose how they felt about this issue. Aleisha explained this feeling when she said:

It's bad. That's what we got told, abortion is bad. We don't get the (*pause*), the only time I ever heard it was good was that teacher Miss

Kelly that I told you about who was really open, well she was telling us about when she was 20 and she got pregnant (*pause*) and she had an abortion and that was the only time I ever heard about anyone having a choice and actually the choice being there. (18 years, Community Focus Group)

The importance of being recognised by school as able to make their own decisions about abortion appeared to underpin participants' suggestions for how this subject might be incorporated in the curriculum.

This sentiment was succinctly captured by Cindy who explained sexuality education should include, 'what options you have if you like, if you want to have an abortion and stuff like that, what you can do and how to deal with it' (16 years, Decile 1, Co-educational School). Another participant indicated that, 'we don't know any of the technical stuff we just know like that it's bad, that's about it and they just tell you not to do it' (Timara, 16 years, Decile 10, Private, Co-educational). Participants also noted it would be helpful to receive information about where to go for an abortion, details about the procedure like its length, 'or even just where to seek the information, where you start' (Chelsea, 16 years, Decile 10, Private, Co-educational). Non-biased information and an opportunity to hear a diversity of abortion perspectives was also requested. This approach was deemed optimal because, 'you can sit there and think about your own [opinions] rather than just having this one opinion going blah, blah, blah' (Karen, 16 years, Decile 10, Private, Co-educational). These suggestions communicate young people's desire for more comprehensive coverage of this topic and acknowledgement that they have a right to make their own decisions about abortion. This view is supported by New Zealand law where a person under 16 does not need parental consent for a legal abortion (see section 25A the Guardianship Act 1968 – amended in 1977).

Young people wanted to know more about teenage parenthood for similar reasons to seeking information about abortion. Sexuality education was thought to lack support and information for those who become teenage parents, instead giving priority to preventing this outcome. In the following discussion participants identify the underpinning philosophy of much sexuality education, which is prevention of 'negative' outcomes of sexual activity.

Haley: ...with teenage parenthood they say this is how to avoid it, but once you're in the situation there's nothing. It's like alright you are a 'no hoper' now.

Sandra: They don't even give you anywhere to go, like if you get into this situation you can go here and talk to these people and...

Heidi: ...people will help you and give you information like if you do become pregnant then there's special schools that you can go to where you can still get your education

Haley: Yeah and abortion stuff

(Decile 10, Co-educational School, 16–17 years)

Haley detects what can be an underlying message of prevention-focused programmes where those who fail to heed its warnings are cast as 'no-hopers'. Recognition of this intimation surfaced in other focus groups when Rosemary remarked that in sexuality education, 'I reckon you get told that teenage girls are bad and sluts, having their babies and stuff' (18 years, Community Focus Group). This positioning can be disempowering for those who become teenage parents, offering a negative sense of self. These kinds of messages which render teen parents as 'irresponsible' and 'problems' also contribute to the social stigmatisation of this group.

Denying young people information about being a teenage parent and what support is available fails to recognise the reality of their lives. This reality is that some will become teenage parents and will engage in sexual activity for this purpose. Examining the way in which teenage pregnancy is discursively constituted in New Zealand, Cherrington and Breheny (2005) explain how a sense of young people's agency and choice is missing from such constructions:

The absence of any recognition of the possibility of agency or choice in teenage pregnancy, coupled with constructions of young people 'at risk', bring a subtle inflection of legitimized adult (parental) authority to any interventionist stance. These young people are being positioned as needing (adult-authoritative) protection, either from their own unconsidered actions or what is acting on them. (p. 97)

Sexuality education, as 'an adult/authoritative, interventionist stance' can perpetuate these dominant discourses of teenage pregnancy by only offering negative portrayals of teenage parenthood. Highlighting the challenges of this situation serves as a strategy to dissuade young people from engaging in unprotected sex. Some participants recognised this negative emphasis and endeavoured to counteract these messages. The conversation above between Haley and Heidi reveals that participants wanted to know how to cope with teenage parenthood, what support is

available and that this situation holds more hope than an end to their lives. Heidi alludes to this sense of hope and positive self-identity for pregnant teens when she offers that, 'there's special schools that you can go to where you can still get your education'. Like their proposals for including abortion in sexuality education, participants sought more positive information about teenage parenthood which subsequently offered them a measure of 'choice'.

Through their assertions for more and positive information about abortion and teenage pregnancy, participants are constituted as subjects with agency. This positioning implies a right to comprehensive information, so they might be self-determining in these matters. This constitution of self provides more agency than subject positions offered by sexuality education, where prevailing discourses proclaim abortion 'wrong' and teenage pregnancy 'a problem' to be solved. The protective and risk management approach of such programmes offers young people limited and negative understandings of themselves as sexual subjects, which may not register with their own sense of self and entitlement. This lack of congruence may contribute to young people's disengagement from sexuality education. Limiting young people's choices through partial information may also appear didactic rather than empowering. Being told what to do and think about abortion and teenage pregnancy infantilises young people wishing to develop a sense of autonomous identity. Such positioning may also be counterproductive to fostering young people's ability to make positive sexual decisions and view themselves positively.

Emotions in relationships and breaking up

'Dealing with relationship break-ups' (54 per cent of participants named this) and the issue of 'emotions in relationships' (51 per cent) were ranked third and fifth as topics participants most wanted to know more about. Disparities existed between focus groups over whether relationships and emotions had been covered in sexuality education. Some participants indicated these elements had been addressed, while others described this content missing.

Even when sexuality education included information on relationships and emotions participants often appeared dissatisfied with this coverage. Some felt emotions and relationships were addressed within a moral discourse where sexual activity was permitted and fulfilling only when 'love' was part of a relationship. Participants viewed this linking of sexual activity and emotions as offering the following prescription; 'I

think we are almost taught that sex is love, like cause they always go on about do it with a special person that you really love and all that sort of stuff' (Ruth, 16 years, Private Co-educational School). In another focus group of community participants this approach to student sexuality and emotions in relationships was talked about in more depth.

Louisa: How come you placed relationships and emotions in the 'poor coverage' pile?

Claire: Oh they never went into it in our school, that's what I was thinking they don't actually teach you like how to have a good relationship and (*pause*) how to relate to people and stuff

Jessica: But what we get told is that there are relationships and people get married when they have them

Andrew: Yeah (*laugh*) and emotions like ...love is the ultimate thing and you can only do that once you get married

Jessica: Yeah and like the relations thing isn't really there for like straight kids either like, they don't teach anyone how to relate to the opposite sex at all or anything like that...

(Community Focus Group, ages 16–18)

This discussion demonstrates the diversity in young people's experience of learning about emotions and relationships, with Claire missing out on this information while Jessica and Andrew received it. Andrew and Jessica critique this coverage for being narrowly confined to heterosexuality and marriage, and morally imbued with an insistence on love as a prerequisite to sex. Within this discourse, marriage is presented as the only sanctioned relationship ('we get told there are relationships and people get married') in which love as 'the ultimate thing' makes sex respectable. As marriage is conventionally equated with heterosexuality, this message invisibilises gay and lesbian identity and an exploration of emotions in same-gender relationships. Also implied is that if heterosexual marriage is where love occurs, then this emotional experience (and the sexual union it legitimates) are not possibilities for gay and lesbian students. These negative messages may contribute to a sense of isolation which some gay and lesbian youth report experiencing at school (Hillier, Turner and Mitchell, 2005).

What young people wanted to know about emotions and relationships was as Claire suggests above, 'How to have a good relationship and how to relate to people'. Other participants mentioned the importance of how to handle specific emotional issues such as ending a relationship.

In the following discussion participants reveal how learning skills to manage this situation were perceived as highly beneficial.

Timara: They don't really tell you that much about relationships about like how to deal with breaking up with someone or anything like that

Sinita: Yeah I know

Timara: The talk like you get with your friends and family and magazines...

Chelsea: Yeah

Louisa: Would that be useful information for senior school students?

Timara: Yeah

Chelsea: Yeah it would

Sinita: It affects so many people

Cindy: They just go on and on in this relationship because they don't know how like to dump the person...

Chelsea: And they are scared like if they break-up cause like quite often you'll have a relationship where you still want to be friends with them but like you don't know how to go about doing that

(Private Co-educational School, 16–17 years)

In asserting an interest in knowing about emotions in relationships and how to cope when one ends, young people appear to contradict some common assumptions. These are beliefs that youth engage in relationships simply to experiment sexually and that they are emotionally immature and selfish. Instead, through their talk participants are constituted as also invested in the emotional aspects of relationships and how to best manage these. These findings corroborate other research indicating young people's relationships are not uniformly fleeting and devoid of emotional investment (Allen, 2004b; Morris and Fuller, 1999).

Topics students did not want to know more about

Issues which ranked lowest in the list of those participants wanted to know more about cohered around the technical and clinical aspects of sexuality, such as 'reproduction', 'periods' and 'puberty'. Focus group discussions implied these topics were considered redundant for senior school students for whom puberty and first periods were a thing of the past. Participants presented themselves as faced with a different set of concerns such as entering longer term relationships and engaging in sexual activity which necessitated other skills and knowledge.

Participants' sense of the redundancy of these topics also appeared related to this material having already been comprehensively covered. Prior to electing what topics they wanted to know more about, the survey asked them to rate how well each of the same topics had been covered at school. The top five topics most students noted as being 'covered very well' were: sexually transmissible infections, puberty, reproduction, condoms and contraception as well as the effects of drugs and alcohol. As the following discussion demonstrates, schools' thorough coverage of these issues was also mentioned in focus groups.

Louisa: Uhm if you think about some of the things that sex education has covered really well, what sorts of things do you think you've learned really well from sex education so far?

Maya: STDs [sexually transmissible diseases]

Pita: Yep

Maya: We get that hammered into us all the time

Teresa: And drugs and don't smoke cigarettes and don't drink lots and all of that sort of stuff that doesn't sort of relate... (*trails off*)

Tess: One of the messages like they've done like the safe thing really well, I think like they always like say to have safe sex like all the time

Teresa: Yeah

Maya: Always know like, where to get like contraception from
(Decile 1, Co-educational School, 17–18 years)

Maya's use of the phrase 'we get that hammered into us all the time' suggests students' perception of a topic being covered 'very well' may have been influenced by the frequency it was mentioned. Use of the word 'hammered' suggests the message was excessive and Teresa's comment that drugs, alcohol and cigarettes 'don't sort of relate' may indicate her feeling these were not necessarily relevant to sexuality education. Given the prevention focus of much sexuality education, it may not be surprising that topics with a risk management focus were deemed no longer necessary at senior level.

By suggesting they know about core sexuality education topics (e.g. reproduction, puberty and STIs) participants are portrayed as sophisticated sexual subjects who are beyond the basics. This perception is reflected in research revealing where schools offer comprehensive sexuality education, student knowledge in these areas is generally high (Allen, 2005d). With these issues no longer deemed so important, they are positioned as having more mature and complex educational

needs. This positioning sits in tension with schools that view students as requiring skills to protect them from negative outcomes of sexual activity, such as sexually transmissible infections. A struggle is apparent here over how participants and their schools understand student sexuality. Young people's requests for curriculum content position them legitimately as sexual subjects with the right to knowledge that will enable them to make autonomous sexual decisions and experience their sexuality in corporeally and emotionally pleasurable ways. Schools that deny young people the information they seek constitute them as preferably non-sexual, unable to make positive sexual decisions and in need of protection (largely from themselves).

Implications for sexuality education

Young people's identification of issues they perceived as inadequately covered offers a critique of current sexuality education provision. Calls for information about how to make sexual activity more enjoyable, imply content is currently too clinical and de-eroticised. Similarly, interest in knowing more about emotions and relationships suggests some programmes offer a technical and emotionally remote education that does not satisfy students' interests in these aspects of intimacy. Requests for less morally steeped and more comprehensive coverage of issues like abortion and teenage parenthood reveal young people are critical of partial and didactic information. Proposals to include these issues imply that if schools are to support young people's sexual health as determined by them, they will need to critically engage with public controversies surrounding abortion and teenage parenthood.

The critique participants make of sexuality education and the issues they identify as wanting to know more about have implications for how programmes constitute student sexuality. Programmes which concentrate on reducing sexually transmissible infections and unintended pregnancy often harbour a preference that students do not engage in sexual activity, thereby constituting them as ideally non-sexual. However, young people's recommendations for content position them as legitimately sexual subjects, who have a right to experience and express their sexuality positively. In a bid to curb teenage pregnancy and abortion, sexuality programmes can fail to represent these issues as options young people might rightfully choose. The student subject of these moral discourses is one whose power is limited to avoiding these 'predicaments' despite the fact that the age of consent to sexual intercourse in New Zealand is 16 years.² Senior school students of this

age and over are therefore legally able to engage in this activity. The Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act (1977) also allows for young people under the age of 16 to be given contraceptive information, services and prescriptions (Crockett, Woolley and Johnson, 2002).

Participants' comments asserting their right to make their own decisions about sexuality issues imbue them with an agency that sexuality education can deny. Young people's requests also position them as mature enough to be given information about sexual pleasure. Programmes in which this information is missing constitute young people as preferably non-sexual, not entitled to pleasure and unready for this knowledge. When participants indicate they want to know about emotions and relationships they are constituted as subjects who are invested in more than sexual activity. Sexuality education's underlying preference for students to avoid sexual activity constitutes a student who is driven by sexual desires which need curbing. Young people's suggestions about programme content indicate they want to be understood differently from how some sexuality education currently views them.

There may be important ramifications for sexuality education that dismisses content students deem important and persists in constituting their sexuality in ways that contradict their own understandings. As focus group discussion revealed, when participants did not receive the information they required or found it unsatisfactory, they sought it in other places. While this may not necessarily lead to negative consequences, it increases the possibility some sources consulted may not be reliable, positive or supportive. For example, while the internet can be an excellent source of valuable information, it also contains much misinformation and sites where young people's best interests are not a priority.

When sexuality education fails to take young people's content suggestions and perceptions of their own sexuality seriously it risks their disengagement from its messages. Content which does not address the questions and issues young people deem important may be dismissed as irrelevant and unhelpful. Ultimately, this means that young people are unlikely to act on the knowledge and messages offered by sexuality education. Such an approach can also encourage young people to feel their needs are not important and that schools are predominantly concerned with securing their conformity, rather than empowering them to make positive decisions. This treatment of student sexuality is disempowering for those who feel they have a right to make their own decisions as young adults. Programmes which position young people in

accordance with their own understandings of themselves as competent decision-makers with a right to comprehensive information that will engender positive and pleasurable sexual experiences may be more likely to be effective. Constituting student sexuality in this way offers a positive sense of agency that is critical for making good decisions about sexual activity.

4

Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus? Re-thinking Gender Differences in Sexuality Education Content

This chapter engages with debates around whether sexuality education should occur in mixed or single gender groups and boys' perceived disinterest in this subject. These debates are engaged through an exploration of gender differences in students' suggestions for sexuality content. Results from the current research reveal young women's and men's content preferences were largely similar. This finding diverges from other studies indicating young men have different content interests and would benefit from separate instruction on this basis (Lenderyou and Ray, 1997).¹

Statistically significant² gender differences were evident in less than half of the topics participants selected. Higher proportions of young men asked for information about 'periods' and 'reproduction'. One of the arguments proffered for young men's disengagement in sexuality education is that content is tailored to 'female' concerns. Young men's choice of 'periods' and 'reproduction', typically rendered 'feminine concerns', seems to challenge the perception that all young men deem this content irrelevant and off-putting. This finding suggests some young men do not perceive they possess enough knowledge in these areas. Displaying interest in 'women's issues' and requesting more of this knowledge sits uneasily with conventional male heterosexualities where young men are 'sexually knowing' and exhibit detachment from the feminine (Kehily, 2002b; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). Other significant gender differences in young men's choice of sexuality content, such as wanting to know more about pornography, may equate more readily with conventional heterosexualities. The implications of how these responses might be seen to position young men as sexual subjects are explored below.

There were only two issues which significantly more young women named for inclusion, suggesting that female participants perceived themselves as sexually knowledgeable. Underpinning calls for sexuality education to better meet young men's needs is an implicit assumption this 'failure' is at the cost of attending to the interests of young women. The presumption that sexuality education better meets the content needs of young women is not supported by the current study. In focus groups, young women were highly critical of issues they felt sexuality education had covered inadequately. A majority identified the same five content areas lacking from programmes as young men (see Chapter 3 for details). Absence of these topics suggests programmes fall short of meeting young women's needs as well. The naming of 'abortion' and 'how to tell if a male is turned on' by significantly more young women, may have implications for understanding their sexual subjectivities. This chapter explores how in selecting these topics young women are positioned in ways that simultaneously support, and disrupt, perceptions of conventional heterosexualities.

Before examining these empirical findings, an overview of gender debates in sexuality education is undertaken. This discussion sets the scene for the current findings by outlining how these debates have emerged and the form they take in existing international literature. Numerous studies concerned with gender issues in sexuality education have emerged in the UK, mainly focused on youth aged 14–16 years (Forrest, 2000; Measor, Tiffin and Fry, 1996; Measor, Tiffin and Miller, 2000; Strange et al., 2003). Less research has been conducted with students over the age of 16, although Hilton's work concerning 16- and 17-year-old young men's preferred teacher characteristics is an exception (Hilton, 2003, 2007). The current research builds on this literature, by exploring gender differences in an older age group in New Zealand. As indicated in Chapter 2, participants in this research are senior school students, in their last two years of secondary school³ and aged 16–19 years.

Situating gender debates in sexuality education

Gender debates in sexuality education are located within, and subsequently influenced by, broader educational debates about gender. Since the early 1990s, a concern with boys' schooling and achievement has monopolised debate around gender and education in many wealthier and industrialised countries (Weaver-Hightower, 2009). Previously, discussion about gender in education involved a focus on girls and the

disadvantages they experienced as a result of schooling structures and processes (Arnot, David and Weiner, 1999). Now, boys occupy centre stage with an increasing amount of educational research devoted to understanding their schooling experiences and policy development to support their schooling success (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Martino, Kehiler and Weaver-Hightower, 2009). This interest has been fuelled by what Epstein et al. (1998a) characterise as a 'globalized moral panic' about boys falling behind girls to become the 'new disadvantaged' at school (Jones and Jacka, 1995). In an inversion of feminist critiques about the nature and content of education reflecting male interests, those supporting this perspective claim schools are 'feminised' spaces (Biddulph, 1998; Pollack, 1998).

This critique has been applied to sexuality education where boys complain of 'a female-focused curriculum'. Some male participants in Abel and Fitzgerald's (2006) research protested that not enough of the programme content they received was relevant to sexuality issues males encounter. The techno-rational (Sears, 1992) framework of programmes engenders an emphasis on 'reproduction' and 'biology', which are socially constituted as predominantly 'women's concerns'. This focus can reinforce 'the idea that sexual health, including relationships and emotions associated with sex, is women's business' (Blake, 2004, p. 159). In Strange et al.'s (2003) research young men outlined a preference for 'male oriented' topics they identified as lacking in sexuality education. These topics included 'erections', 'masturbation', 'women's sexual pleasure' and 'how to have sex'. This sentiment was shared by young men in Measor et al.'s (2000) study, where boys indicated sexuality education was 'embarrassing' and 'boring'. Such feelings were attributed to their sexuality programmes being designed and delivered by an all-female team who it was thought selected material that would appeal to girls.

A paucity of male sexuality educators is seen to contribute to a sense of programmes as 'feminised' and therefore irrelevant and unappealing to young men. The gender of the teacher was pertinent to some young men in Westwood and Mullan's (2009) study of student perceptions of the effectiveness of school nurses' contributions to sexuality education. Male participants in this UK-based study were less impressed than girls by what the school nurse contributed to sex and relationships education. Westwood and Mullan surmise this finding is at least in part a consequence of these nurses being exclusively female. Young people's gender preference for sexuality educators is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

On the basis of young men's critique and disengagement from sexuality education there have been calls for 'new approaches' to working with them (Blake, 2004; Measor et al., 2000). Those who support programmes targeted at boys can be crudely positioned in one of two camps: men's rights or equal rights (Allen, 2009a). Men's rights proponents deem young men's critique of sexuality education as further evidence of the overall demise of males in the educational arena. This perspective draws on the 'poor boys' discourse (Epstein et al., 1998b) which positions young men as the victims of 1980s feminist campaigns to improve educational opportunities for girls and women. For men's rights advocates the aim of 'new approaches' to sexuality education for boys is restorative, that is, redressing the disadvantage boys experience in schooling as a result of these contexts being feminised, and reinstating their dominant position in the gender hierarchy. The pedagogy of these approaches conceptualises boys as essentially different from girls, and thus requiring curriculum content and delivery that caters to this difference.

The other group who maintain boys would benefit from sexuality education programmes tailored to their needs can be characterised as interested in gender equity. More likely to be pro-feminist, this group views special attention directed at boys as a means of achieving gender equality (Lenderyou and Ray, 1997). With this approach, securing young men's engagement in programmes is a prerequisite to encouraging their accountability for sexuality issues women have traditionally been responsible for (such as contraception) (Measor et al., 2000, p. 140). Delineating the aim of 'gender equity' informed strategies Measor et al., (2000) explain that these

aim to encourage boys to break out of the cycle of behaviour that oppresses women and creates problems for themselves...[this] sex education...encourages the sharing of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that would not normally be discussed. It aims to liberate young men from the restrictive effects of sexism, and aims to provide a safe environment to explore feelings of inadequacy. It offers an opportunity to challenge traditional ideas of what is involved in 'becoming a man' and to revalue 'feminine' qualities. (pp. 160–1)

Masculinity is conceptualised by those advocating such education as oppressive not only for young women, but for young men (Davidson, 1990; Forrest, 2000). The 'problem' masculinity poses for young men

is that it prohibits expressions of self which fall outside of conventionally prescribed notions of masculinity. These traditionally held views posit young men as always interested in sexual activity, emotionally aloof rather than emotionally invested in relationships and the perpetrators rather than recipients of sexual violence and coercion (Holland, Ramazanoglu and Sharpe, 1993). The nature of this 'masculinity' may be biologically and/or socially derived, whereas for men's rights advocates it is more likely to be perceived an essential characteristic. Whatever their beliefs about masculinity's ontology, both perspectives are founded on the idea that boys are different from girls and therefore warrant different sexuality education approaches.

A currently popular solution for addressing gender debates in sexuality education is to instigate single-gender groupings for at least some (if not all) classes. Most of the international literature maintains some, or all, of young people's sexuality education should be delivered in single-gender groups (Brunk et al., 2008; Chambers, 2004; Lees, 1994; Measor et al., 1996, 2000; Strange et al., 2003). Whilst this is touted as 'the answer' to engaging young men by boys' advocates, young men themselves seem more reticent. Some young men signal discomfort in discussing certain topics in mixed gender classes (Blake, 2004; Strange et al., 2003). However, it is rare for them to request exclusively male classes. Allen (1987) indicates that boys were less likely than girls to express a preference for sex education in single-gender groups. Similarly, Measor et al., (2000) report that '[boys]... did not see any advantages in single-gender teaching' (p. 140).

Some boys have expressed resentment when classes have been split into single-gender groupings to provide girls with 'talks'. In such instances, boys felt they had been excluded from information girls were privy to and that girls' needs had been prioritized (Strange et al., 2003). Single-gender classes for boys have also been regarded as counterproductive for learning about sexuality by some sexuality researchers. Epstein and Johnson (1998) caution that all-boy environments, particularly when facilitated by a male educator, can produce a culture of hegemonic masculinity that is inhibitive for learning. Young men themselves also highlight the tension between asking questions about sexuality, and maintaining an appropriately masculine identity in all-male contexts (Allen, 2005b; Holland et al., 1998; Kehily, 2002b).

Research indicates that boys are more positive than girls about having sexuality education in mixed-gender classes (Alldred and David, 2007; Measor et al., 2000; Strange et al., 2003). Both young men and women

acknowledge that being in a mixed gender environment affords the possibility of learning about the other gender (Measor, 2004). In Alldred and David's (2007) England-based study, year 9 boys revealed girls' presence meant they could learn from their more 'mature' and 'sensitive' questions. This statement implicitly assumes such opportunities are unlikely to occur in all-male environments. In exclusively male groups young men's questions can serve to consolidate an appropriate masculinity and must incite laughter, rather than be serious (Kehily and Nayak, 1997). When the advantages of mixed-gender classrooms were discussed in the same study in a more animated context, the reason proffered for this composition was one of 'heterosexual titillation'. When a researcher suggested why mixed-gender classes might be preferred the following response was invoked.

PA: Just so you can flirt with them?

Boy: No not really. You just sit next to them 'til you get a stiff on!
(Alldred and David, 2007, p. 154)

It is these performances of masculinity which underpin the tendency in the literature to advocate for at least some single-gender lessons. While some young women are unperturbed by such performances and maintain they can be enjoyable (Strange et al., 2003) others find them disruptive. Young women in several studies describe resentment at the way such behaviour is time-wasting, and diverts attention from prescribed subject matter while teachers discipline the perpetrators (Measor et al., 1996; Strange et al., 2003). Single-gender lessons are also preferred by some young women because they wish to escape the sexist comments and criticism contained in this banter. Young women in one study recounted how a sexuality education video had shown naked people. Boys' ensuing talk about the women's bodies they had seen made these young women feel 'objectified and demeaned' (Strange et al., 2003, p. 208). Another advantage of single-gender classrooms young women identify is feeling free to talk about topics they deem important (Measor et al., 2000). Some young women expressed discomfort talking in mixed-gender contexts because 'any expression of interest or demonstration of knowledge on a sexual subject' risked them being labelled by boys as a 'slag'/'slut'/'ho' (Strange et al., 2003, pp. 204–5). In these episodes young women's interest/knowledge in sexual matters was read by young men as 'evidence' of sexual activity.

Content debates and gender

In research around young people's preferences for sexuality education content, young women generally express greater interest in receiving more information about sexuality issues. Forrest, Strange and Oakley (2004) distributed a questionnaire which included potential topics for sexuality education to 13–14-year-olds in thirteen English secondary schools. For all but two topics, a significantly higher proportion of girls requested more information than boys. The researchers attribute this gender difference to the fact that it is more 'socially legitimate for girls to express' knowledge needs in relation to sexuality issues (p. 350). By comparison, 'boys may feel less able to express needs at all, particularly where these might be taken to imply sexual inadequacy or ignorance' (p. 350). These researchers do not specify if the questionnaire was anonymous, so it cannot be confirmed whether young men may have been anxious their information requests could be traced to them. As we will see below, this finding is reversed in the current research, where female participants identified fewer issues than young men they wanted to know more about.

The two items which more boys wanted to know about in the Strange, Forrest and Oakley (2004) study were: 'what people do when they have sex' and 'how young people's bodies develop'. In addition to the questionnaire, a 'suggestion box' was employed enabling students to write anonymous questions to be placed in this box. These questions provide greater insight into the specifics around what young people wanted to know about these issues. Sixteen per cent (365 questions) of all 'suggestion box' questions related to the issue of 'what people do when they have sex'. A quarter of these sought 'definitions or descriptions of 'sex' or sexual positions. Another quarter asked specifically about oral and/or anal sex, for example: 'What does oral sex mean? What's a blow job? What's the best position to have sex?' (Forrest et al., 2004, p. 346). In relation to 'how young people's bodies develop' over half of the suggestion box questions cohered around the rate of genital development and function. Most questions related to penis size, where assurance was sought about the size of the question writer's penis in relation to their peers.

When questionnaire items were ranked in terms of what participants most wanted to know more about, the greatest proportion of students (71 per cent) in Forrest et al.'s (2004) research wanted more information about 'STDs' (sexually transmissible diseases).

The second most highly rated issue was HIV/AIDS with participants asking questions about the definition of HIV and AIDS and the differences between them. 'Where to get medical advice about STDs (including HIV/AIDS)' was the third most popular topic. While the first three issues were ranked equally by girls and boys, the fourth issue produced a gender difference. For girls, the fourth ranking issue was 'pregnancy' including 'how conception takes place, common myths and misconceptions and the relationship between conception and menstruation' (Forrest et al., 2004, p. 343). In contrast, the item 'sexual feelings, emotions and relationships' was ranked fourth by boys. Suggestion box questions reveal the areas students were interested in were: how long relationships last, identifying when a relationship is considered 'stable' and how to ask someone out and tell them you are attracted to them. While some of the top-ranked topics resonate with the interests of young people in the current research, they more closely reflect a traditional emphasis on sexually transmissible infections. Discrepancies in girls' and boys' fourth ranking issue imply a similar complexity in conventionally gendered heterosexualities to the older cohort of the current study.

A resonating theme in research around gendered content preferences is young men's desire for what is conceptualised as more 'explicit' information (Buston and Wight, 2006; Forrest, 2000; Measor et al., 2000). Buston and Wight (2006) undertook thirty-five in-depth interviews and eight group discussions with males aged 14–16 years from six schools in the east of Scotland. This research revealed young men were generally positive about the sexuality education they had received. This sentiment was conveyed by recounting what they deemed highlights, such as gaining practical information about using condoms. In terms of their criticisms of curriculum content, many felt it had not been explicit enough. These young men described desiring more information on the logistics of sexual activity, that is, 'how to do sex' and associated concerns such as 'how to make sex good for the girl'. This concern might be seen as a consequence of the missing discourse of erotics in programmes (Allen, 2006a) and form part of young men's consolidation of appropriate masculinity (Allen, 2005b). The researchers do not mention any participant asking 'how to make sexual activity good for the guy', although this is not surprising given the heteronormative context of schooling in Scotland (Buston and Hart, 2001). Young men also expressed interest in receiving topics such as 'types of contraception other than condoms' and 'how to talk to girls'. The latter is a concern shared by young men in the current research

and forms part of their interest in the topic 'emotions in relationships' explored below.

Having traversed gender debates in sexuality education in the international literature, the chapter now turns to an examination of young people's content preferences in the current study and implications of these for their sexual subjectivities.

Similarity in young women and men's content preferences

In descending order of most popular, topics a majority of participants wanted to know about were: 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners' (56 per cent), 'abortion' (54 per cent), 'dealing with relationship break ups' (54 per cent), 'teenage pregnancy' (51 per cent) and 'emotions in relationships' (51 per cent). The nature of these issues contrasts starkly with those less than half of participants identified. The topic the lowest proportion of participants selected was 'reproduction' (20 per cent) followed by issues like 'periods' (22 per cent) and 'puberty' (28 per cent). The latter group concerns biological and technical aspects of sexuality tending to be clinical and scientific in character. Issues such as 'dealing with break-ups' and 'making sexual activity pleasurable' imply a view of sexuality that is embodied and emotionally invested (see Chapter 3).

For issues that most participants perceived as important at senior level, young women's and men's preferences were similar, with only two significant gender differences. A higher proportion of young women wanted to know about 'abortion' and more young men were interested in 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners'. The picture was less clear for those issues that less than half of the participants selected. Significant gender differences were apparent in half of these topics (thirteen out of twenty-six). All but one of these items (how to tell if a male is turned on) revealed that proportionately more young men wanted additional information. Significant gender differences and their implications for young people's sexual subjectivities are explored in detail in the next sections.

Issues proportionately more young men wanted to know about

More young men signalled wanting information about topics named by less than half of participants for programme inclusion. These topics included, 'physical changes at puberty',⁴ 'periods', 'reproduction',

'using a condom', 'safer sex' and the 'effects of drugs and alcohol on sexual decision-making'. Many of these issues could be conceptualised as 'basic' knowledge which are usually taught in the early years of secondary schooling in New Zealand (ages 11–14 years). International research suggests young men generally receive less sexuality information than young women from external school sources (Blake, 2004; Sex Education Forum, 1996). For instance, young men do not access teen magazines which offer insights about sexuality and relationships, to the same degree as young women (Jackson, 2005). Many also lack a peer group or family members with whom they can comfortably discuss sexuality issues informatively (Buston and Wight, 2006). The social constitution of masculinity means that seeking this information requires an admission of ignorance contrary to the performance of appropriate masculinity (Forrest et al., 2004). With matters of sexuality Kehily (2002b) explains, 'a central theme in the demonstration of an esteemed masculinity is the notion of "knowing it already"' (p. 134). Peer groups are a site where 'the demonstration of competence and fear of ignorance become familiar tropes in the articulation of a masculinity that is sexually knowing and heterosexuality active' (p. 134). Exaggeration and lying about sexual exploits form part of this articulation rendering information proffered in this context unreliable (Holland et al., 1993). Proportionately more requests from young men for 'rudimentary' knowledge may be a consequence of having less access to dependable sexuality information and the fact that seeking this may risk appropriate masculinity.

While the demonstration of sexual competence and knowledge is central to esteemed masculinity, young men's requests for more information seem inconsistent with this masculine performance. Although less than half of male participants ticked these 'basic' sexuality issues, compared with young women, they did so in proportionately higher numbers. A factor contributing to this result may be the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, making requests for knowledge less likely to threaten esteemed masculinity. The age of these participants may also play a role in these findings. Appearing sexually knowledgeable may be less important for some young men as they progress through schooling and masculinities can be consolidated and performed in other ways. Redman's (2001) research with young men aged 15–18 revealed how romantic relationships with young women provided a resource through which middle class/professional masculine identity was established. While investment in romance within conventional discourses of heterosexuality is aligned with women, for Redman's

participants it 'played an important role in the means by which they organised a gendered and heterosexualised sense of self' (Redman, 2001, p. 189). These findings resonate with New Zealand research where similarly aged young men demonstrate investments in a romance-based heterosexual masculinity (Allen, 2007e). The availability of other means of establishing an appropriate masculinity may reduce the need to appear sexually knowledgeable for some later teens.

Calls for more information about 'periods' and 'reproduction', often cast as 'women's issues', also sit uneasily with conventional masculinities. Masculinity can be understood as a relational concept defined through its difference to femininity (Connell, 1987; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003). To consolidate an appropriately masculine identity, men must separate themselves from and renounce the feminine. Demonstrating an interest in femininity beyond heterosexual desire subsequently jeopardises masculine identity. Young men's requests for more information about perceived 'women's issues' may represent a digression from conventional masculinities where disinterest/disdain for feminine concerns is demonstrated.

This finding suggests it may be more difficult to assert that male participants' disengagement and disruptive behaviour in sexuality lessons is attributable to programmes' concentration on feminine concerns. As indicated above, participants in studies of younger students have suggested that boys' misbehaviour in sexuality lessons is partially attributable to programme failure in addressing issues boys considered important (Lenderyou and Ray, 1997). Calls for more information about topics like 'periods' imply some young men found this material informative and considered it important. Rather than being turned off by such content (Forrest, 2000) these young men's responses may signal they have gained insufficient knowledge in these areas and would like more. In such cases, young men's misbehaviour may not be a consequence of a so-called 'female focus', but that sexuality education's content offers rich opportunities for consolidating masculine identity (Allen, 2005b; Measor et al., 1996).

Another item which significantly more young men named was, 'how to tell if a female is turned on' (50 per cent). Whether naming this issue coincides with conventional masculinities is more ambiguous. Wanting to know if a female is turned on may reflect an interest in securing a partner's satisfaction in heterosexual encounters by ensuring this activity is enjoyable. This interpretation seems commensurate with the item rated by most young people for programme inclusion: 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners'. Research

indicates young men's interests in sexual satisfaction are not always self-profiting with some invested (at least at the level of talk) in making sexual experiences reciprocally pleasurable (Allen, 2007e). While male concern with attending to female pleasure appears positive, Australian researchers suggest this interest might serve as a means of proving sexual prowess:

Giving women an orgasm is a demonstration of the man's sexual capacities and skill...he seems to be 'doing' sex on an undifferentiated women's body. Women's pleasure unlike men's is not seen to be natural, but rather as dependent on men's work. Thus women's orgasm is not pleasure for pleasure's sake, but is used to prove the quality of men's technique. (Roberts et al., p. 526)

From this perspective, young men's greater interest in telling whether a female is turned on might reflect a concern with determining 'successful' technique. Demonstrating oneself as sexually proficient or as Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thomson (1998, p. 150) describe it, a 'sexual gladiator', fits with a cultural ideal of Western masculinity as virile, competitive, assertive and concerned with demonstrations of potency (see also Pascoe, 2007). This finding highlights the complexity of young men's answers which potentially position them in ways that both conform to and reconfigure conventional masculinities.

While some young men's responses positioned them in ways that were less conventionally heterosexual, others appeared to locate them more firmly in this paradigm. Although less than half of young men indicated they wanted to know more about topics like 'pornography'⁵ and 'prostitution', proportionately more did so than young women. Mainstream pornography centres and caters for male heterosexual desires in ways that affirm masculinity's difference and create masculine space (Ciclitira, 2004). When pornography is publicly displayed it 'asserts the masculinity of a space, challenging the presence of women and/or affirming their absence' (Thomson, 1992, p. 186). Mainstream pornography sustains conventional masculinities as its existence and accessibility are an expression of male power within culture (Thomson, 1992). Similar observations may be made of prostitution which has historically catered to male patrons. This practice constitutes men as sexually charged and in need of release. In ticking the options 'pornography' and 'prostitution' young men's responses appear to align them with a conventional masculinity that is avidly (hetero)sexual and where male difference is asserted through the

distancing of women as objects to be consumed, rather than subjects with which to engage. This reading is supported by a proliferation of unsolicited written comments by young men in these questionnaires about pornography and prostitution. In the margin beside a question that asked how sexuality education could be improved, one 17-year-old male wrote, 'include more pornographic videos for free from forms 6-7' (i.e. the last two years of secondary schooling). When asked who was the best person to teach sexuality education another 18-year-old male wrote, 'Strippers, prostitutes, PIMPS...it's their profession and they do it all day long'. While these comments are analysed in depth elsewhere (see Allen, 2006b) one of their effects is a symbolic assertion of sexual agency through an alignment with power contained within conventional masculinity.

Issues that significantly more young women wanted to know more about

'Abortion' and 'how to tell if a male is turned on' were the only two issues which proportionately more young women selected. This finding contradicts research by Forrest et al., (2004) where students' content interests were assessed in thirteen English schools. These researchers observed a higher proportion of girls requesting information on most topics. Participants' age may explicate this discrepancy with those in Forest, Strange and Oakley's research with 13-14-year-olds. As mentioned above, young women's greater exposure to instructive sexuality information may mean that by senior school their content needs are more likely to be satisfied. The identification of five issues that a majority of young women believed sexuality education should include indicates their feeling that programmes could still be improved.

Research has shown young women to be more sexually knowledgeable than young men (Allen, 2001; Ryall, 1999). With proportionately less young women asking for information about fewer topics, the current research appears consistent with these findings. Although actual sexual knowledge was not measured, young women's perception of their knowledge might be deduced from their fewer requests for information. Being sexually knowledgeable can transcend 'acceptable femininity' when such knowledge is perceived to signal sexual promiscuity (Jackson and Cram, 2007; Weekes, 2002). Acceptable femininities are governed by what Lees (1993) and McRobbie and Garber (1982) first conceptualised as the sexual double standard where a slag/drag dichotomy operates. This form of social regulation means that young men's sexual reputations are enhanced by sexual activity, while young

women's can be damaged. Young women's answers position them as relatively confident in their sexual knowledge, a subjectivity which pushes the boundaries of conventionally demure femininity. Some 'new' forms of femininities achieve currency through appearing sexually knowledgeable and displaying 'sexual technique' as found in the sexually explicit nature of magazines for girls (Aapola, Gonick and Harris, 2005; Harris, 2004; Jackson, 2005). However, current research indicates that for young women, 'concern with notions of "reputation" and the naturalization of heterosexuality within the school site remain key structuring themes within student sexual cultures' (Kehily, 2004, p. 13; see also Maxwell, 2007). Within the context of an anonymous questionnaire, disclosure of possession of sexual knowledge might have been seen to pose minimal risk to sexual reputation.

Significantly more young women wanted to know about 'abortion'.⁶ Focus group discussion revealed coverage of this topic was variable, with some schools providing limited information and others dismissing it as too controversial. Schools often dealt with this controversy by presenting partial information about the 'immorality' and 'wrongness' of this choice (see Chapter 3). Female participants in some focus groups identified this as a biased view serving to discourage them from considering this procedure. What seemed to frustrate young women most about this approach was that it denied them the chance to form their own perspective. Without comprehensive information, participants felt they were missing out on knowledge which might support their own decision-making.

In identifying abortion for inclusion and proposing a more comprehensive and less biased approach, young women are positioned as having a right to determine their own perspective. This understanding of sexual self sits in opposition to some schools' positioning of students as needing direction to make the 'right' decision (typically not to have an abortion). This constitution of the subject occurs when comprehensive information is denied, encouraging the student to adopt the option lessons promote. By indicating they want to know about abortion in more detail young women seek more agency than schools may bestow on them. The right to make this decision autonomously is supported by the New Zealand legal system. The law stipulates that parental consent is not required for those under 16, making it legal for a woman of any age to seek, or refuse to consent to, an abortion (Crockett, Woolley and Johnson, 2002).

Wanting to know about abortion in proportionately higher numbers than young men may coincide and sit in tension with conventional

femininities. Within conventional heterosexualities women are often rendered the passive recipients of male sexual decision-making (Holland et al., 1998; Kehily, 2004; Maxwell, 2007). Young women's greater interest in abortion may reflect a sense of being active subjects in a decision they consider primarily their own. A focus group participant echoed this sentiment when she asserted she would prefer sexuality education allowed her to make her own decision about abortion rather than 'just having this one opinion going blah, blah, blah' (Decile 10 school, Private, All girls focus group, 17 years). As pregnancy and abortion are processes that affect their bodies, young women may mobilise new discourses of female agency about their right to be self-determining. These meanings are offered in 'girl power' discourses which Hopkins characterises as 'a provocative mix of youth, vitality, sexuality and self-determination' (Hopkins cited in Harris, 2004, p. 17). In this way, young women are positioned with greater agency than is offered within conventional femininities where sexual decision-making is deferred to males.

Young women's greater interest in abortion also positions them within a traditionally feminine role as responsible for reproductive matters. The ultimate right to make decisions about abortion is accompanied by primary responsibility for this action. This notion is contained within legal prescriptions governing this procedure. Fathers' paternal rights only come into effect at the birth of a child, which means potential fathers have no legal right to prevent or request an abortion (Crockett et al., 2002). While providing the woman with legal autonomy, this stipulation simultaneously means decision-making responsibility can potentially be deflected from young men. Displaying greater interest in abortion may indicate young women's recognition of themselves as legally and socially designated in a traditionally feminine role as ultimately responsible for this kind of reproductive issue.

'Being able to tell if a male is turned on' was another topic more young women wanted information about. This request corresponds with participants' identification of the need for sexuality education to include desire and pleasure and treat them positively (see Chapters 3 and 5). Young women's calls for more information about this aspect of pleasure may indicate their specific concerns with this topic. The sense that male sexual pleasure is different from women's is perpetuated by gender being socially constituted as a binary in which men and women are situated as attracted opposites (Butler, 1990). Difference presupposes each gender must be made intelligible to the other through means

such as self-help books like Gray's (1995) *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Female participants' interest in being able to tell if a male is turned on may reflect curiosity in making the unknowable 'other' intelligible.

Another reason for young women wanting to know about this issue may relate to a concern with establishing reciprocally pleasurable heterosexual relationships. The idea that sexual pleasure is a positive outcome of sexual activity to which everyone has a right emerged within sex manuals in the 1960s and 1970s (Braun, Gavey and McPhillips, 2003). This notion continues to form part of contemporary discourses about healthy sexual relationships (Cacchioni, 2007). Knowing whether a male partner is aroused may help young women to determine whether heterosexual activity is mutually pleasurable.

While 'being able to tell if a male is turned on' might seem an important undertaking for establishing gender equitable relationships, such a concern may be problematic for some young women. Research indicates that generally young women are less likely than young men to experience pleasure and desire in relationships (Allen, 2005d; Holland et al., 1998; McClelland and Fine, 2008b; Reddy and Dunne, 2007; Stewart, 1999a; Thompson, 1990; Tolman, 2006). Given these circumstances a young woman's interest in knowing whether a male is turned on may be at the expense of her own sexual pleasure. Australian researchers Roberts et al., (1995) observed this was the case for women in their study who faked orgasms in order to preserve male partners' sense of sexual prowess. These participants were not only complicit in the consolidation of esteemed masculine identity but sacrificed their own pleasure. Under these conditions, young women who are interested in whether young men are 'turned on' might be understood as conforming to a conventional female sexuality where their interests are subordinated to men's.

Implications of findings for debates about gender and sexuality education

Young women and men had largely similar content preferences amongst topics a majority selected for inclusion in sexuality education. Significant gender differences existed for only two of these issues, with proportionately more young women interested in 'abortion' and more young men in 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners'. Instigating separately gendered classes on the basis that young women and men's content preferences are substantially different does

not appear to be supported by this research. This finding does not preclude the fact that separately gendered lessons may be advisable on other grounds: for instance, when working with students from ethnic groups where talk between genders about sexuality is prohibited (for an example here see Tupuola, 2004). Measor et al.,s (1996) research proposes instances of single-gender teaching may be beneficial when boys' bullying and disruptive behaviour in a mixed gender class is counter-productive to all students' learning.

One of the arguments advanced by those who advocate for male-only classes is that young men are bored by the 'pregnancy and period' focus of sexuality education and need boy-focused lessons (Lenderyou and Ray, 1997). The fact that male participants indicated they wanted to know about 'periods' and 'reproduction' in greater numbers than young women appears to challenge this assumption. These young men conveyed a sense of lacking this knowledge and considering it still relevant at senior level. The claim that these topics are 'women's issues' serves to perpetuate an essentially different masculinity that is largely unconcerned with the feminine. This constitution of gender contributes to social inequalities where such forms of masculinity are symbolically and materially accorded more social power (over women and subordinate masculinities). Such an essentialist understanding fails to capture the diversity inherent within masculinities, as reflected in this study's findings. Such diversity was evidenced in young men's responses which positioned them in less conventionally masculine ways (e.g. as interested in emotions in relationships). Placing boys in a male-only environment where 'feminine concerns' are less likely to be discussed (or covered in a 'masculinised' manner) may serve to increase this knowledge deficit and social inequalities.

Gender differences in participants' content preferences reveal insights about young people's sexual subjectivities that also have implications for the delivery of sexuality education. By choosing only two topics they wanted to know more about in proportionately greater numbers than young men, young women appear to perceive themselves as relatively sexually knowledgeable. This sense of possessing knowledge rests uneasily with a conventional femininity that defers to active male decision-making and may jeopardise sexual reputation. Young women's sense of being knowledgeable, however, does not necessarily mean sexuality education meets all their content needs or that it does this more effectively than for young men. Like young men, their identification of five priority areas where senior sexuality education could provide (more) detailed and comprehensive education, suggests programmes

can still be improved. Young women were also much more vocal than young men in group discussion about the perceived inadequacies of sexuality education.

The way young women's responses position them in relation to conventional femininities also has implications for how sexuality education might better support them. While ticking issues for inclusion in proportionately lower numbers than young men may indicate they are more sexually knowledgeable, in practice they may not always perceive themselves as such. Research on young people's relationships reveals gendered power relations mean translating knowledge into practice is not always possible (Allen, 2003; Holland et al., 1998; Maxwell, 2007; Stewart, 1999b). How best to support young women to enact sexual knowledge in practice is an area sexuality education continues to try to address (Carmody, 2009).

In asking for less biased and more comprehensive information about issues like abortion, young women are positioned as active decision-makers. Being constituted as a self-determining subject may be positive in effecting a sense of agency but could also saddle young women with the responsibility for reproductive matters. This idea is already institutionally entrenched within legal and labour markets where women's lower average wage means it is economically more viable for them to stay at home and raise children in heterosexual relationships (Statistics New Zealand, 2005). A legal right to make decisions about abortion offers young women power over what happens to their bodies at the same time as potentially divesting responsibility for a joint action from young men. This situation locates young women (and young men) within the realms of conventional heterosexuality where women are deemed ultimately responsible for reproductive matters. If sexuality education is to offer young people more than these traditionally gendered roles, then issues like abortion and teenage parenthood need to be treated critically.

Ambiguity about whether young women's responses diverge from or conform to conventional heterosexualities was apparent in more of them being interested in knowing 'how to tell if a male is turned on'. These responses may be indicative of an active female sexuality that is concerned with achieving reciprocally pleasurable sexual experiences and unafraid of demonstrating an interest in desire and pleasure. Conversely, they may indicate a concern with male pleasure which supersedes their own, which may be detrimental to an empowered female sexuality. Sexuality education which endeavours to include positive discourses of student desire and pleasure will need to be cognizant of

this tendency for female desire to often hold a secondary place within heterosexual relations (Fine and McClelland, 2006). Simply catering to young women's requests to know more about male sexual arousal may serve to reinforce this as 'normal' and 'of priority'.

Proportionately more young men wanting to know about the types of sexuality issues covered in early secondary schooling may also have implications for sexuality education. These requests suggest some young men feel they are not receiving this information either from school or other sources. As these issues are more likely to be deemed 'women's concerns' young men may have fewer opportunities to access this information. This presents a challenge for sexuality education to ensure that those who perceive this information as important are not missing out. Suggesting that such issues are irrelevant and uninteresting to young men neglects those who think otherwise, and impedes their chances of gaining such knowledge.

Indicating a desire for more knowledge on a greater number of issues than young women sits uneasily with conventional masculinities as 'all knowing' in matters of sexuality. Other responses offered by young men appeared to locate them within notions of conventional masculinity. Significantly more requested information on issues like 'pornography' and 'prostitution' positioning them as actively desiring and interested in consumable rather than intimate relationships with women. The way in which young people's responses simultaneously position them as conventionally, and less conventionally, masculine or feminine reveals the complexity of their sexual subjectivities. One of the many challenges for sexuality education is to cater to this complexity in ways that offer students more than just traditional gendered notions of heterosexuality.

5

‘Pleasurable Pedagogy’: Young People’s Thoughts about Including ‘Pleasure’ in Sexuality Education

This chapter addresses debate about the ‘missing discourse of desire’ (Fine, 1988) in sexuality education by examining young people’s ideas around incorporating ‘pleasure’ in programmes. There has been burgeoning interest in the possibility of including discussions of desire and pleasure within school sexuality education since Michelle Fine’s seminal publication in this area (Allen, 2004a; Hirst, 2007; Ingham, 2005b; Kehily, 2002b; Kiely, 2005; Rasmussen, Rofes and Talburt, 2004; Tolman, 2002). In this chapter, I explore young people’s investment and interest in including pleasure within sexuality education in New Zealand. These views are analysed for the insights they offer about how such content might successfully form part of programmes. An important feature of this discussion is that these ideas represent the views of young people themselves. Until now, debates about the inclusion of pleasure in programmes have been largely adult-defined at the level of policy, public debate and within academic discussion (Alldred and David, 2007; Evans, 2006; Measor, 2004).

This chapter also considers how feasible pleasure’s inclusion is and possible difficulties of addressing it from young people’s perspectives. Participants’ complex and often contradictory reactions to incorporating pleasure imply some of the challenges facing the introduction of this topic. While most participants displayed interest in its inclusion, some found it difficult to fathom how such discussion might be successfully managed in the classroom. I argue these views reflect wider dominant discourses about ‘sexualities’ and reveal how young people’s ideas draw from these meanings. Such narratives offer additional understandings about the social constitution of pleasure, the institutional setting of schools and their possible impact on this curricular inclusion.

A feminist politics of sexual pleasure

The emergence of sexual pleasure as an issue of contention in sexuality education owes much to the activism and thinking of feminist scholars. Women's sexual pleasure has constituted a site of political struggle for feminists, as a space where the interplay of gendered power and sexuality are acutely visible (Jackson and Scott, 1996). Early forms of feminism sought to acknowledge and seek the right to women's desire and pleasure. In 1918 British family planning pioneer Dr Marie Stopes produced the ninth edition of her popular marriage manual *Married love: A new contribution to the solution of sex difficulties*. In this book Stopes devotes an entire chapter to what she coins 'The Fundamental Pulse' (i.e. women's capacity for sexual desire) where she debunks a popular myth of the time that 'in the normal woman, especially those of the higher social classes, the sexual instinct is acquired, not inborn' (Stopes, 1918, p. 59). Employing anecdotal evidence from the experiences of her own female patients, Stopes advocated for a view of women's sexual desire as 'normal', albeit within the confines of marriage. In an era when 'good' women were thought 'desire-less', and sexual activity was something only men would enjoy, Stopes's ideas were radical. Almost one hundred years later, this 'good girl' discourse continues to hold currency. In its contemporary configuration 'good girls' are those who either don't experience strong desire (because their minds are firmly focused on their education, careers, etc.) or who successfully repress feelings of desire in order to manage their sexual reputations and avoid unplanned pregnancy (Charlton, 2007; Tolman and Higgins, 1996).

Contemporary feminists concerned with young women's sexual pleasure highlight how it continues to be subject to intense surveillance and subordinated in heterosexual relationships. Much of the literature on young women's experiences of sexual activity reveals their descriptions of encounters as often disappointing and devoid of personal desire and pleasure (Allen, 2005d; Diamond, 2005; McClelland and Fine, 2008c; Sieg, 2007; Thompson, 1990; Tolman, 2002). Young women's talk about desire and pleasure continues to be policed by highly regulating discourses. This phenomenon is evidenced in McClelland and Fines's (2008c) study of 'teen sexualities' involving young women in an ethnically diverse urban high school in America. These researchers found young women's talk about desire, pleasure and entitlement were metaphorically 'laminated in cellophane'. The young women in their study only talked about these issues after engaging in 'a kind of discursive foreplay', whereby narratives of disease prevention

and victimisation were rehearsed. In their own words McClelland and Fine (2008c) explain, 'protection/prevention became a discursive cocoon for young women's talk of wanting/desire, a way to enter (and exit) the zone of pleasure' (p. 240). Despite broad features of social change within the labour market and domestic sphere, for example, young women's sexual desire also continues to be policed by the 'good girl'/'bad girl' or 'slag'/'drag' dichotomy (Kehily, 2004). The obligation to manage sexual reputation so as to be a 'good girl' but not 'too good' serves as a mechanism for curtailing some young women's desire and prevents them from expressing their need for sexual pleasure.

In response to the documented paucity of young women's sexual desire and pleasure in relationships some feminists have sought to uncover more positive sexual experiences indicative of sexual agency. In the context of her work around rape prevention education Carmody (2005) interviewed 26 Australian women and men of diverse sexualities aged 21–58 years about negotiating 'ethical' sex. Older female participants in this study reflected on their early sexual careers and signalled strategies such as 'self-reflection' and 'self-care', enabling successful negotiation of pleasurable sexual relations. In my own research (Allen, 2003, 2005d) young women have also described experiences of positive sexual embodiment and desire that contrast with conventional depictions of sexual disembodiment and an absence of desire and pleasure in heterosexual relationships. For these young women, though, positive experiences of sexual desire and pleasure were contingent on specific sets of contextual relations and not constant across relationships.

This contextual element to the experience and expression of young women's sexual desire and pleasure is also apparent from how and where they choose to share these occurrences. Harris (2005) notes the way in which the internet and 'zines'¹ can operate as marginal spaces for young women's articulations of desire and pleasure. She explains that 'within these sites, some young women are able to engage in unregulated dialogue and debate with one another, to generate their own meanings and terminologies around sexual desire, and to respond with creativity and wit to the uses to which "desire" discourses are put' (Harris, 2005, p. 42). These spaces indicate that sexual desire and pleasure are experienced by some young women and enjoyed in ways that subvert dominant social appropriations of them.

Feminist researcher Angela McRobbie (2009) indicates how in contemporary discourses of femininity around 'girl power', for example, there can be an appropriation of feminist values such as 'agency'. This appropriation aligns 'girl-power' with neo-liberal

agendas of 'autonomy', 'self-realisation' and 'commodification' (Harris, 2005). Through fashion, beauty and life-style products, music and accessories young women are hailed as desiring sexual actors who not only actively initiate sexual activity but are entitled (even expected) to enjoy it (Gill, 2008). In contrast to views of young women's sexuality in Marie Stopes's era, women are encouraged to view sex as an activity of self-definition that is both positive and something they deserve (Gill, 2008). This legitimization of female desire and sexual pleasure might be hailed as a positive step towards young women's exercise of sexual agency. New discourses of female sexual desire might also represent further regulation of women's sexuality, affording most benefits to consumer culture industries (Harris, 2005). Gill (2008) argues that while previously media/consumer representations of women were overtly objectifying, current depictions are organised around sexual confidence and autonomy where women are seen to 'have it all' and 'do it all'. In these instances the sexual availability conveyed by historically objectifying images of women is effectively recast as 'autonomy'.

The emergence of 'pleasure' as an issue in sexuality education

Feminist appraisals of sexuality education occurred at least ten years before the publication of Fine's important work, in the form of a critique of the 'plumbing and prevention' focus of programmes (Jackson, 1978). However, Fine's (1988) work, entitled 'Sexuality, schooling and adolescent females: The missing discourse of desire', drew attention explicitly to desire as an absence in sexuality education. The missing discourse of desire was identified as one of four discourses (along with 'sexuality as violence', 'sexuality as victimization' and 'sexuality as individual morality') implicated in the management of student sexuality in American schools. In a now often-quoted passage Fine (1988) states:

The naming of desire, pleasure, or sexual entitlement, particularly for females, barely exists in the formal agenda of public schooling on sexuality. When spoken, it is tagged with reminders of 'consequences' – emotional, physical, moral, reproductive and/or financial (Freudenberg, 1987). A genuine discourse of desire would invite adolescents to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable, grounded in experiences, needs and limits. Such a discourse would release females from a position of receptivity, enable an analysis of the

dialectics of victimization and pleasure, and would pose female adolescents as subjects of sexuality, initiators as well as negotiators. (p. 33)

The ripple-effect of this work has been to encourage sexuality education researchers internationally to investigate whether desire and pleasure are also missing from local programmes. Subsequently, corollary questions have been generated such as why are these important issues missing and with what effect for young people? (Allen, 2004a; Connell, 2005; Hirst, 2007; Ingham, 2005b; Kehily, 2002b; Kiely, 2005; Rasmussen, Rofes and Talburt, 2004; Tolman, 2002).

Those who have engaged with Fine's work document an international trend where schooling cultures rarely recognise or name desire, pleasure or sexual entitlement (Allen, 2005d; Harrison, Hillier and Walsh, 1996; Holland et al., 1998; Kiely, 2005; Rasmussen, Rofes and Talburt, 2004). When pleasure is acknowledged it often materialises in ways that perpetuate dominant discourses of male and female heterosexuality and can sustain unequal gender relations. Pleasure's (infrequent) appearance has traditionally emerged in discussions of puberty with reference to 'wet dreams', aligning pleasurable sexual experience with young men. Concurrently, the labelling and explanation of the clitoris as a potential site of female corporeal pleasure have been identified as frequently omitted in reproductive diagrams (Diorio and Munro, 2003). These depictions suggest that desire and pleasure are an expectation of male sexual maturity, while for women they are relegated to an absence. Such constructions echo findings where young men generally report sexual encounters as more pleasurable and satisfying than for young women (Allen, 2005d; Dowsett, 2003; Hooke, Capewell and Whyte, 2000; Schubotz, Rolston and Simpson, 2004; Stewart, 1999a; Wight, 1996).

Feminist interest in the missing discourse of desire in sexuality education has run parallel with broader critiques of programmes as too biologically and technically orientated. As indicated in Chapter 3, sexual liberals have historically critiqued sexuality education for too heavy an emphasis on disease prevention and its failure to present a holistic understanding of sexual health (Thomson, 1994). From the viewpoint of sexual liberalism, the incorporation of positive discussions around pleasure and desire fit well with a more encompassing notion of sexual health. This understanding acknowledges emotional and embodied experience of sexual pleasure and desire as important to overall sexual well-being. This critique from feminists and sexual liberals has placed the issue of including sexual desire and pleasure in sexuality education programmes on the current public policy agenda.

Potential benefits of including pleasure

There are several reasons why including information about pleasure in sexuality education might be beneficial for young people. These arguments have been traversed in Chapter 3 and are outlined in detail elsewhere (see Allen, 2007d) so are only briefly reiterated here to provide justification for the chapter's focus. Positive acknowledgement of sexual pleasure in sexuality education is not simply about redressing an absence of discourses of desire within programmes. Recognising and fulfilling young people's need for this information can constitute them as legitimate sexual subjects in ways that withholding such knowledge denies (Allen, 2007a). Failing to view sexual pleasure as a positive possibility for students can communicate a preference they are non-sexual (Allen, 2007a). The importance of being viewed as a *sexual subject* lies in the agency imbued in this subjectivity. For researchers like Holland et al., (1998) a sense of empowerment is deemed essential for making positive sexual decisions including practising safer sex. Students who view themselves legitimately and positively as sexual are likely to be better equipped to negotiate sexual situations (such as condom use) than those who perceive their sexuality negatively. Such a subjectivity provides space for a sense of self-worth, entitlement and control which can contribute to positive sexual decision-making and successful relationship negotiation.

Silence around pleasure in sexuality education programmes may also have negative ramifications for young people's experiences of sexuality. Experiencing sexual pleasure can have physical and mental benefits which may elude those unaware of this possibility or how it might be achieved. New Zealand-based research indicates that some young people found their first sexual experiences disappointing due to ignorance about the corporeal logistics of pleasure (Allen, 2005d). While most young people knew sexual activity was supposed to be pleasurable, many were unsure how to generate this experience. One couple in this research suggested that being told more about pleasure at school may have helped make their first sexual experience together more pleasurable (Allen, 2005d, p. 47):

Peter: The stuff you want to know [in sexuality education] is... how to do it, like just the basics, like positioning or whatever or something like that I mean ...

Amy: What makes it, you know with regards to positioning what makes it easier for both you know sexes... If you've got absolutely

no idea, you're just going to stuff around for ages and you know most times it's painful, if you don't know what you are on about...

(Amy 18 years, Peter 19 years, both at school, couple interview)

Feminist researchers have signalled an absence of information about pleasure in sexuality education may be particularly detrimental for young women. As young women are already constituted within dominant discourses of heterosexuality as less likely to experience sexual activity as pleasurable, lack of discussion about this topic reinforces this notion. A silence about female pleasure may also fail to convey a sense of personal empowerment and pleasurable entitlement to young women. Tolman (2002) explains that by not exploring the possible benefits of sexual activity in terms of pleasure, sexuality education fails to provide young women with a standard against which to make decisions about engaging in sexual activity (or not). When an individual knows what is pleasurable they are better placed to make informed decisions about whether a sexual activity is wanted.

Critical discussion of pleasure and desire may also have benefits for young men. Within dominant discourses of masculinity young men are constituted as always 'up for sex' (i.e. perpetually desiring) and easily able to achieve sexual pleasure (for themselves) (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). This constitution of masculinity can produce feelings of inferiority and vulnerability in young men who deviate from this perceived 'norm'. For instance, young men who do not experience themselves as always 'horny' or wanting sexual encounters may feel there is something wrong with them (rather than this being a culturally perpetuated idea). Dominant discourses of masculinity also have regulatory effects for young men's sexual behaviour that may have negative ramifications for themselves (as well as their partners). Being seen to always want 'sexual activity' makes it difficult for young men to refuse a partner's sexual advances or, in the extreme, report sexual assault. By refusing to engage in sexual activity or making a complaint of sexual assault, young men 'fail' to take up the 'ever-ready' subjectivity of conventional masculinity thereby forfeiting some of their masculine status. This inability of young men to refuse or report unwanted sex without loss of face has serious implications for sexual violence prevention. The compulsion to always want sex can also compel young men to 'press' for sexual activity that neither they nor their partner may particularly want. Rather than sexual experiences being mutually negotiated and pleasurable, such pressure to perform can render these encounters coercive and, paradoxically,

disembodied (see Allen, 2002). Talking critically about these pressures and expectations around sexual desire and pleasure in relation to masculinity (and femininity) may open spaces for young men to potentially 'do' male sexuality in different ways.

A lack of positive information about sexual pleasure and desire from school-based sources has meant that many young people seek this information elsewhere. Pornography is one site that young people indicate they consult for information about bodies and pleasures (Allen, 2001, 2006b; Chakraborty, 2010). Young men especially have reported pornography as both a source of sexual stimulation and simultaneously a site of information about the embodied and pleasurable aspects of sexual activity (Allen, 2001; Beggan, 2003). While mainstream pornography offers details of enfleshment and bodily logistics uniformly missing from sexuality education, its primary role is sexual stimulation premised on fantasy, rather than reality. Sexual desire is always present and sexual pleasure is always achieved in mainstream pornography in ways that tend to obfuscate real-life contextual impediments, for instance, bodies that look or respond differently than expected or spatial/temporal considerations such as lack of privacy or locations to have sex. One of the major impediments to sexual pleasure identified in Hirst's (2007) English study of 15–16-year-olds was a lack of private indoor space to engage in sexual activity. Many of the young people in this research habitually had sex outdoors, often at the local park in the vicinity of others, and this activity was dependent on weather conditions. The inclusion of sexual pleasure and desire in sexuality education could open space for critical reflection about the usefulness of sexual information divulged by pornography. Such discussion might also 'fill the gaps' left by pornography around pleasure and desire for those students who rely on it as a primary source of information.

In the first part of this chapter I have outlined the emergence of pleasure debates in sexuality education and some of the existing arguments for its inclusion. Some of the reasons why pleasure is not addressed in sexuality education are explored in Chapter 7. As a means of adding young people's perspectives to this debate, the chapter now shifts to young people's views about this possibility.

Young people's investment in sexual pleasure

The topic named most frequently for inclusion in senior sexuality education by survey participants was 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable

for both partners' (56 per cent). This issue ranked highest out of a plethora of more traditional items found in programmes such as 'safer sex', 'sexually transmissible infections' and 'condom use'. By out-ranking these other items participants reveal their prioritisation of knowledge about pleasure. This result might be predicted given the novelty value of such a topic. However, 'pleasure' was favoured over other issues seldom broached in programmes such as 'abortion' (54 per cent), 'dealing with relationship break-ups' (54 per cent), 'teenage parenthood' (51 per cent) and 'emotions in relationships' (51 per cent). This prioritisation of 'sexual pleasure' over other aspects of sexuality is evidence of its perceived importance to participants.

The closed-ended nature of this survey question meant participants did not have an opportunity to explain their issue selection. During focus groups, 'how to make sexual activity more enjoyable for both partners' was an item participants categorised in an activity that determined the extent of topic coverage in sexuality programmes. Debate about how well this issue had been addressed revealed participants' investments in 'sexual pleasure'. Below is a typical exchange engendered by the task of determining whether this issue had received 'Good', 'Average' or 'Poor' coverage, or had 'Not been Taught'.

Harry: This one here [picking up the card], I know you guys are all going to laugh at me, but uhm

Zoe: No we won't

Harry: ... 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners', but if that like that's sort of like a popular answer, what are you [directed at the researcher] going to do are you going to turn around and say this is how you do this, to stimulate that and that kind of stuff?

Louisa: I don't know, would that be useful?

Harry: I mean like god (*laughs*)

Louisa: [sensing Harry's hesitation] No go on say it

Harry: Oh like for me, I'd love to know about that stuff

Zoe: I'd like to know about that stuff too

Harry: Oh sweet

(Decile 10 School, Co-educational, Mixed Gender Focus Group)

Harry's opening remark, 'I know you guys are all going to laugh at me', acknowledges that displaying a serious interest in 'sexual pleasure' risks ridicule from others. His assertion that he 'would love to know about that stuff' signals his interest in this area, with use of the word 'love'

implying a significant rather than casual curiosity. Harry's statement enables Zoe to express similar sentiment with the comment 'I'd like to know about that stuff too'. Hesitancy in admitting interest in sexual pleasure was apparent in other focus groups. To risk derision from peers by declaring an interest in knowing more about sexual pleasure reveals these young people's significant investment in this issue.

Reasons for young people's interest in sexual pleasure also emerged in conversation about how well this topic had been covered at school. All focus groups agreed this issue had either 'not been taught' or received 'poor coverage'. Lack of or inadequate attention to sexual pleasure in sexuality education appeared to be a motivation for requesting its inclusion. Those who placed this issue in the 'poor coverage' category tended to do so because their memory of its coverage was hazy or they felt it had been addressed unsatisfactorily. This dissatisfaction was derived from the way sexual pleasure was often portrayed negatively as something which was 'bad' and should not be mentioned.

Louisa: So the next category is 'poor coverage' in sexuality education and the first topic you've placed there is 'pleasure and desire'

Jackson: Poor? Shouldn't that be in 'No' [category]

Rosemary: I put that down in 'poor' just because you do get a couple of teachers who say well, you know sex is supposed to be fun but it's not always and you shouldn't be having it anyway (*all laugh*)

Alesha: It's supposed to be after you're married

Rosemary: Yeah

Louisa: To put that in the 'good coverage' pile, what would you have wanted to know about pleasure and desire?

Kyle: That it's an okay thing, that everyone experiences it

Rosemary: Yeah

Kyle: And there are ways to get it (*small laugh from Rosemary*)

Louisa: And you want to know the ways?

Kyle: Well...

Rosemary: They should actually mention the word orgasm at least once

Jackson: Yeah

Rosemary: Because they don't. I, this is weird, I don't actually, and this is truthfully, I'd never heard of the word orgasm until I was like fourteen ...

Alesha: Me neither

Rosemary: ...I didn't even know what one was. No one told me that there was a pleasurable side to this that you could actually do this...

Alesha: Yeah I heard about your boyfriend blah, blah, blah orgasm...
Rosemary: Or the internet, I found out on the internet on a, on a...
Jackson: Oh yeah, I find out about everything on the internet...
Kyle: Oh internet, what would we do without it
Rosemary: You know you never get told about it
Kyle: Yeah it's stating basic human wants and needs yeah
Louisa: And how to achieve desire and pleasure?
Rosemary: Yeah. It's not a bad thing, telling you that pleasure's not a bad thing.
Kyle: Yeah, exactly.

(Community Focus Group, Mixed Gender Focus Group)

These participants indicate wanting to know more about sexual pleasure as it was largely missing from the curriculum. For Rosemary and Elizabeth this absence contributed to not having heard the word 'orgasm' until their early teens. Including sexual pleasure appeared not only to be about redressing its absence, but approaching it in a qualitatively different way. A traditional approach to young people's sexual pleasure is that it is 'wrong', an idea encapsulated by Rosemary's comment that 'you do get a couple of teachers who say well, you know sex is supposed to be fun' but the general consensus is that 'you shouldn't be having it [sex] anyway'. Instead, participants suggested treating sexual pleasure as 'an okay thing, that everyone experiences' as a 'basic human want and need' (Kyle, 19 years). This perspective designates sexual pleasure a natural and positive part of student identity, rather than something which should be ignored or strictly controlled. Knowing about sexual pleasure was not simply about filling a 'gap' in current programme content, but suggesting a more positive and comprehensive approach to this issue.

Young people's feelings about teaching about pleasure

While wanting to know more about sexual pleasure, participants expressed uncertainty and a sense of impossibility about how this topic might be incorporated. Incredulity is perceptible in the first narrative quoted in the previous section. Harry considers the card 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners', and reacts with, '...but if that like that's sort of like a popular answer, what are you [addressing the researcher] going to do are you going to turn around and say this is how you do this, to stimulate that and that kind of stuff?' The use of 'but' and phrasing this remark as a question imply that Harry thought

teaching about the logistics of sexual activity was an improbability. What is not captured by these words are his tone of voice and facial expression which communicated astonishment that discussing sexual stimulation was being contemplated. Other participants demonstrated a similar sense of wonder, often checking what issues on cards 'really' meant and whether they were inclusive of actual details of 'sexual positions' etc. In a focus group conversation analysed in detail below, Fraser makes the following comment after stating that students should be taught about 'sexual pleasure':

Fraser: You sort of do have to get taught [about how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners]. Maybe you [addressing researcher] should have a question about do you think you should be (*pause*) like taught, oh are you allowed to ask questions like that about what sort of sexual activity you can do and how to do it properly and stuff?

(Decile 10 School, Co-educational, Mixed Gender
Focus Group, 17 years)

The idea that sexual pleasure might form part of the curriculum was so unprecedented for Fraser that he appeared to have trouble comprehending he was being consulted about this possibility. This confusion is demonstrated when he begins to say the research should include a question about whether students want to know about sexual pleasure. Given the way schools ignore positive acknowledgement of sexual pleasure, it is unsurprising Fraser finds it difficult to comprehend being asked about this inclusion. Recognising the current discussion is a means of gauging young people's interest in sexual pleasure, Fraser confirms this topic would include the kind of content he has in mind, i.e. 'how to do it [have sex] properly and stuff'. Disbelief that sexual pleasure might form a legitimate topic in sexuality education might be understood as a consequence of schools' constitution of student sexuality. As argued elsewhere, schools often deny young people are sexual subjects who might legitimately seek sexual pleasure (Allen, 2007a). This environment may make it difficult for some students to fathom that sexual pleasure could be a legitimate topic in programmes.

Some participants expressed ambivalence about how pleasure would be taught. This uncertainty related to what it was feasible to teach given conservative components of the school community. Although the following conversation is sparked by consideration of whether transgender issues had been covered in sexuality education, participants

broaden their discussion to incorporate the challenges facing similarly 'controversial' topics.

Louisa: What about transgendered people?

Kevin: I think that's something that society doesn't want to talk about really.

Chelsea: Yeah they avoid it

Kevin: So it's carried through to the schools cause...

Cindy: Cause some parents would kick up a stink

Kevin: Oh yeah

Chelsea: They'd be like why are you teaching our little kids this and ra ra

Ruth: (*putting on a parent's voice*) 'oh my precious little Jonny learning about freaks' (*all laugh*)

Louisa: Would you want to know about this sort of thing? (*all 'yeah'*)

Ruth: Yeah it's interesting but you are going to have a big problem with convincing parents

Chelsea: Oh yeah. Like half the stuff (*pointing to the cards in piles*) you'd get half the people kicking up a stink. They'd just try to keep you out of it

Cindy: Like the majority of parents would not care about any of that (*pointing to topics participants had placed in the 'not taught' pile*). Issues like 'sexual pleasure' like all of that, like heaps of like really conservative parents would get really angry

Chelsea: It's all that 'out there', 'not the norm stuff' that the parents would...

Ruth: Yeah cause if you don't know about it then you don't do it.

(Decile 10, Co-educational, Mixed Gender Focus Group)

As the idea of young people legitimately experiencing sexual pleasure is 'not the norm' within schooling environments, this topic is likely to be one that people will 'kick up a stink' and get 'angry' about. These participants recognise that while they may want to know about such issues, adult-others wield considerable power over what curriculum they receive. Although participants may not have been aware of the legalities, such power is written into the legislative provisions for school sexuality education. A directive within the Education Act 1964 requires principals to make a written report to the governing body of schools (the Board of Trustees) after consultation with the school community about the content of sexuality education. The Board of Trustees can then 'direct, or refrain from directing' the school to include in the teaching

programme 'any particular element of sex education described in that written description' (Ministry of Education, 1999). While schools are not required to obtain parental permission if a programme has been approved by the Board of Trustees, what is taught must be palatable to the school community if unwanted publicity and parental/carers complaints are to be minimised.

Concern was also expressed about how to teach a topic which by its perceived 'nature' some participants considered could not be taught. This reaction was demonstrated by a young man who after perusing the card topics relating to sexual pleasure exclaimed, 'What is this issue "what sexual activity can physically feel like"? How are they supposed to teach you that?' (Decile 1 School, Co-educational, Mixed Gender Focus Group, 16 years). This kind of remark assumes that knowledge about sexual pleasure is not best acquired through conventional education. Two young women talking about the experience of sexual pleasure in another focus group echoed these ideas, elaborating on why they thought it could not be taught. In opposition to other members of their group, they argued that sexual pleasure was a personal experience that could not be gleaned from a sexuality lesson.

Susan: I think it should be something like personal between you and your boyfriend or whatever, not actually like not actually discussed in the classroom (*others laugh*) about how you get turned on or something. It's part of it, but not part of the education kind of thing

Maisey: It's kind of a private thing

Susan: Yeah it would just like happen, like you'd know (*laugh*)

(Decile 4, All Girls School)

This last statement suggests the logistics of sexual pleasure are already known as a consequence of sexual activity being a 'natural phenomenon'. The perception that sexual pleasure is 'natural' renders instruction superfluous and practical experience all that is necessary. In the context of considering whether sexuality education might be 'practical', Wilson (2003) argues there may be benefits in teaching about erotic experience:

though we cannot give people sexual or erotic experience [in sexuality education] in the way we can give them experience of (for instance) playing football ... it does not follow that we can give them no practical experience at all that is relevant to their sexual or erotic development. The question, 'How can I be a good lover?', or 'How

can I do justice to myself and my partner in bed?' does not have to wait for an answer until such time as I actually fall in love with somebody and go to bed with him/her. (Wilson, 2003, p. 27)

From this perspective, knowledge about sexual pleasure does not have to be gleaned exclusively through practice. Although an embodied experience, sexual pleasure may be learned and indeed enhanced through prior consideration of the types of questions Wilson poses.

For Susan and Maisey, also problematic about teaching sexual pleasure is the way this experience is understood as private. As a 'kind of private thing' (Maisey, 17 years), 'something personal between you and your boyfriend or whatever' (Susan, 17 years), this topic was considered inappropriate for the public forum of a sexuality classroom. Viewing sexuality as essentially private can render teaching about sexual pleasure as disruptive, invasive and inappropriate (Wilson, 2003). To engage in such education can interfere with the 'natural order' of sexual activity. When sexuality is viewed as socially constituted, the notion that it is a private matter is understood as socially conceived (Foucault, 1976). This perspective deems private acts as inextricably tied to social meanings which are publicly prescribed. Viewing sexual pleasure as private may subsequently be a misnomer as this experience is given meaning and regulated by public understandings of what sexual pleasure is, and how it should be experienced. For example, sexual pleasure is often measured by the presence of orgasm, suggesting that sexual activity is not truly satisfying unless this occurs, despite research evidence refuting this assumption (Braun, Gavey and McPhillips, 2003). While acts producing sexual pleasure might be deemed private, how such pleasure is achieved and interpreted is also a function of social meanings. To suggest that sexual pleasure cannot be taught because of its 'private nature' may ignore how this experience is influenced by public conception. There may even be benefits in exploring the socially constituted nature of sexual pleasure as part of sexuality education, in order to consider how these meanings influence individual experience.

Another pedagogical consideration in teaching about pleasure was the issue of embarrassment. For some students, 'how you get turned on' was too intimate and risky a discussion to have in front of peers. These anxieties were articulated by participants following Fraser's question (analysed earlier) regarding the logistics of sexual activity.

Fraser: You sort of do have to get taught [about how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners]. Maybe you [addressing

researcher] should have a question about do you think you should be (*pause*) like taught, oh are you allowed to ask questions like that about what sort of sexual activity you can do and how to do it properly and stuff?

Heidi: I mean no one would feel comfortable asking that in class though

Don: Yeah, like half of them would just jump and run away if you asked that.

Mick: It's not just ask the teacher, it's

Heidi: The other kids ...

Don: ...yeah it's that you're in a classroom with all your friends

Sandra: Yeah

Mick: You don't want them to know that ...

Sandra: You know nothing

Heidi: Yeah

(Decile 10, Co-educational, Mixed Gender Focus Group)

These participants feared that discussing sexual pleasure would reveal confidential insights about themselves. This information could divulge whether they are sexually active and the extent of their sexual knowledge, details which can bestow or undermine peer status (Holland et al., 1998; Kehily, 2002b). For gay, lesbian or bisexual students these feelings of vulnerability may be heightened as discussing sexual pleasure might 'out' them or increase the likelihood of homophobic comments.

Teachers' feelings of embarrassment also concerned some participants who believed some would not cope with facilitating discussions on sexual pleasure. One young man remarked that conversations about sexual pleasure were currently missing from sexuality education because '...it's kind of embarrassing for the teacher... (*pause*) and like that's just easier for them to get the kids to put on condoms all period and no one has to talk about stuff' (Decile 1 School, Co-Educational, Mixed Gender Focus Group, 16 years). Evidence suggests that some students may not want to ask teachers about sexual pleasure, for fear they will be judged and treated differently in other aspects of school life (Allen, 2009b).

Implications of young people's thoughts for sexuality programmes

While wanting to know more about sexual pleasure, participants identified a number of challenges this inclusion might face in sexuality

education. Attention was drawn to resistance from conservative members of the school community who were likely to deem learning about sexual pleasure 'unimportant'. This perspective ran counter to survey participants' prioritisation of 'sexual pleasure' as the issue they most wanted to know about. Participants' responses sit in tension with wider social discourses that deny young people are sexual subjects who might legitimately experience sexual pleasure (Allen, 2007a). A possible explanation for this result lies in the composition of the research sample who were volunteers. Researchers have noted that those who volunteer for sexuality research tend to hold more liberal sexual views (Catania et al., 1990). Consequently, participants may hold more favourable opinions about the inclusion of pleasure in sexuality education than those contained with prevailing discourses about young people and sexuality. Young people's responses highlight that these dominant understandings about youthful sexualities represent a barrier to the inclusion of pleasure within programmes.

Another challenge participants outlined was the potential for student and teacher embarrassment. Fear that engagement with this subject may reveal their sexual selves is likely to make discussion and learning about sexual pleasure less productive. Participants' concerns about embarrassment signal the importance of ensuring teachers feel comfortable and are well prepared to teach about sexual pleasure. This inclusion necessitates a classroom environment where students can confidently ask questions without anxiety about negative repercussions from friends or teachers. The creation of such a space demands creative pedagogical strategies and teachers who can positively manage discriminatory and/or inappropriate behaviour.

While the call to include sexual pleasure interrupts the conventions of sexuality programmes, participants' reactions were often a product of dominant discourses of student sexuality. Participants' incredulity that sexual pleasure might form a legitimate component of the curriculum reveals the power of these dominant understandings. Schools often treat young people's search for sexual pleasure as a problem to be managed rather than a legitimate quest with potentially positive outcomes (Allen, 2006b; Rasmussen, 2006). Verifying what was meant by the topic 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both partners' indicated many found it difficult to fathom being consulted about this issue. This reaction may be a consequence of the entrenchment of dominant understandings of student sexuality in schooling contexts. Such responses signal the challenge these discourses present to the introduction of 'pleasure' as part of the curriculum.

Concern that sexual pleasure is 'unteachable' and the belief it is 'private' also reflect socially dominant understandings of sexualities. The idea that sexual pleasure is a private phenomenon that will 'naturally' happen is a more widely held meaning than that it is socially constituted and potentially neither 'private' nor 'natural' (Hawkes, 2004). As agencies of cultural reproduction (Halsey et al., 1997) schools reflect and (re)produce such dominant understandings of sexualities (Allen, 2005a). Participants' articulation of these dominant ideas indicates their presence in the school environment and the challenge they pose to alternative discourses about youth and sexual pleasure. To simply place 'sexual pleasure' in the curriculum when it sits in tension with the general approach to student sexuality is likely to be ineffectual. For instance, teaching positively about sexual pleasure in sexuality education could be undermined by wider school rules governing displays of affection (e.g. no hand holding). Participants' responses draw attention to the need to reconsider the sexual culture of schools and the way dominant discourses of student sexuality may hamper the successful inclusion of pleasure within programmes.

This chapter has endeavoured to be exploratory, considering issues young people predict may arise if discussions of pleasure were part of sexuality education. Its aim has been firstly to determine what investment young people have in the inclusion of material on sexual pleasure within senior sexuality programmes. Secondly, it has examined what young people themselves perceive as important issues to consider if this content were included. Although eager for sexual pleasure to be part of the curriculum, participants anticipate several obstacles associated with the sexual culture of schooling, which are largely a reflection of wider social discourses of sexuality. Dealing with these impediments requires innovative solutions and well-trained educators. Such work is already being undertaken by some dedicated professionals (see for example The Centre for HIV and Sexual Health, 2007).

'Pleasurable' postscript

In concluding this chapter I want to add a postscript to these findings. Since conducting this fieldwork I have witnessed a flourish of interest amongst sexuality educators particularly in New Zealand but also in Australia and England in including pleasure in programmes. I am frequently contacted by school nurses, counsellors and health teachers who want to know how to talk to young people about pleasure in sexuality education. Most calls take the form of requests for curriculum

examples and activities that will assist in addressing this issue. I have also attended seminars for in-service health teachers with the aim of introducing and up-skilling them in teaching about pleasure and desire. These contacts are simultaneously thrilling and disappointing. I am thrilled that 'pleasure' is now on some schools' agenda. However, I am also despondent about how this discourse appears sometimes to be configured. What was it that Michelle Fine recently wrote in reflecting on how her call for a discourse of desire has manifested? 'Yes indeed Michelle, a discourse of desire is rampant, commodified and being sold – careful what you ask for' (Fine, 2005, p. 57).

One of the things that concern me about pleasure's insertion in programmes is the tendency for this to be mobilised in ways that create a 'pleasure imperative'. To some extent this was foreseen in envisioning the potential of a discourse of erotics which comprises discussion of desire and pleasure. In 2005 I wrote:

Including a discourse of erotics in sexuality education could also be about creating spaces in which young people's sexual desire and pleasure can be legitimated and positively integrated within official school culture. This does not mean that young people have to, or will necessarily seize upon these spaces, but that they are no longer denied them because they are 'missing' from sexuality education programmes. (Allen, 2005d, pp. 147–8)

Perhaps I underestimated the regulatory potential of such a discourse and the institutional power of schooling contexts. How is it that when I have witnessed teachers talk about pleasure to their students that it warps from a 'positive possibility' to a mandatory element of sexual activity? Sexual pleasure subsequently becomes the marker by which a 'successful' encounter is determined. It is the 'new' measure by which young people might judge themselves competent or incompetent and experience their subjectivities limited accordingly (the 'old' measure being the successful negotiation of 'safer sex'). Instead of forging space for open discussion of sexual pleasure and the idea that it might be legitimately experienced by young people, its introduction seems to impose the same old disciplinary shackles. These limitations are enduringly female and male gender-normative and heteronormative.

This disciplinary effect is in part a product of the power of prevailing discursive resources available to educators to talk about pleasure. Listening to both in-service teacher training and classroom teaching about pleasure I have anecdotally noticed a number of language

slippages. For instance, in one of these forums I heard an educator give the following justification for including sexual pleasure in programmes: 'If students know sex should be something that is consensual and pleasurable, it may be easier for them to recognise and say "no" to abuse.' In this statement the pleasure imperative resides seemingly innocuously in the word 'should'. That is, 'sex *should* be something that is... pleasurable'. Implicit is that sexual activity engaged in for reasons other than pleasure is 'wrong' and encounters which are not pleasurable are somehow 'deficient'.

When coupled with the discursive power of gender-normative understandings of sexuality, this pleasure imperative slides easily into a re-inscription of normative masculinities and femininities. The possibility of students' legitimate experience of sexual pleasure twists into well-worn indicators of masculinity regarding young men's sexual technique and ability to coax pleasure (conflated with orgasm) out of partners (Farvid and Braun, 2006). Within contemporary 'girl-power' discourses, young women are expected to both want and achieve orgasm, to the extent that they feel pressure to 'fake' if these are not 'naturally occurring' (Aapola, Gonick, and Harris, 2005). Each of these gendered performances confines young women's and men's expressions of sexuality to conventional modes of masculinity and femininity. Paradoxically, this manifestation of a discourse of pleasure is no more likely to engender pleasurable embodied sexual experience than its absence.

Perhaps it is not surprising that discussion about pleasure and desire might suffer from the same heteronormativity as other topics historically have in sexuality education (e.g. safer sex). The pervasive heterosexualisation of sexual pleasure (Warner, 1993) beyond the sexuality education classroom infiltrates the form and character of discussions of this topic in class. I have heard experienced sexuality educators handle this issue by employing terminology which does not assume the gender of those engaged in sexual activity. For instance, not assuming that a male student's question about 'how to put on a condom in a way that increases sexual pleasure' implies a female partner and using gender neutral language such as, 'you could ask your partner to put it on for you'. Other times I have heard educators give the dual option of 'girlfriend/boyfriend' so as not to presume any particular gender. While this language is inclusive of those whose partners fall easily into the category of male or female, it re-inscribes a gender dichotomy that does not encompass some people's transgendered or intersex realities. Despite this careful attention to language, somehow these 'concessions'

inadequately open space for non-heteronormative pleasures. Not only is it too easy to slide into heteronormative speak, but no matter what the educator says, sexual pleasure and desire are predominantly heard as 'heterosexual' (see Allen, 2007c). How to unhinge pleasures and desires more successfully from a presumed heterosexuality needs much further thought.

Another problem with the 'pleasure imperative' is the way it fails to take account of nuances and complexities in lived sexual experiences and the array of reasons people engage in sexual activity. One day while sitting amongst a group of in-service health teachers on a professional development course, I heard the group facilitator explain that it was important to ask students the following question: 'If someone is not experiencing pleasure then why are they doing what they are doing?' The question was meant to offer further justification for the importance of raising pleasure as a topic of class discussion. It is derived from a belief that if young people know what is pleasurable then they are less likely to act out of ambivalence and engage in practices they don't particularly want or enjoy (Tolman, 2002). My concern lies with what such a comment negates. It is clear that sexual activity is often actively and purposively engaged in for reasons other than our own sexual pleasure: for instance, in order to increase the likelihood of getting something we want (such as financial gain, emotional security, a child, sleep), out of pity, out of love, in order to give pleasure to someone else (rather than ourselves), to heal (someone else or ourselves), to forget, to forgive etc. When pleasure is held up as the only reason to engage in sexual activity, not only does it deny the complexity of other reasons we do 'it', but it denigrates them. Pleasure becomes the new 'ideal', the only true and valid reason sexual activity should be engaged in. The old morality of sexual activity's 'true purpose' being for reproduction is simply replaced by a new, supposedly more 'progressive' one: that sexual activity is for pleasure. In this regard a pleasure imperative is no more likely to equip young people with the tools to negotiate and experience their sexual selves positively than calls that emphasise responsible and safer sex.

A further concern around sexual pleasure's inclusion in sexuality education is the way in which it might be appropriated by some moral conservatives as a mechanism for securing abstinence. This utility of pleasure is somewhat ironic as its envisaged insertion entailed an understanding of young people as *legitimately sexual subjects* (Allen, 2005d; Fine, 1988). Calls for young people's abstinence are based on the belief that young people should not be sexually active before marriage,

and that such actions are forbidden and 'wrong' (Santelli et al., 2006). In a casual conversation with a community sexuality educator about their experience of teaching about pleasure, they mentioned some members of religious and conservative communities were in favour of students discussing pleasure. When I enquired why they explained, 'They love the pleasure stuff cause it is a way of encouraging young people not to have sex.' In these instances the idea, 'why would someone engage in something that they do not find sexually pleasurable' surpasses the needs of the individual and serves as a deterrent that satisfies religious doctrine. What is insidious about this use of pleasure is that within an abstinence-only approach sexual activity outside marriage is always constituted as 'pleasure-less'. Sexual pleasure is only seen to be positively experienced within the confines of heterosexual marriage and outside this institution it is designated perpetually perilous and disappointing. Acknowledgement of sexual pleasure in these instances does not open possibilities for young people to experience themselves as sexual subjects. Conversely, this reference to pleasure acts as a tool for restricting young people's sexual expression and securing their conformity to conservative and religious mores.

A final note here regarding certain configurations of sexual pleasure and desire in sexuality programmes invokes a critique made by Rasmussen (2009). She argues that there has been a lack of scrutiny of the political motivations that underpin research on sexuality education associated with pleasure and desire (Rasmussen, 2009). This research has lacked reflexive interrogation of the political motivations for advocating the inclusion of these issues. This body of work which includes Fine (1988), Fine and McClelland (2006) as well as Rasmussen's and my own writing fosters a problematic binary between 'progressive secular' and 'backward religious/conservative' perspectives. Where the insertion of 'pleasure and desire' are considered 'progressive' within accounts supportive of pleasure and desire's inclusion, moralising about sexuality education is conflated with neo-liberalism and fundamentalism. A double standard ensues where the morals of so-called progressive sexuality education are not explicitly named or scrutinised (Rasmussen, 2009).

The anecdotal episodes above begin to expose some of the problems associated with assuming the inclusion of desire and pleasure in sexuality education to be 'progressive'. These anecdotes reveal how acknowledgement and discussion of desire and pleasure is not inherently 'progressive' nor does it carry any particular agency for young people. As Rasmussen notes, 'in our desire to affirm pleasure progressive researchers in sex education can fail to recognise the legitimate and

profound differences within communities and relationships about how pleasure might be ethically constituted' (Rasmussen, 2009). What and whose morality is promoted when we advocate for sexual pleasure and desire in sexuality education and ultimately for whose benefit? Of course this dilemma is inevitable because the nature of discourse and subjectification means that regulatory effects are inescapable. That is, some form of morality will be imposed and subjectivity and practice regulated accordingly. However, this effect of discourse does not preclude asking these questions, but warrants them. In acknowledging that a discourse of desire has an 'agenda' we might ask what potential does it hold for social/sexual justice? Whose interests does it serve and negate?

This postscript is not meant to undermine the aim of this chapter by implying that the inclusion of pleasure is no longer useful. Instead I have attempted to offer a critically reflexive reading of the politics of pleasure's inclusion. My intention has not been to abandon pleasure, but to interrogate our (that is, educators' – including my own) attempts to mobilise this discourse within sexuality education so that we might continue to strive for the realisation of the potential it promises.

6

'It's not *who* they are it's *what they're like*': Re-conceptualising the 'Best Educator' Debate

Who makes the best sexuality educators and why are key questions for those who design and deliver school-based sexuality programmes. Those who teach sexuality education are integral to programmes that successfully support young people to experience their sexuality positively (Forrest, Strange and Oakley, 2002; Harrison, Hillier and Walsh, 1996; Hilton, 2003, 2007; Strange et al., 2006; Wight and Buston, 2003). Knowing what makes an effective educator is therefore crucial for developing and delivering programmes that are successful in this respect. Drawing on the research's empirical findings, this chapter considers who young people think make the best educators and why.

Survey and focus group participants were asked the question, 'Who do you think are the best people to teach sexuality at school?' In focus groups, this question remained open-ended, offering participants an initial topic for unstructured discussion. In the survey, this question was closed-ended, providing participants with a range of possible educators to select, for example, 'teachers', 'school counsellors', 'peer sexuality educators', 'public health nurses' and 'specialist organisations' (such as The New Zealand Family Planning Association). An additional open-ended component to this question then asked participants to 'Indicate why you think the people you have named are the best to teach sexuality education'.

Although peer sexuality educators were named more often in questionnaire findings, the reasons for choosing any educator were largely consistent across all categories. For instance, the reference to an educator being 'knowledgeable' ('because they are experienced and have knowledge of the topic at hand' – Male, 17 years) was the predominant reason for specifying an educator of any type. Focus group narratives

help shed light on these results with talk dominated less by *who* made the best educators, and more by the *qualities* young people valued in effective educators. During focus groups, ‘best educators’ were identified through extensive talk about their qualities rather than one educator identity being mentioned more frequently than others. A difficulty of talking about particular educator identities was that it invariably produced conflicting opinions. For instance, when a participant suggested ‘peer educators’ were best, debate quickly ensued about why peer educators may not be ideal. It seemed that for each educator identity, while some participants had positive experiences of, for example, peer educators and their ability to maintain confidentiality, others had not. Typically, discussion centred on qualities of effective educators and often concluded that these took precedence over an educator’s identity. In contrast to much existing research in this area (see discussion below), these findings suggest participants valued particular qualities sexuality educators exhibited more than *who* that educator was.

This chapter calls for a departure from traditional investigations into *who* makes the best sexuality educators, to a reframing of this issue as about ‘what qualities’ best sexuality educators display. The problem is thus re-conceptualised from defining successful sexuality educators by their identity (e.g. in terms of their professional role or identity markers such as gender), to those characteristics students deem important to teach this subject successfully. Rather than viewing these characteristics as intrinsic to an educator identity, it is suggested such qualities might potentially be displayed by any educator. This argument has implications for future staffing of sexuality programmes and training of educators. Findings also pose a disruption to the ‘logic’ of assumptions such as ‘Our school uses peer educators because students prefer talking to someone their own age’. In developing this argument, the chapter critically engages with related debates around the importance of educator age and gender.

Contours of the ‘best’ educator debate

This chapter begins by sketching the contours of the ‘best’ educator debate in existing literature. It reveals how this debate has been conceptualised and its effect on how we understand the teacher’s role in providing ‘effective’ sexuality programmes. The next section provides a backdrop for the research’s empirical findings, in order to discern similarities and differences between current participants’ preferences for educators and existing research.

One of the reasons *who* teaches sexuality education is contested is because this role can demand more of teachers than is typically expected. Teaching sexuality education necessitates more than a comprehensive grasp of curriculum content and ability to communicate this to students (Kehily, 2002b; Lokanc-Diluzio et al., 2007; Schaalma et al., 2004). The socially constituted nature of sexuality as 'private', 'sensitive' and 'dangerous' demands a teacher who is comfortable with a highly controversial subject as well as their own sexual identity (Alldred, David and Smith, 2003; Epstein and Johnson, 1998). The controversy that surrounds sexuality issues and that often results in their marginalisation in schools means sexuality educators also play a pivotal role in campaigning for space and resources to meet student needs (Buston et al., 2002; Paechter, 2004). While the teacher-pupil relationship helps shape the context for learning in any curriculum area, the content of sexuality education positions teacher and student in ways that can disrupt the teacher/pupil binary (Kehily, 2002b; Lupton and Tulloch, 1996). For instance, to provide an answer to a student's question 'What does semen taste like?' could involve revealing aspects of the sexual self that would make many teachers feel vulnerable. This personal vulnerability implies a concession of power to students that teachers normally would not need to contemplate. How sexuality educators manage this relationship through presentation of self, engagement with pupils and general classroom organisation is a critical factor for programme success.

In existing literature the 'best educator' debate is framed in terms of a question that begins with *who*? That is, 'Who makes the best sexuality educators?' While some research makes reference to important 'qualities' those who teach sexuality should display, these are in a minority. This research also tends to be undertaken from the perspectives of teachers themselves, so that the question becomes 'What qualities do teachers value in sexuality educators?' (see Milton et al., 2001; Sinkinson, 2009). When the perspectives of young people are engaged, the question is structured around a series of identities that imply specific forms of effectiveness. This conceptualisation is contained in the statement 'Peer educators are better at relating to young people'. 'Who' a teacher is (in terms of identity markers) is understood as having a direct relationship to their effectiveness as an educator. This supposition draws a causal relationship between identity and practice. Within the contours of the 'Who makes the best educators?' debate are a series of related contentions that also implicate identity. For instance, 'Does the gender of the teacher matter?' 'Does

the age of the teacher matter?' 'Is religious and ethnic similarity to students important?' 'Are known or anonymous educators more effective?' In each case, *who* the educator is, for example, female/male, young/old, Muslim/Christian and school-based educator/external educator, is seen to influence their competency. This chapter focuses on examining two of these identity markers in the form of debates around an educator's 'gender' and 'age'.

Does age matter? Peer-led versus adult-led education

Debate around educators' age typically manifests as a question of whether peer- or adult-led programmes are more effective (Forrest et al., 2002; Mellanby et al., 2001). Peer education as a general pedagogical approach flourished in New Zealand and the United Kingdom during the mid-1980s (Forrest, 2004; Hynes, 2005). These programmes were thought to have a 'political edge' because instead of involving 'top-down' instruction from teachers, they utilised young people's existing networks and knowledges. A peer education philosophy has useful application to sexuality education for several reasons. Its 'grassroots' framework renders it a potential advantage in accessing young people regarded as 'particularly at-risk and vulnerable to poor sexual health outcomes' (Forrest, 2004, p. 210). For those who become peer educators, there is the additional benefit of increased sexual knowledge, confidence and interpersonal skills (Strange et al., 2002b). Consequently, the overall sexual health of the youth population is raised, not just that of the young people a programme targets.

As its name suggests, peer-led sexuality education broadly operates by facilitating young people to support other young people around issues of sexuality. How this education materialises varies depending on contextual and regional factors (Strange et al., 2002a). Where I live in Auckland, New Zealand, this education occurs in the form of a Peer Sexuality Support Programme (PSSP) delivered in 25 local secondary schools (Auckland Sexual Health Services, 2007–8). In the words of Auckland Sexual Health Services who facilitate this programme, the PSSP seeks to 'formalise already existing networks through training students to work in a support and referral role with their peers' (Auckland Sexual Health Services, 2007–8). At a practical level, this means that usually senior students (in the last three years of secondary school) volunteer or are chosen to act as mentors and advisers for younger students around sexuality issues. To prepare for this role, peer educators participate in a four-day residential training course where they explore their own

and others' attitudes and values around sexuality. This training also provides accurate sexual information and access to resources so peer educators can undertake their role confidently (Auckland Sexual Health Services, 2007–8).

Peer-led sexuality education emerges in the literature as more popular than adult-led approaches. Part of the reason for this preference is that young people report liking educators of a similar age and status (Evans et al., 2002; Forrest, 2004; Forrest et al., 2002; Mellanby et al., 2001; Stephenson et al., 2004). Similarities in age and social standing are believed to enable peer educators to better understand young people's concerns. Authority bestowed to older educators through adult status is perceived to be inhibitive of such understanding. Being on a par with young people is also seen to facilitate peer sexuality educators' transmission of information in a more realistic and interesting way (Stephenson et al., 2004). Discussing a review of peer education conducted in England, Forrest (2004) notes that young people like peer educators because they represent credible sources of sexual information without appearing to 'know it all'. Peer educators were also perceived to be better at maintaining confidences and to be less patronising than teachers. In Strange et al.'s (2002b) research peer educators observed that students felt more relaxed with them than with teachers. This atmosphere was facilitated by generating a sense of informality through the use of jokes and humour.

Peer-led education is an increasingly popular method of delivering sexuality education internationally and has received official support in some countries. Government policy in the United Kingdom has recently advocated peer-led education in schools (DfEE, 2000) despite a paucity of rigorous evidence regarding its effectiveness. One of the few studies which examine peer-led sexuality education in England indicates that peer educators themselves have identified programme challenges (Strange et al., 2002b). One of these is the difficulties peer educators can experience in providing an atmosphere of informality and maintaining control over the class. While a challenging accomplishment for trained teachers, this situation may be especially difficult for untrained peer educators whom students may perceive as exerting less authority than teachers. Another challenge identified by peer educators was preserving control over the content and delivery of programmes. Peer educators had minimal power regarding class scheduling and noted that being allocated the last few hours of the day when students were tired made their work difficult. Some also criticised teachers for 'taking over' by dictating the content of lessons and interfering in disciplinary measures

(Strange et al., 2002b, p. 345). Although popular with young people, such research signals peer education is not without its own challenges.

Adult-led sexuality education encompasses any programme taught by someone other than students' peers. These people might include the school nurse, school counsellor or an educator from an external organisation delivering sexual health programmes. Within the existing literature, however, adult-led sexuality education is often conflated with 'teacher-led' programmes and positioned in a permanent stand-off with 'peer' education. In comparison with peer educators, teachers receive significant criticism in the literature for their perceived inadequacies (Alldred and David, 2007; Allen, 2005d, Harrison, 1997; Kehily, 2002b; Measor, Tiffin and Miller, 2000). Students have described teachers as 'moralistic and judgemental' (Lupton and Tulloch, 1996), embarrassed to provide detailed information (Measor et al., 2000), inadequately trained (Harrison, 1997) and/or unable to control disruptive/abusive students (Buston et al., 2002). Despite these criticisms there is recognition from some young people that teachers represent a reliable source of information. In Hirst's (2008) UK based study with 15–16-year-olds, participants acknowledged that unlike the media, teachers provided a dependable source of information on sexual behaviour. As one of these participants, Josie, says; 'Suppose they do influence you [i.e. television and magazines] but when it [sexual information] comes from teachers it sort of has more... dunno... importance' (Hirst, 2008, p. 408).

Young people's concerns about teacher-led sexuality education are echoed in literature illuminating teachers' own perspectives. This research reveals that some teachers feel ill-equipped for the challenges of teaching this subject (Alldred et al., 2003; Milton et al., 2001; Munro and Ballard, 2004). Such anxieties are heightened by insufficient pre-service and in-service training, leaving some bereft of knowledge and skills to facilitate classroom activities in a safe and supportive way (Giami et al., 2006). In Wight and Buston's (2003) evaluation of an in-service teacher training programme around sex education for 13–15-year-olds in Scotland, teachers expressed discomfort about discussing sexuality issues openly with young people. Similarly, in Munro and Ballard's (2004) research with New Zealand health teachers, some reported feeling uncomfortable talking about pleasure and desire to students. These topics were considered problematic when raised in adult contexts, let alone with students in the institutional context of schooling. For some teachers, part of this difficulty was that they deemed this information inappropriate for children and young people.

The controversy which surrounds sexuality education also leaves some teachers fearful of what it is permissible to say to students. This situation has been especially acute in England with its infamous Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act which prohibited 'the promotion of homosexuality as a "pretended" family relationship'. Although this legislation did not apply specifically to teachers, many have been uncertain about its reach in schools, resulting in avoidance of discussions of homosexuality (Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford, 2003). The repeal of Section 28 in 2003 and the establishment of the Civil Partnerships Act in December 2005 appear to have done little to allay teachers' fears in this regard (DePlama and Atkinson, 2006). Even when there is no legislative confusion over teachers' ability to address sexual diversity issues, some remain reluctant to do so. Health teachers in Munro and Ballard's (2004) New Zealand-based research raised similar concerns about being seen to 'push' certain agendas in sexuality education regardless of personal beliefs and identity. One of Munro and Ballard's (2004) participants explained:

There are many practical issues in this for teachers because if I'm a gay teacher and I teach, then I'm really open to accusation of bias...self-promotion...and if I'm heterosexual then I'm...open to biases in relation to personal attitudes about sexual activities...If I'm a person that's a Christian...then there are also problems, so I think it is naïve to think we can just pop it [sexuality] into the curriculum without some impact, and my problem is that it won't be taught well because we haven't taken the dynamics into account yet. (p. 79)

These concerns around their own sexual identities and personal practices influence teachers' implementation of sexuality education. With such institutional and social constraints it is not surprising many feel uncomfortable about delivering this subject competently.

Does the teacher's gender matter?

How a teacher's gender might affect students' experience of programmes is another component of the 'best educator' debate that reflects a preoccupation with identity (Bleach, 1998; Carrington et al., 2007; Martino, 2009). When single-gender classes led by a teacher of matching gender are championed, an association is drawn between the teacher's gendered identity and successful classroom practice. Implicit within such calls is an assumption that male and female teachers have different

professional qualities as a consequence of their gender (Martino and Frank, 2006). Comments which encapsulate this belief are that male teachers are better than female teachers at maintaining discipline and motivating boys (Martino, Kehiler and Weaver-Hightower, 2009). Calls for same-gender teachers also rest on assumptions that students learn differently on the basis of their gender. The purportedly action-oriented style of male teachers is deemed 'good' for boys who are thought to learn best this way. The 'logic' of calls for same-gender teachers is based on gender differentiated and binary assumptions about teacher and learner identities.

Debate around teachers' gender in sexuality education has most recently manifested as a call for more male sexuality educators. This issue is located within a wider educational debate about the need to augment numbers of male teachers generally (Drudy et al., 2005; Epstein et al., 1998a, 1998b; Mills, Martino and Lingard, 2004). For early childhood and primary sectors traditionally comprising few males, this increase is considered urgent (Skelton, 2001b). The need for more male teachers forms part of a larger discourse prevalent from the late 1990s around boys' perceived 'disadvantage' in education (Jones and Jacka, 1995). The notion that boys are 'failing' at school has largely rested on aggregated quantitative data indicating boys' overall lower rates of achievement compared to girls (Skelton, 2001b). Other commonly cited indicators of disadvantage are school retention and truancy rates, a feminised schooling environment (Carrington et al., 2007) and lower literacy scores (Martino, 2003).

More male teachers have been proposed as one solution to this conceptualised male educational 'decline' (Martino, Mills and Lingard, 2004). Based on the assumption that male teachers have a better understanding of male learners' needs because of shared gender it is argued that if boys are to close what has been conceptualised as an educational 'gender gap' (Hammersley, 2001) then male teachers are best equipped to achieve this goal. Recruiting male role models is also suggested as a means of counteracting a 'female bias' at school, so that boys might feel more comfortable about their masculinity in this 'feminised' environment (Martino and Kehler, 2006). Although there is no evidence that male role models have a positive effect on boys' educational achievement (Martino, 2009), the belief that they do is expounded as a reason to encourage more men into teaching. There is clearly much that might be critiqued about this larger educational debate. However, as sexuality education is the focus here, there is inadequate space for such discussion (for critical discussion see Allen,

2009a; Carrington et al., 2007; Martino and Kehler, 2006; Martino et al., 2009; Mills et al., 2004). The purpose of sketching this larger landscape of the men in teaching debate is to highlight its points of seepage into sexuality education.

Within the context of sexuality education the call for more male educators is motivated by a perceived need to improve the experience and effectiveness of programmes for boys. In their study of 13–15-year-olds' views of sex education in England, Measor et al. (2000) argue one of the policy implications of their findings is the need to 'recruit male workers to...health professional teams...and sex education more generally' (p. 143). These researchers report some male participants' discomfort with female-only professionals because as one recounted, 'I'd find it difficult to go to a woman school nurse. A man knows what you're on about, and he's experienced and knows what's what' (p. 142). This view is echoed in other UK research by Blake and Brown (2004) where young men describe the need to discuss issues relating to puberty, sex and relationships 'specific' to male bodies. For instance, shaving, the voice breaking and spontaneous erections are identified as issues often missing from programmes and which it may be less embarrassing to talk to a male educator about.

The justification for having male educators tackle such issues is that not only do they have experience of them, but they are likely to address them in ways that are sensitive to young men's vulnerabilities and fears. One of the problems with such reasoning is that it casts men's experiences of these practices as universal. The notion that such phenomena are knowable through shared gendered experience negates historical, cultural, religious, socio-economic and geographical differences. It also associates these experiences with binary notions of gendered embodiment that do not take account of considerable variability in masculine and feminine bodies. For instance, shaving facial hair is a practice also undertaken by some women. The experiences of transgendered bodies are also completely ignored by such justifications for male educators which adhere tightly to polarised notions of masculinity and femininity. In addition, what underpins this thinking is an unspoken understanding about women teachers' pedagogical inadequacies. Dealing with bodily induced embarrassment which belies a personal sense of control (for example, spontaneous erections) has parallels in women's experiences of erect nipples and menstrual blood leakage. To suggest that women are likely to be less attuned to young men's embarrassment fails to take account of the extent of human embodied experience.

Increasing the number of male teachers in sexuality education has been advocated as a means of solving boys' perceived disinterest in programmes and disruptive classroom behaviour. In their research with 14- and 15-year-olds in England, Measor et al., (2000) document a classroom scenario which epitomises what is perceived as boys' largely negative relationship with sexuality education:

In mixed-sex lessons and in boys-only lessons there was noise, pushing and shoving, throwing of bags – and the occasional punch; chair-legs were scraped along the floor, desks were rattled, and there was a sustained barrage of jokes and laughter. The jokes were made by the boys and were directed against a range of targets, teachers, girls and also other boys. The girls sat quietly throughout the disruption and noise, waiting to hear what the health professional or teacher had to say. (Measor et al., 2000, p. 72)

This picture of disruption is painted implicitly or explicitly in much literature around boys' behaviour in sexuality lessons (Hilton, 2001, 2003; Lenderyou and Ray, 1997; Measor, Tiffin and Fry, 1996). The reason proffered for young men's behaviour is that they are disengaged by sexuality education's 'feminised' content and delivery (Davidson, 1996). Sexuality education is equated with 'girls stuff', concentrating on 'women and periods' and issues such as pregnancy and contraception deemed uninteresting or irrelevant for many boys (Forrest, 2000). One recent exception to this depiction is Buston and Wight's (2006) study of 14–16-year-old young men's experiences of programmes in the east of Scotland. These researchers report that while young men critiqued programme content, the majority viewed this education positively. For these young men, school-based sexuality education was a valuable and significant source of sexual information.

Increasing the number of men delivering sexuality education is proposed as a strategy to encourage boys to become more engaged and less unruly in class (Forrest, 2000; Measor et al., 1996). Drawing on the same arguments as the larger debate about men in teaching, male teachers are seen to benefit boys as role models and with their teaching style. As they are themselves male it is expected these teachers will choose topics which are relevant to young men and currently 'missing' from programmes. The teachers' own masculinity will also enable them to deliver material in ways that will ignite young men's interest. Their perceived advantage as male role models depends on the political perspective held by those advocating for

more male teachers. For pro-feminist campaigners, these teachers can model gender equitable behaviour that signals interest in sexual health as a positive and valuable undertaking for young men (Measor et al., 2000). Male teachers can imbue a sense of shared responsibility over issues like contraception and pregnancy, which have been relegated women's concerns. For men's rights proponents drawing on mythopoetic discourses¹ (Mills, Francis and Skelton, 2009), male teachers can support young men to reclaim aspects of male sexuality eroded by the 'feminised' culture of sexuality classrooms. Instead of demonising young men's disruptive behaviour (as women and pro-feminists are seen to do), male teachers can shape and deliver content in a way that celebrates and capitalises on the essence of masculinity. The concern for gender equity in the latter approach is to recoup masculinity's status in sexuality education, which feminism is seen to have stolen.

Studies reveal that young women may also prefer a same-gender teacher (Lees, 1994; Measor et al., 2000; Strange et al., 2003). Like some of their male counterparts, young women in these studies believe a same-gender teacher will better understand their issues and be less embarrassing to talk to (Measor et al., 2000). Research has documented the way boys' loud, physically aggressive and verbally abusive behaviour can interfere with learning opportunities for girls (Alldred and David, 2007; Measor, 2004; Measor et al., 2000; Strange et al., 2003, 2006). One proposed solution to this situation is for a female teacher to instruct them separately. Some young women also fear that questions directed at a male teacher will be interpreted by peers as displaying sexual interest in them (Strange et al., 2003). Explaining this dilemma, young women in Measor et al.'s study (2000) indicated they found asking questions problematic when sex education was conducted in science lessons by a male teacher.

Amy: You want to ask questions, but we have a male science teacher and you can't.

Debbie: With a male science teacher you think twice about asking a question.

(p. 143)

Young women in this study also expressed other objections to male teachers whom they considered disrespectful and used humour inappropriately. One young woman described how she did not appreciate Mr Jones's jokes, stating in her class evaluation, 'I was angry because the teacher took the piss out of virgins' (Measor et al., 2000, p. 143).

The 'boy-turn' (Weaver-Hightower, 2003) in education has meant the issue of same-gender teachers for girls in sexuality education has been overshadowed by concerns about boys.

These debates imply *who* the teacher is (in terms of gender identity) has implications for programme effectiveness for boys and girls. In the current research, participants' responses encourage a reframing of this issue about whether gender influences a sexuality educator's effectiveness. As in Chapter 4, one of the aims of this chapter is to question how useful this polarisation of female and male preferences in sexuality education is. By casting male and female teachers and students as essentially different, what nuances and possibilities for re-imagining sexuality education are lost?

Current New Zealand context of teacher delivery

To make sense of the current research findings it is necessary to explain the list of educator categories participants could select from in the closed-ended survey question. In this question, participants could designate a best educator from the following categories: 'teachers', 'school counsellors', 'peer sexuality educators', 'public health nurses', 'specialist organisations' (such as Family Planning) and 'other' with the last two categories requesting a 'please specify'. These options were formulated on the basis of sexuality education provision in New Zealand. The majority of school-based sexuality education occurs as part of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum where sexuality education is a requirement until the end of year 10 (when students are approximately 14 years old). After this, schools discretionally offer senior students sexuality education as part of health education. Such provision means health and physical education teachers generally teach this subject.

Students may receive information about sexuality from a number of other sources. As part of, or supplementary to, their health curriculum some schools invite specialist organisations to provide discrete sessions on specific sexuality issues. Organisations like the New Zealand Family Planning Association have historically provided such education, offering sessions on relationship skills, safer sex, contraception, conception and birth. Other organisations concentrate on specific aspects of sexuality, like sexual diversity or homophobia. For example, there are Auckland- and Wellington-based groups committed to providing support, contact and education for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, Fa'afafine and

Takataapui youth.² There are also organisations which focus on ethnic sectors of the youth population (such as Maori and Pasifika) and deliver sexuality programmes in accordance with cultural protocols.³ Family Life Education Pasifika (FLEP) is a Pacific health organisation that uses music, dance, drama and arts to promote a positive view of sexual health and well-being in intermediate, secondary and tertiary institutions.

Many of these organisations employ young educators so their work has a peer-led component. For instance, an Auckland-based organisation called 'Awhitia' (Te Kaha o te Rangatahi Whanau o Tamariki Makaurau) has a peer education team who share information from a youth perspective. This group works in schools with high populations of Maori students and employs role play, song, dance and drama to explore topics like puberty, contraception, parenting, sexual orientation, relationships and sexually transmissible infections (Te Kaha o te Rangatahi Whanau o Tamariki Makaurau Trust, 2010). Peer sexuality education might also be instigated through a more formal programme in schools which involves implementing the services of organisations like Auckland Sexual Health Services (as described earlier). In these instances peer educators are derived from the school population itself and provide a permanent internal school presence.

Health nurses are additional sources of sexuality education, making periodic school visits or in some cases forming part of a school-based clinic. School counsellors also act as a resource for students who are grappling with sexuality issues in a counselling context. In some cases, school nurses and counsellors may deliver class-based sessions at the invitation of another teacher. These sessions usually address special areas of expertise such as 'sexually transmissible infections' for nurses or 'sexual violence prevention' for counsellors. While health teachers are officially a main source of sexuality information, students are exposed to a range of potential sexuality educators. The next section provides a synopsis of who, out of this collection of educators, young people named as 'best'.

Who young people think make the best educators

In the questionnaire, peer sexuality educators were named most often as the best people to teach sexuality education (47 per cent ticked this option). One of the reasons for this choice was succinctly captured by one male participant who said, 'youth like to talk to youth' (Survey

Data, Male, 18 years). In the following focus group extract, participants signal the appeal of talking to a peer educator of similar age.

Sandra: Being the same age as you is important I think

Heidi: Yeah, that's definitely a huge one

Louisa: Why's that?

Sandra: Because you can relate to them

Heidi: You're not going to take an 80 year old seriously (*laugh*)

Mick: But they can't be too close to your age group otherwise, because I don't know maybe they wouldn't be serious enough and then you wouldn't take them seriously enough as well because you'd think that they are more just a mate

Haley: We had Miss Adams because she was quite young it actually worked out quite well

Heidi: But if they were a mate that would be quite good as long as they have the information you want to talk about

Haley: And they took it seriously

(Decile 10, Co-educational School, Mixed Focus Group)

Participants valued being taught by someone of a similar age as this person was perceived to be more likely to relate to them. As young people do not enjoy a structurally equal relationship with most adults, talking with someone of the same generation is presumed to be easier. The finding that peer educators make the best educators is supported by research revealing 'friends' are a significant, and often preferred, source of sexual information for young people (Allen, 2005d; Bleakley et al., 2009; Epstein and Ward, 2008; Thomson, 1991; Walker, 1997).

Peer educators were not unreservedly named as the best people to teach sexuality education in the above extract. The benefit of being youthful is tagged with qualifications like needing knowledge ('as long as they have the information you want') and taking their role seriously. Other focus group commentary indicated peer educators were perceived to have certain disadvantages. Some participants indicated they avoided peer educators because 'They'd probably like tell their friends and all' (Male, 16 years, Decile 4, Co-educational School, Mixed Focus Group). Other difficulties were that peer educators were known to students and may fail to keep issues confidential.

Kassi: One of our friends, she's a Peer Sexuality Support person, she's the type of person that I would never ever go to with any of my problems though

Jessica: Yeah

Louisa: Why is that?

Kassi: Because I know her on a personal level like ... I don't know she's just *(pause)* you've got to have people that you probably don't know that well

Christian: Yeah definitely

Kassi: That won't judge you *(pause)* and they don't know you.

(Mixed gender, Community Focus Group)

Such comments reveal the complexity of determining who participants thought made the best educators. The two extracts above indicate that for these young people simply being a peer educator does not automatically render someone an effective teacher. In the first narrative, qualities such as being knowledgeable and taking this role seriously are also valued, while in the second it is someone who is non-judgemental. Ambivalence expressed across focus groups about advantages of youthfulness was captured articulately by the following participant:

Kyle: Older people without being too generalising are sometimes a bit out of touch on what some of the young people are going through, not always but, it's easier for someone of our own age group to know what our own age group is going through but then again there's a lot of old people who bring a whole lot of wisdom and also *(pause)* purposely educate themselves on what's happening so they can speak to it as good, as well as anyone.

(Mixed gender, Community Focus Group, 19 years)

Kyle's comments indicate a struggle to generalise about the effectiveness of educators based on age. His remark that 'older people...are sometimes a bit out of touch on what some people are going through' rapidly slides into the concession that, 'there's a lot of old people who bring a whole lot of wisdom and also purposely educate themselves on what's happening [to young people] so they can speak to it as good, as well as anyone'. Such narratives offer support for the idea that educator identity did not appear to be as important to these young people as the qualities sexuality educators display.

Teachers were the next most commonly specified 'best' educator with 37 per cent of participants choosing this option. This finding corroborates other research identifying teachers as a significant source of information about sexuality (Harrison and Dempsey, 1998; Hirst, 2008; Lawrence, Kanabus and Regis, 2000; Rosenthal and Smith, 1995).

Focus group participants often referred to favourite teachers providing detailed descriptions about why their classes were effective. One such example follows, where for brevity a single participant's words are quoted, even though these sentiments were shared by other group members.

Because sexuality is a touchy issue for some people, particularly if you start talking about like your own sexuality and stuff, like cause we usually have discussions in this class all the time about everything.....so you do need a good teacher that is on your level because like you don't want to say stuff if they're like up there [gestures upwards] looking down on you. Because it's been pretty cool cause like we had Miss Grey and Miss White in the Health Department and Miss Grey was like real cool, cause she used to like sit with us in the seats and stuff and come and have like talks to us and stuff. (Decile 4, Co-educational School, Mixed Focus Group, Male, 16 years)

Being 'on the same level' as students rather than a figure of authority was identified as an important educator characteristic across focus groups. This approach helped facilitate discussion of 'a touchy issue' like 'your own sexuality' and appeared less judgemental. These qualities were not deemed the preserve of teachers, but often attributed to other educators as demonstrated in the next section.

While some teachers were praised highly by participants, this group of educators received most criticism during focus group discussion. Participants provided vivid anecdotes about teachers who were uncomfortable with subject material, lacking in knowledge and/or inept at managing classroom behaviour.

Zara: We had Miss Plum she was a PE [Physical Education] teacher but she cried

Zoe: Yeah she did aye

Zara: So we just felt sorry for her, [student's name] made her cry about 3 times

Zoe: Yeah

Zara: Like it was so horrible

Zoe: Yeah but wasn't someone asking her about her personal experience?

Zara: Yeah

Zoe: ...and she was like [mimics Miss Plum] 'I don't want to talk about it' (*laugh*)

Lenny: Yeah that's why it should be a, it should be like a uhm sex educator doing it not...

Harry: Not a teacher

Ginny: For embarrassment reasons and knowledge reasons as well

Harry: Yeah cause the teachers, the teachers talk so much like

Odette: And you kind of know them as well before like before

Ginny: Yeah

Odette: Like you're on a different level and then when they teach you like

Zoe: So you kind of feel, it's really awkward.

(Decile 10, Co-educational School, Mixed Focus Group)

Harry's remark, 'the teachers talk so much like' signalled a common fear that some teachers would breach student confidentiality. Contact with students outside of sexuality education left some participants anxious that information shared in these classes might negatively influence other aspects of school life. Despite such limitations survey participants identified teachers as their second most popular educator. This discrepancy may be explained by the unevenness of teacher competency where some are extremely effective and others struggle with teaching this subject (as one young man noted, '*some* teachers are really good at it' – Survey, 16 years).

Public health nurses ranked third in the 'best' educator hierarchy (named by 35 per cent of participants). In survey responses participants commented that 'Public health nurses have medical knowledge that can help with questions (Male, 18 years). Knowing about sexually transmissible infections was a particular benefit of nurses' medical knowledge: 'They know about STIs how you get them how they can be treated etc.' (Male, 16 years). Focus group participants also made reference to the individualised service nurses provided. This was deemed a particular advantage for those who were embarrassed at posing questions in class or who had something confidential to discuss: 'I suppose if you're by yourself and the health nurse is with you, you can get a lot more out of it, with a teacher...because it's a larger group then you know, you can't really talk about what you really want to know' (Decile 1, Co-educational School, Focus Group, Teresa, 17 years).

This ranking of school nurses was relatively high compared to other UK-based research. Westwood and Mullan (2009) surveyed 1,959 year 8–10 pupils' knowledge and attitudes about the role of the school nurse in secondary schools. Many of the participants in this

research had no idea who their school nurse was or what they did. Young men and older students were the least impressed by school nurses' contribution to sexuality education. Overall, young women were more likely to report their school nurse as being supportive, sympathetic, knowledgeable, approachable and fun. Westwood and Mullan conclude that generally, young people did not appear to be very positive about the contribution of school nurses to sexuality education. Young people's higher ranking of school nurses in the current research may be attributable to the fact that those with whom they have contact are highly dedicated to delivering a quality service. This situation is a consequence of the fact that dealing with sexual health issues in secondary schools is not necessarily part of public health nurses' workload. Generally, public health nurses in New Zealand focus on the general health of primary school-aged children. Visiting secondary schools for sexuality related matters is often a non-compulsory feature of workload that only those with a special interest in this area undertake. Those public health nurses with whom secondary school students come into contact are therefore more likely to be there because they are committed to young people's sexual health.

After nurses, specialist organisations were perceived the 'best' educators (18 per cent of participants named them). Comments in surveys and focus groups revealed the appeal of these organisations was their 'fun' and 'interesting' pedagogy. In the following survey responses participants praise these organisations for making learning interactive.

Because they make the subject fun and at the same time learn a lot. (Survey, Male, 18 years)

Because they have a more hands on approach and don't give too much 'worksheets' or things like that. (Survey, Male, 17 years)

Because they won't be boring like the others. (Survey, Male, 17 years)

They make it fun and sound interesting. (Survey, Male, 17 years)

British and Australian studies also reveal students' preference for interactive classroom pedagogies (Alldred and David, 2007; Lupton and Tulloch, 1996; Strange et al., 2003). In Strange et al.'s (2003) research in English secondary schools, 15- and 16-year-olds described wanting 'active' teaching methods such as group discussion, rather than

mundane tasks like completing worksheets (p. 208). Participants in the current study often commended specific organisations for their professionalism and interactive teaching methods like sharing and discussing personal stories. In the following extract, participants discuss what outside organisations were thought to specifically offer.

Sandra: You want someone who's not from the school or someone who actually does it as a job and knows what they're talking about and you know can be professional about what they are telling you and...

Heidi: Like Family Planning

Sandra: Yeah

Haley: Some of the teachers crack up about saying sexual intercourse sometimes, it's just hilarious you can't take them seriously when they're cracking up themselves

Louisa: So that survey question where I asked you about who do you think are the best people to teach sexuality education, were all the options you wanted in there?

Don: Family Planning, I just crossed out specialist organisations and put Family Planning

Haley: I said [name of community organisation supporting same-sex attracted youth] ...they're so relaxed about it. Like they tell their own story or they'll sit there and answer our questions that the teacher would get embarrassed about.

(Decile 10, Co-educational School, Mixed gender)

For these participants outside organisations 'know what they're talking about' because they draw on experience and exude a professionalism that invites open discussion.

The educator category named least frequently were counsellors (13 per cent). 'Counsellors' did not emerge as a spontaneous topic of focus group discussion, with only two participants signalling they had sourced sexuality information from them. While some participants may not have disclosed their counselling experiences, it is likely a majority had not consulted counsellors about sexuality issues. Only students with specific sexuality concerns would usually have contact with counsellors. While some schools do have counsellors who are concurrently health teachers, dedicated counsellors do not generally teach sexuality classes regularly. For many participants, a lack of direct experience of counsellors as sexuality educators may have consigned them to the bottom of the 'best educator' hierarchy.

Characteristics of the best sexuality educators

'Being knowledgeable' was the most commonly cited reason for choosing any category of educator, closely followed by being 'able to relate to young people' and reference to characteristics linked with an educator's 'professionalism'. This section explores these open-ended survey answers, employing focus group narratives to explain them.

Open-ended survey responses often referred to an educator's depth and range of knowledge with participants explaining they had chosen a particular educator because 'They would have a wide knowledge about it (Male, 16 years) and 'These people would know more in depth about the issues they will teach' (Female, 18 years). The importance of having an educator who was knowledgeable also surfaced in focus groups. In the following discussion where participants debate the appropriate gender and age of an educator, being knowledgeable appears to transcend these considerations.

Louisa: Who do you think is the best person to teach sexuality education then?

Amber: I think a lady

Becca: Either one [i.e. male or female]

Tom: We just say females cause we've only had females up until now, like Miss Nicolls and Miss Samuels have taken it since...

Julian: I had Mr Sanders

Angela: As long as they know what they are talking about that's all that matters

Claire: Yeah

Louisa: They don't necessarily have to be closer to your age or a particular gender?

Becca: No

Tom: Nah

Amber: No.

(Decile 4, Co-educational School, Mixed focus group)

While this conversation commences with the assertion that an educator's gender and age are important, it quickly shifts to concern with an educator's qualities in the form of 'knowing what they are talking about'. The structure of this conversation was typical of debates about best educators, and indicates how talk about educator identities was reframed into concern with educator qualities.

The next most commonly cited reason for survey participants to chose an educator made reference to this person's 'professionalism'. The phrase 'because they are trained' emerged repeatedly across educator categories. Training appeared to be valued because it increased the likelihood educators would be knowledgeable, offer accurate advice, be able to teach effectively and deal with young people's concerns.

Because they will be trained to have the correct information. (Survey, Female, 17 years)

Because they are trained specifically to help with or to explain what sexuality is. (Survey, Female, 17 years)

Because they are trained to deal with teenagers and sex issues related to them. (Survey, Female, 16 years)

Because they are trained professionals with a lot more knowledge. Know what they are talking about. (Survey, Female, 17 years)

Focus group participants also acknowledged the benefits of trained educators given the 'sensitive' and controversial nature of some issues. In one example, the importance of educators who were trained to challenge heteronormative assumptions and were knowledgeable about sexual diversity was discussed; 'teachers at school should be educated on gay issues so they can pass it onto the students' (Male, 16 years, Community Focus Group). This group of self-identified same-gender attracted students saw teachers who were 'educated' about sexual diversity and who could impart this knowledge to students as one strategy for combating homophobia in schools.

Aligned with survey remarks about the advantages of being 'trained' were references to the value of educators who were *experienced* in dealing with sexuality issues. These remarks tended to relate to personal experience, rather than teaching experience, although this was also mentioned. Personal experience was regarded by some students as lending integrity to teaching practice; 'Because they know what to do or tell you the truth cause I think they've been there and done that' (Survey, Male, 16 years). When an educator was believed to lack this experience it could undermine their credibility with students and subsequently teaching effectiveness. In one school, several focus groups criticised a teacher whom they depicted as ineffective on numerous grounds. While discussing Miss Apple's (a pseudonym) perceived flaws one participant

questioned her experience of sexuality issues and subsequent ability to teach this subject.

Heidi: And also everyone was talking about Miss Apple and saying 'oh she hasn't even had sex yet'. Like everyone was like, rumours were like going around and stuff.

Fraser: But she has a child

All: (laugh).

(Decile 10, Co-educational School, Mixed Gender Focus Group)

Sexual experience is aligned here with educator effectiveness, with Miss Apple's perceived asexuality considered an impediment to her teaching ability. The importance of educators' personal experience was also evident in participants' responses to another survey question enquiring how sexuality education could be improved. Young people proposed including educators '... who had been through the rough times of sexuality (baby, Dads, etc.)' (Survey, Male, 17 years), 'People that have had life changes from sexually transmitted diseases' (Survey, Female, 16 years) and 'People of different sexualities' (Survey, Female, 17 years). Such answers reveal the value participants placed on experience where personal stories can add meaning to seemingly intangible concepts like HIV/AIDS or unexpected pregnancy.

Another popular reason for specifying why an educator had been chosen was that they were a 'specialist' ('Because they are specialists at doing their job' – Survey, Male, 19 years). This was a quality participants related to each educator category (e.g. teachers, peer sexuality educators, public health nurses etc.) and not just external organisations specialising in sexual health education. Being a specialist was associated with possessing greater knowledge ('deal with that topic only, therefore more knowledgeable and will understand' – Survey, Female, 18 years), being more comfortable with subject matter ('They do this job specifically and they are comfortable with what they are teaching' – Survey, Male, 16 years) and an ability to address students' questions ('Because it's their job. They know what they're on about, know all questions' – Survey, Female, 16 years). Focus groups also mentioned the advantages of having a specialist sexuality educator (in this case external to the school) whom they viewed as better equipped for lessons than generalist teachers.

Louisa: So are you saying that it's better to have an educator you don't know?

Zoe: Yeah

Zara: Someone who's got training in doing it. Cause then you think well this person does it all the time

Zoe: Yeah

Ginny: Cause they'll be used to the jokes and stuff as well

Odette: Cause like I just felt, when I wasn't laughing at Miss Michaels I felt sorry and embarrassed for her

Zara: Yeah, me too.

(Decile 10, Co-educational School, Mixed Focus Group)

Specialising in this teaching was believed to make an educator less uncomfortable with the subject matter and better at managing student 'jokes'. Participants felt that dedicated sexuality educators ('[a] person who does it all the time') was more effective than the situation described by one young man: 'my teacher says that she teaches sexuality cause she has to not because she really wants to' (Decile 1, Co-educational School, Focus Group, 17 years).

Being able to relate to young people was another key quality participants associated with 'the best' educators. Survey data revealed being able to relate to young people involved an educator being trusted ('Because these are the people that I could trust or go and ask' – Male, 17 years), aware of the realities of young people's lives ('Because these are the types of people that have a wider understanding of/for youth' – Male, 16 years) and able to foster open discussion ('Can relate to them and feel more comfortable talking about sex and the things to do with it' – Female, 16 years). Considerable debate occurred in focus groups over which educators related best to young people. Typically, these discussions were resolved by acknowledgement that this characteristic was not necessarily aligned with an educator's identity (e.g. in terms of age, gender, job title). This conclusion is summarised here by participants discussing the importance of an educator's age.

Aroha: It's not the age. I don't think it's the age. It's just the way they approach the subject. Like, I mean, you could have a real old person, but they could be like really young in mind. Like, really on your level

Maisey: Yeah

Aroha: So, it's just their whole appearance, like, are they open-minded or not?

Susan: Yeah, just as long as the students feel comfortable talking to that person.

(Decile 4, Co-educational School, Mixed Focus Group)

These survey and focus group findings have implications for the assertion that particular types of educators are better able to relate to young people. For instance, peer educators are often accredited with the ability to establish relationships more readily with students because of their closer proximity in age. This point of similarity is also seen to engender greater understanding of young people's lived realities. The idea that being the same age will facilitate communication and understanding demonstrates an essentialist logic. This assertion can ignore the complexity of young people's subjectivities which are produced at the intersection of structures such as class, ethnicity, able-bodiedness and sexuality (to name a few). A middle-class, New Zealand-born Pakeha,⁴ female peer sexuality educator therefore is unlikely to have greater affinity and understanding of a similarly aged, female, Muslim refugee (despite sharing the same gender, age, school and regional locality). The finding that being able to relate to young people was a quality that participants attributed to all educator types gives credence to the idea that this need not be the preserve of one educator type.

Implications for teaching practice

These findings problematise the idea that a certain type of educator (e.g. peer sexuality educators, nurses etc.) make the best teachers of sexuality education. As participants attributed the same 'best' qualities to all educators, these characteristics were not perceived the domain of any educator type. This finding suggests that the relationship between educator identity and teacher effectiveness was not neatly aligned for young people in this study. This finding may have implications for how investigations of effective practice in sexuality education are framed. When 'who' an educator is may not be a determining factor in the quality of teaching practice, the merits of determining programme effectiveness by placing emphasis on the teacher's identity become less clear. These young people's responses imply the relationship between teacher identity and best educator qualities may be more arbitrary.

These findings might be read in relation to key debates concerning the teaching of sexuality education. Some researchers have suggested that boys' negative reactions to sexuality programmes can be attributed to the teacher's gender and boys' preference for male educators (Bleach, 1998). Such statements align effective classroom practice with gender as an aspect of the teacher's identity. A similar framing of educator identity and effective practice occurs around the issue of educator age. Peer-led programmes capitalise on the presumption 'older' educators are less likely

to understand youth culture and subsequently relate to young people in meaningful ways. In the current study, survey participants were asked if they preferred sexuality educators to be the same gender as them, with a majority of participants (77 per cent) answering 'no'. Participants were also asked if they preferred sexuality educators to be nearer their age, again with a majority (65 per cent) answering 'no'. This result is commensurate with the way participants bestowed teaching qualities they valued to all types of educator, not just peer educators. 'Who' the educator was (e.g. whether they were male or female, old or young) did not appear to matter as much as the characteristics they displayed.

This finding is consistent with more general research concerning the benefits of matching teachers and students by gender (Martin and Marsh, 2005). Carrington et al.'s (2007) study takes a critical view of policy premised upon what these researchers consider as 'a number of unexamined assumptions' about the benefits of same-gender teachers (p. 397). Working with a younger age group, these researchers interviewed more than 300, 7–8-year-olds in the north and south-east of England. Almost two-thirds of the sample (92 boys, 106 girls) responded negatively to the question 'Do you think it makes any difference whether you have a man or a lady teacher?' In relation to whether they considered their teachers role models, those few who did were equally as likely to nominate a female as a male. Children's interview responses also revealed the teacher's gender had little apparent bearing on their level of academic engagement or the perceived quality of their classroom experiences. From these findings, Carrington et al., conclude, '... there is little or no evidence to support the view that the "feminised" nature of the teaching profession and concomitant shortage of male "role models" in schools has an adverse effect on boys' levels of academic motivation and engagement' (Carrington et al., 2007, p. 411). Like the current study, educator qualities such as 'consistent, even-handed and supportive' treatment of students took precedence over whether the teacher was male or female.

Knowing what young people perceive as making the best sexuality educators is integral to any programme that effectively addresses their needs and interests. From the qualities designated in this study, it is clear that participants felt 'being knowledgeable', 'able to relate to young people' and demonstrating characteristics relating to a sense of 'professionalism' were imperative *whoever* the educator was.

7

Sexuality Education Re-imagined? Relinquishing the Disease and Pregnancy Prevention Focus

In this chapter the theme of ‘re-imagining sexuality education’ is revisited by rethinking the disease and pregnancy prevention focus of programmes. Its content differs from previous chapters, in that it does not present empirical findings. Instead, discussion is premised on participants’ calls for including desire and pleasure in programmes as delineated in Chapter 5. Taking young people’s call for inclusion of these issues seriously, this chapter speculates on how education including pleasure and desire might be re-conceived. Such a re-imagining moves beyond the insertion of a discourse of desire and pleasure in sexuality education, to a shift in the philosophy and conceptualisation of programmes. With the aim of re-imagining sexuality education, I ask what might happen if we were to relinquish the disease and pregnancy prevention focus that currently preoccupies most programmes? This question engages debates about what has historically constituted *effective* sexuality education in countries like New Zealand, England, Australia and North America and what might constitute future measures of ‘effectiveness’.

The first part of the chapter explores how programme ‘effectiveness’ has been conceptualised in existing literature. This examination establishes that a health promotion focus largely underpins notions of sexuality education’s ‘effectiveness’, calculated by a reduction in so-called ‘negative’ sexual outcomes. This measure persists despite contemporary programmes professing broader aims and more holistic approaches to young people’s sexuality. In New Zealand, for instance, the inception of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum in 1999 enabled sexuality education to recognise student sexual well-being as more than the absence of disease. Provision for such education is contained in explicit policy statements about this being a lifelong process that

'provides students with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to develop positive attitudes towards sexuality, to take care of their sexual health, and to enhance their interpersonal relationships, now and in the future' (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 38). Despite this policy level change, much school-based sexuality education in New Zealand clings to a disease and pregnancy prevention focus. This situation is evident from the critique made by young people in the current study about how potential dangers of sexual activity dominate programme content and approaches (see also Allen, 2005c, 2005d). Evidence of this enduring focus is also apparent in international sexuality programmes with participants in Australian (Hillier and Mitchell, 2008; Lupton and Tulloch, 1996) and British (Alldred and David, 2007; Strange et al., 2006) research making similar observations. These criticisms continue in social environments where the importance of addressing other aspects of students' sexuality is generally acknowledged.

Given this persistence in programme aims, the chapter explores what investments schools have in retaining a disease and pregnancy prevention focus. This question may seem unwarranted given the potentially life-threatening and transforming consequences of sexual activity's negative outcomes. It may also appear inane, given that equipping young people with knowledge and skills to avert 'unwanted' and 'negative' outcomes of sexual activity has been a historical programme objective (Diorio, 1985; Reiss, 1993; Sears, 1992). However, it is precisely the assumption that a disease and pregnancy prevention focus are inherently 'appropriate' and 'beneficial' that this chapter endeavours to trouble.

I argue that there are several reasons for schools' investment in prioritising pregnancy and disease prevention. The first involves the social constitution of sexuality as 'problematic' and 'dangerous', and therefore necessitating crisis management. This perception intensifies when sexuality is linked with young people for whom there exists a normative and cultural ideal of being 'non-sexual' (Monk, 2001). Sexuality education is faced with the dilemma of undertaking the contradictory task of acknowledging the sexual activity of those who are 'ideally' and normatively, socially constituted as 'non-sexual'. Concentrating on the negative outcomes of sexual activity is one way in which programmes may be seen to reconcile this tension.

The chapter also examines the way a disease and pregnancy prevention emphasis is congruent with social concern about 'risk'. Jones argues that contemporary Western societies are characterised by 'risk anxiety' where there is a preoccupation with 'protection from risk' (Jones, 2001,

p. 10). Within such a historical moment the importance of protecting young people from perceived negative sexual outcomes gains renewed potency. This environment casts schools as risk-conscious spaces consumed with student safety, a role which shapes their approach to student sexuality and sexuality education. State concern with social and economic prosperity is another reason explored for schools' investment in a danger prevention emphasis. The utility of sexuality education as a governmental instrument to reduce the negative social and economic toll young people's sexual activity is thought to incur is also analysed.

When reducing unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmissible infections are the usual markers of programme success, I ask whether a danger prevention focus is the best way of achieving this goal. Evidence suggests that discourses consistent with this programme emphasis work to position young people in ways that are counterproductive to encouraging pregnancy and disease prevention (Allen, 2007a). Young people have argued that programmes which prioritise these concerns fail to meet their needs for information about pleasure, desire and the logistics of sexual activity (Allen, 2007d; Forrest, Strange and Oakley, 2004; Hirst, 2004; Measor, Tiffin and Miller, 2000). This approach also disallows the possibility that young people may *choose* to put themselves at risk of STIs and decide to get pregnant. In light of these considerations, I argue a danger prevention emphasis may not be successful at reducing 'unwanted' sexual outcomes and could have negative effects for young people.

In the final section, I attempt to re-conceptualise what constitutes programme 'success' and the implications of this for how sexuality education might be re-conceived. Instead of offering a definitive answer about how sexuality education might be re-conceptualised, I endeavour to encourage new ways of thinking about what issues it prioritises and why. To re-think the possibility of new programme priorities, the chapter draws on Foucault's work around the ethics of pleasure as one example of how sexuality education might be productively reconfigured.

Reconciling this 're-imagining' with the postscript of Chapter 5

Given the difficulties already identified for including a discourse of pleasure in sexuality education, it might seem incongruent to 're-imagine' programmes in the way I propose here. As indicated in the postscript of Chapter 5, the reason for drawing attention to emerging challenges of pleasure's inclusion was not meant to undermine or

dismiss this possibility. Acknowledging these issues forms part of a critically reflexive practice to explore the potential of including pleasure in programmes in ways that enable, instead of foreclose, positive sexual possibilities for young people. In undertaking this analysis, I am not suggesting that these challenges warrant throwing 'pleasure' out of sexuality education before it has even found a 'legitimate' place within it.

The 'nature' of discourse is such that all discursive meanings have regulatory effects. This means that no matter what philosophical underpinnings or aims we might possess/desire for sexuality education, all carry potential possibilities and constraints for subjective agency. What is important, therefore, is interrogating the configuration of those effects and their implications for achieving social/sexual justice in sexuality education. Like Rasmussen (2009) I think it is important to examine the political motivations that underpin a call for pleasure in programmes. This chapter is positioned in conversation with this concern in two regards.

Firstly, it attempts to employ a Foucauldian conceptualisation of ethical pleasures in order to explore their potential to circumvent some of the caveats outlined in Chapter 5. 'Pleasure' does not stand alone in Foucault's theoretical exploration of this term. Instead, it is preceded by 'ethics' or 'ethical'. From a Foucauldian perspective, the pursuit of 'pleasure' in and of itself, as a new means of legitimising sexual activity (as manifested in some of the classroom pedagogy and in-service teacher training I witnessed), is not sought. As will be detailed in the description of ethical pleasures below, Foucault does not propose this kind of 'pleasure imperative'. The inclusion of 'ethical' before 'pleasures' also thwarts some of the normative slippages I have observed in the inclusion of pleasure in teacher training and sexuality education (see Chapter 5 'Postscript'). For Foucault, ethical pleasures are unhinged from sexual identities, in that engagement in particular pleasurable practices does not determine 'heterosexuality', 'homosexuality', 'bisexuality', etc. As the discussion of Rasmussen's reading of Foucault below reveals, this conceptualisation of the ethics of pleasure promises understandings of self that transcend normative gendered and sexual constraints.

Secondly, this chapter endeavours to answer Rasmussen's (2009) call to explicitly name and scrutinize the morals and assumed 'progressiveness' of pleasure's incorporation in sexuality education. Drawing on Foucault's ideas about ethical pleasures provides an explicit statement about why such a discourse is 'deemed good'. The key lies in the word 'ethics' which involves 'care of the self' and implicitly care of others, which seeks to foster relationships of social/sexual justice. As indicated in Chapter 1, a

guiding motivation for re-imagining sexuality education is what I call the pursuit of social/sexual justice. Sexuality education concerned with achieving social/sexual justice strives to be non-heteronormative, non-gender normative, non-discriminatory on any basis (ethnic, religious, physical ability, level of sexual experience) and opens possibilities for young people to experience sexuality positively as *sexual subjects* (Allen, 2005d). In this chapter, I draw on Foucault's ideas about an ethics of pleasure to examine their possibilities as a vehicle for achieving such a form of sexuality education.

How is programme effectiveness currently constituted?

What the aims of sexuality education should be is a question which is intimately tied to how programme effectiveness is measured. It is only when we have a sense of what sexuality education should do that we can ascertain whether or not it has been successful. The aims of programmes are diverse nationally and internationally (Poobalan et al., 2009). As Grunseit et al., (1997) identify in their international review of sexuality education, 'programmes comprise a wide range of curricula that differ in terms of aims, scope, implementation and content' (p. 422). This diversity is reflected in the array of nomenclature to describe what might broadly be conceptualised as 'sexuality education' such as family life education, sexual health, sex and relationships education, relationships and sexuality education, human sexuality, sex respect and abstinence-only education (Grunseit et al., 1997; Parker, Wellings and Lazarus, 2009).

What counts as 'effective' sexuality education varies because of the diversity of programmes and their aims. For instance, a significant goal of abstinence-only education is encouraging abstinence from sexual intercourse until marriage. As a consequence of this aim, a measure of programme effectiveness is a reduction in numbers of young people who engage in sexual activity before marriage (Santelli et al., 2006). In countries where a significant proportion of the population are infected with HIV, increasing condom use during sexual intercourse is a key goal for sexuality education (Magnussen et al., 2004). Programme effectiveness in this instance may be judged by reported use of condoms and a decrease in the number of new cases of HIV diagnosed.

The prevailing health promotion focus of sexuality education has meant that its effectiveness has generally been measured in relation to this overarching concern. As indicated in Chapter 1, sexuality education in New Zealand (as elsewhere) has experienced different emphases in

aims and content at various historical moments as a consequence of particular cultural, political and economic factors (Allen and Elliot, 2008). Despite periods when New Zealand programmes focused on ensuring moral purity (late 1800s), eradicating venereal disease (both world wars) or prevention of HIV/AIDS (1980s) the unifying thread of these foci is 'health promotion'. Kippax and Stephenson (2005) explain how this theme of health promotion translates into a measure of programme effectiveness:

The purpose of sex and relationships education programmes or interventions is to improve health outcomes in a population – typically young people. In the case of sex and relationships education programmes, improvement might mean a reduction in rates of HIV or sexually transmissible infections, a reduction in the number of unwanted pregnancies and/or a reduction in the number of abortions. (p. 359)

Programme effectiveness is conventionally perceived as a reduction in 'negative' outcomes of sexual activity such as unplanned pregnancy (DiCenso et al., 2002), STIs and abortion. This health promotion agenda is underscored by an almost ritual citation of statistics highlighting the need for improvement in the population's sexual health. Regardless of its global derivation, the literature concerned with sexuality education evaluation invariably includes (and often commences with) a statement about high rates of unplanned pregnancies, STIs and sometimes the early age of sexual initiation (Milhausen et al., 2008; Schaalma et al., 2004; Smylie et al., 2008). This last statistic often serves to signal early and subsequently 'promiscuous' sexual activity as linked to unplanned pregnancy and abortion (Magnussen and Trost, 2006). Recounting these statistics provides justification for sexuality education and a measure by which its effectiveness can be discerned.

In addition to a reduction in 'negative' sexual health statistics, programme effectiveness has also been judged by a number of 'softer' measures. These indicators cohere around behaviours, knowledge and attitudes deemed to facilitate these statistical reductions. For instance, using condoms during sexual intercourse is a behaviour that supports lowering rates of STIs and unplanned pregnancies. As a consequence, programme effectiveness is sometimes measured by an increase in young people reporting frequency of condom use (Raj et al., 2008). Another common indicator is an increase in knowledge about unplanned pregnancy and contraception following exposure to a sexuality

education intervention (Young Song et al., 2000). Attitudinal changes towards contraceptive agency and perceived ability to communicate with others about sexual activity (including condom and contraceptive use) are also viewed as markers of programme effectiveness (Smylie et al., 2008). While it may not be possible to draw a causal relationship between these indicators and a reduction in disease and unplanned pregnancy, they are considered important antecedents to lowering these statistics.

While many researchers have contributed to current notions of sexuality education's effectiveness, American Douglas Kirby's work has been integral to defining and documenting this concept internationally (Kirby, 1985, 1999, 2001; Kirby and Coyle, 1997; Kirby and Rolleri, 2007). His 1997 review of 35 evaluations of the effectiveness of school-based programmes in the United States was one of the first to provide an empirical basis for researchers to defend and promote the utility of sexuality education (Kirby and Coyle, 1997). Critics of sexuality education often maintain that programmes are ineffective at reducing risk-taking behaviours such as failure to use contraception and/or condoms. These critics have also argued that teaching young people about sex encourages sexual activity (Goldman, 2008). Kirby's work became internationally popular because it provided an answer to such criticisms based on a systematic evaluation of existing evidence. Kirby concluded that some sexuality education delayed young people's sexual initiation, reduced the frequency of intercourse or number of sexual partners, or increased the use of condoms or other forms of contraception (Kirby and Coyle, 1997). In contrast, none of the six abstinence-only programmes included in his review revealed a consistent and significant impact on delaying the onset of intercourse (see Kirby and Coyle, 1997, p. 418).

Kirby's conceptualisation of effective sexuality education in this seminal review offered significant evidence that programmes could reduce sexual risk-taking behaviour. He looked particularly at sexuality education's effect on several sexual and contraceptive behaviours constituted as 'risky'. These included early sexual initiation, frequency of intercourse, number of sexual partners and use of condoms and contraception. In each case, these indicators were perceived to increase propensity towards unplanned pregnancy and STIs.

In addition to determining whether programmes were 'effective', Kirby's early work also explored why some programmes were more successful than others. He asked, 'What curricula are most effective at changing sexual risk-taking behaviours, either by delaying or reducing sexual activity or by increasing the use of protection? What

are their characteristics?’ (Kirby and Coyle, 1997, p. 422). In a later revision of his thinking about these characteristics he delineates ten criteria that make programmes effective (Kirby, 1999). These range from ‘focusing on reducing one or more sexual behaviours that lead to unintended pregnancy or HIV/STD infection’ to having a programme that ‘selected teachers or peers who believed in the programme they were implementing and then provided training for those individuals’ (Kirby, 1999, p. 93). In accordance with his conceptualisation of ‘effectiveness’, each of these characteristics is valued for its contribution to sexuality education’s ultimate goal of reducing unplanned pregnancy and STIs.

Kirby’s (1997) review was updated and extended in 2007, although the original conceptualisation of ‘effective’ sexuality education has endured (Kirby and Roller, 2007). In this later research the review is widened to include 83 studies and extended to incorporate programmes operating outside the United States. The key determinant of ‘effective’ sexuality education remains that of establishing the effects of curriculum-based sex and HIV education on risk-taking behaviours, sexually transmissible infections and pregnancy rates. However, in this research Kirby also examines ‘mediating factors of risk-taking behaviour’ such as personal values and attitudes towards sex and self-efficacy and sexual negotiation skills (Kirby and Roller, 2007). This addition reflects a contemporary concern beyond hard statistics of pregnancy and STI reduction to recognition of the importance of factors which contribute to them (e.g. increased knowledge and attitudinal change). Common characteristics of programmes effective in changing sexual risk behaviours are unfurled from 10 to 17 and explored in greater depth. The reason for tracking the legacy of Kirby’s work is to demonstrate that his initial conceptualisation of ‘effective’ programmes has prevailed and remains influential in decreeing what counts as their ‘success’.

Kirby’s work has succeeded in providing a strong evidence-based argument for the inclusion and importance of school-based sexuality education. This contribution has significantly muffled objections to the establishment and resilience of school-based sexuality programmes by moral conservatives in countries like New Zealand. A less anticipated effect of the potency of this argument has been the consolidation of what constitutes ‘effective’ sexuality education. This influence is evidenced in the local appropriation/application of Kirby’s analysis of ‘effective’ sexuality programmes by researchers internationally (see DiCenso et al., 2002; Poobalan et al., 2009). It might also be argued that this conceptualisation of ‘effectiveness’ has engendered a conflation of

sexuality education's 'success' with how well it achieves disease and pregnancy prevention. This definition of effectiveness has implications for changing and/or developing the aims of sexuality programmes. When the justification for sexuality education rests on this notion of 'effectiveness', to challenge such a focus appears to shake the legitimacy of school-based programmes. Put another way, if school-based sexuality education is justified on the basis of its ability to reduce unplanned pregnancies and STIs, to question or suggest the removal of this focus may threaten its very existence.

What might constitute 'effective' sexuality education has been challenged by those who view programmes as about more than disease and pregnancy prevention. The critique made by sexual liberals of a health pragmatist approach to sexuality education (see Chapter 3 for details) has been instrumental in broadening our sense of what might constitute programme 'success'. Within the existing literature there are few who would argue that the reduction of unplanned pregnancy and STIs are unhelpful programme aims. However, what is contested particularly by those drawing on a discourse of sexual liberalism is the means by which this might be achieved and the emphasis bestowed on these objectives. Effective sexuality education from this perspective is about recognising young people's sexual health more holistically and not simply as the absence of sexual disease or unwanted sexual outcomes (Coleman, 2002). Instead, sexual health involves a positive sense of sexual self, feelings of sexual confidence and efficacy, along with the acquisition of skills enabling the successful negotiation of positive sexual experiences.

A parochial concentration on equipping young people with knowledge and skills to avoid pregnancy and STIs is not considered 'effective' sexuality education by critics of this approach. As Kirby's later work around 'mediating factors' attests, to achieve a reduction in 'negative' sexual health statistics requires more than an increase in knowledge about contraception and safer sex. The definition of 'effective' sexuality education has broadened to acknowledge that to experience sexuality positively young people require additional skills and support (Coleman, 2002). While these might be equally beneficial for reducing rates of pregnancy and STIs, they signal a notion of sexual health which extends beyond this focus. In this vein, researchers argue that programmes need to equip young people with 'opportunities for agency' in recognition that sexual health involves an ability to enact decisions that produce positive sexual experiences (Morris, 2005; Paiva, 2005). These experiences might involve initiating or refusing sexual

activity or negotiating pleasurable sexual sensation. Illustrating this perspective Kippax and Stephenson (2005) explain, ‘... effective sex and relationship education provides people with opportunities to socially transform their worlds’ (p. 360). It is upon the possibilities offered by this kind of conceptualisation of ‘successful’ sexuality education that the last section in this chapter is predicated.

This section has explored the way in which ‘effective’ sexuality education is conceptualised in existing academic literature. Such literature does have some impact on how sexuality education operates in schools via its influence on educational policy design and when its insights are adopted by teachers at the level of classroom practice. However, schools’ investment in a disease and pregnancy prevention focus is not directly attributable to the influence of academic literature. As the next section demonstrates, schools’ stake in this type of education is also a consequence of how they manage the tensions and challenges presented by specific social, political and economic influences.

Why are schools invested in a disease and pregnancy prevention focus?

To understand why schools are invested in a disease and pregnancy prevention focus it is necessary to recap on some of the theoretical concepts outlined in Chapter 1. The aim of this theoretical exploration is to demonstrate the way schools are inextricably implicated in the constitution of meanings about students’ sexuality. This role is in part a consequence of the institutional power of these educational spaces but cannot be divorced from the influence of wider social discourses of ‘youthful sexuality’. Meanings about student sexuality constituted in/by schools as ‘dangerous’ and ‘problematic’ are not unique to this environment but also a product of dominant contemporary social discourses about young people’s sexuality. The pastoral role imbued to schools means they are vested with the task of protecting students from sexual dangers and risks in a cultural moment when ‘risk anxiety’ is heightened. Faced with this responsibility and a cultural ideal that young people should be non-sexual (Allen, 2007a) one way of managing these social ‘anxieties’ is for sexuality education to take a danger aversion approach.

From a Foucauldian perspective, sexuality is a historical construct, that is, ‘the product of particular discourses which are articulated around a cluster of power relations’ (Kehily, 2002, p. 52). Discourses offer ways of understanding the world and are a product of discursive fields such

as medicine, law, education and religion. Sexuality is not possessed by the individual or seen to represent an instinctual or biological given that socialisation develops. Instead, sexuality is constructed through a range of discursive practices (Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford, 2003). How sexuality is understood is influenced by discourses which circulate in any historical moment and their association with power. As social institutions, schools are spaces in which numerous competing and contradictory discourses of sexuality are played out. In Kehily's (2002) words:

In the domain of the sexual, for example, the discourse of the official school assumes that students are sexually innocent and in need of protection while the discourse of the informal school assumes an active and knowing sexuality manifest in peer relations and exchanges between pupils and teachers. (p. 37)

Schools' deployment of these discourses offer students ways of constructing sexual identities which may be adopted, resisted or reworked. Through such discursive practices 'student sexuality' is brought into being. Schools, then, are important sites in which meanings about young people's sexuality are constituted and circulated. However, these meanings do not exist in isolation from wider social discourses of youthful sexuality. As public institutions schools represent a site of discursive practices which are intimately connected to wider social meanings. For educational sociologists, this means schools are agencies of cultural reproduction, that is, a product of wider social discourses and significant sites for their (re)production (Halsey et al., 1997).

A current dominant social discourse about young people is that their sexuality is something which is dangerous and which they need protection from (Kehily, 2007). How a discourse becomes dominant is in part a historical phenomenon, whereby particular discourses acquire prevalence at any given moment. Dominant discourses have firm institutional locations and are ubiquitous, making them appear natural, universal, inevitable and commonsensical. The idea of young people's sexuality as 'dangerous' is produced in discursive fields such as psychology. Here, adolescence is often constituted as a period of raging hormones and uncontrollable desires that propel young people into 'perilous' situations (Ayman-Nolley and Taira, 2000). As discourses are multiple and competing there is no one dominant discourse about young people's sexuality. Monk (2001) argues that another pervasive discourse concerning young people is that they

are 'innocent' and 'dependent' rather than sexually knowing and autonomous (p. 278). This meaning is cultivated within discursive fields such as the law when legal action is brought against teachers who have sexual relationships with students (Cavanagh, 2007). These cases construct young people as victims and deny the student an active and independent sexuality. Schools offer an institutional location which serves to fortify the power of such understandings of young people's sexuality. Sexuality education represents one of the practices in these institutions by which such meanings about student sexuality are pedagogically constituted.

The power of these social discourses is not only institutionally derived but historically located within a moment 'of massive anxiety in the West about the capacities, the safety, and the status of children' (Wallace, 1995, p. 286). Such concerns reside in what Giddens conceptualises as an era of 'risk anxiety' resulting from rapid social change and a feeling of mounting and unsolvable threats ranging from global warming to a loss of faith in experts (Jones, 2001). Characterising this era Giddens (1991) notes:

The point...is not that day to day life is inherently more risky than was the case in prior eras. It is rather that, in conditions of modernity, for lay actors as well as for experts in specific fields, thinking in terms of risk and risk assessment is a more or less ever-present exercise, of a partly inponderable character. (pp. 123–4)

In an era of risk anxiety young people emerge as especially vulnerable, as their age lends them a perceived sense of dependence and lack of experience. In relation to sexual activity, this vulnerability is heightened because sex symbolically marks the boundary between childhood and adulthood (Jones, 2001).

In a period of risk anxiety schools become risk-conscious spaces responsible for protecting students. Concentrating on providing students with information to avert sexual danger not only makes sense in this environment but appears a prerogative. The potential for sexuality education to undertake this work with intensity is premised on its historical role as a vehicle for solving 'social problems' (Allen and Elliot, 2008). Within this risk-averse environment, addressing subjects like sexual desire and pleasure in positive ways becomes highly problematic. Traversing such content can be construed as inciting sexual danger, even irresponsible (see Chapter 5). When faced with social pressure to be risk-averse and social meanings of youthful sexuality as 'dangerous'

and in need of 'protection', schools are likely to find teaching about sexual risk a more legitimate and easier task.

Schools' adherence to a disease and pregnancy prevention focus might also be attributed to how these issues have significance for the state. In recent years research in New Zealand and the UK outlining the detrimental effects of teenage pregnancy has flourished. A plethora of negative social, economic and educational effects for teenage mothers and their children have been outlined (Bonell, 2004; Dickson et al., 2002; Ingham, 2005a; Shaw, Lawlor and Najman, 2006; Social Exclusion Unit, 1999; Woodward, Horwood and Fergusson, 2001). In 2001 the New Zealand government launched a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy to reduce sexually transmissible infections and what are conceptualised as 'unintended/unwanted pregnancies' (Ministry of Health, 2001, p. 1). This strategy follows that of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy implemented in the UK (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). The objective of this policy was a reduction in the rate of teenage conception and increase in teenage parents' participation in education, training or employment in order to reduce long-term risks of social exclusion.

While these policies are framed in terms of benefits for teenage parents and their children, they also serve a wider economic and social purpose. They endeavour to create a society of self-sustaining citizens that do not require precious state resources for treatment of sexually transmissible infections or child support. Schools are sites over which the state exercises considerable control and through which its interests are subsequently deployed (Dale, 1997). From this perspective sexuality education represents a state mechanism for reducing unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmissible infections. The state's economic and social interest in this education helps to perpetuate the notion that disease and pregnancy prevention are legitimate foci for sexuality education.

How useful is this prevention focus in sexuality education?

This question draws attention to the purpose of sexuality education and whose interests it ultimately serves. My intention is not to measure 'effectiveness' by highlighting the statistical success of programmes at reducing teenage pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections. As seen in the discussion above, there is already an existing body of work which has evaluated this notion of programme 'effectiveness'.

Rather, I am interested in what a disease and pregnancy prevention focus ignores.

Programmes focused on reducing sexually transmissible infections and unplanned pregnancy take for granted that these are *negative* outcomes of sexual activity. While it might be difficult to argue that having an STI is not a negative outcome, sexuality education's insistence that these incidences are reduced does not acknowledge a subject's agency in engaging in 'risky' practice. Ridge's (2004) research with young gay Australian men highlights the 'choice' some made in engaging in unprotected anal intercourse. As the title of Ridge's paper, "It was an incredible thrill", conveys, unprotected anal sex held meanings for young men that outweighed the risk of this practice. Ridge explains that barebacking 'could be a mode of "letting go", about muscles grinding together, a means of celebrating masculinity and venturing beyond boundaries or feeling adventurous and free' (Ridge, 2004, p. 275).

Sexuality education which makes prevention of sexually transmissible infections its main concern contains the assumption that everyone wishes to avoid risk. This education provides no space for the sexual subject who armed with safer sex knowledge actively rejects it. Such programmes can only position these young people as 'irresponsible' and 'dangerous'. This positioning offers the likes of young people in Ridge's study a resource through which particular experiences of sexual pleasure and identity can be cultivated (e.g. a hyper masculine identity and one which derives pleasure and power from the experience of risk). Discourses of disease prevention do not accommodate this sort of subject or offer them positive messages about the sexual self. A danger prevention focus may marginalise and alienate these young people further.

A predominance of prevention discourses also fails to acknowledge complex relationships between sexuality, desire, pleasure and danger. Sexuality education that concentrates on reducing unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmissible infections implies 'sexuality' accompanied by 'risk' is 'bad' and must be avoided. There is little recognition of the fact that danger can fuel desire and that risk might be experienced as erotic. Discussing sexual practices involving risk or pain is almost unfathomable in these programmes as these are cast outside the realm of sexually 'normal' and their invitation of risk is therefore incomprehensible. The young person who courts sexual danger and who gains pleasure from sexual risk is disallowed and/or unintelligible within this sort of sexuality education. The assumed subject is an essentially

rational student who is simply lacking the right safer sex knowledge to put into practice. Ironically, it is precisely those who are likely to put themselves in 'danger' that sexuality education aspires to address.

Associated with the prevention focus of sexuality education is the constitution of teenage pregnancy as necessarily a negative and unwanted outcome of sexual activity. Cherrington and Breheny (2005) reveal teenage pregnancy as discursively produced within fields such as health and economics which pathologise teenage mothers, designating them a social and economic 'problem'. Within these constructions 'teenage pregnancy is typically deemed an individual health or behavioural problem in need of a psychological solution' (Cherrington and Breheny, 2005, p. 89). Any recognition that teenagers might choose pregnancy or that this may be a viable or realistic option is neglected (Cherrington and Breheny, 2005, p. 97). Kidger's (2005) research with teenage mothers in England revealed that caring for their children provided substantial pleasure and fulfilment. One young woman indicated that after sharing her experiences of teenage motherhood in schools, teachers would often comment on her positive story. Explaining her reaction to these remarks she said, 'I was like, well, that's how I feel about my life, you know I can't come in here and lie' (Kidger, 2005, p. 489). Teenage fathers also talk about the transformative effects of their experience. These include extricating themselves from 'a deadbeat peer group', inspiring them to gain employment as well as to stop drinking heavily (Rouch, 2005). Sexuality education which places emphasis on avoiding teenage pregnancy by reference to its perceived social, economic and educational disadvantages denies this as a positive life-changing experience for some young people.

Sexuality education permeated by prevention discourses offers students the possibility of avoiding sexual risk or subsequently the label 'deviant'. For some, the latter will appear a more viable option with greater identifiable benefits. How then does this type of sexuality education cater for those who actively risk sexual infection or want a baby? In the current research participants indicated information about teenage parenthood was one of the top five topics they wanted sexuality education to include (see Chapter 3). Teaching only for the prevention of teenage pregnancy assumes young people do not make their own life decisions and will 'do the right thing' by not becoming teenage parents. This view is not only unrealistic, but denies that young people are actively engaged in making their own meaning from sexuality education's messages. The prevention focus in sexuality programmes

involves withholding information about teenage parenthood which students want and that may support their life choices.

Sexuality education focused on reducing teenage pregnancies and STIs also privileges heterosexuality. In identifying pregnancy prevention as a principal element of sexuality programmes, schools address the heterosexual student. This occurs because schools are heteronormative spaces (Quinlivan and Town, 1999) where patterns of thought, awareness and belief are organised around the presumption of a universal heterosexual desire, behaviour and identity (Warner, 1993, pp. xxi–xxv). What this means for pregnancy prevention messages is that while they may be equally valid for bisexual students, these young people are typically addressed by default. Similarly, same-gender attracted youth observe that lessons on safer sex presuppose heterosexual intercourse (Hillier and Mitchell, 2008). When same-gender activity is mentioned, this is most commonly in relation to gay men and accompanied by reference to HIV/AIDS. These associations equate same-gender desire with danger and disease (Quinlivan and Town, 1999). The heteronormative framing of disease and pregnancy prevention messages subordinate the interests of same-gender attracted youth while denying them information critical to their sexual health. By addressing a heterosexual subject these kinds of programmes perpetuate a heteronormativity that relegates same-gender attracted students to ‘deviant’ and ‘other’.

Sexuality education and ethical pleasures

To recognise the disease and pregnancy prevention emphasis in sexuality education as socially and historically constituted implies it is (theoretically) mutable. If sexuality education were to relinquish this focus, what might replace it? To extend the possibilities of how sexuality education might be philosophically conceived, I experiment with the idea of education concerned with ethical pleasures. This possibility is explored in relation to Foucault’s notion of an ethics of pleasure and the potential implications it has for young people’s experience of sexual self.

The choice of pleasure as a means of reframing sexuality education is based on it being central to life, adding meaning to who we are, what we feel and what we value. Writing about the experience of sexual pleasure for people with spinal cord injury, Tepper (2000) captures its significance:

Pleasure adds meaning to our lives. Sexual pleasure is particularly powerful in making one feel alive. It is an antidote to pain, both

physical and emotional...Sexual pleasure can enhance an intimate relationship. It can add a sense of connectedness to the world or to each other. It can heal a sense of emotional isolation so many of us feel even though we are socially integrated. It can help build our immunity against media messages that can make us feel as if we don't deserve pleasure. (p. 288)

Despite pleasure's obvious benefits and its centrality to existence, it is often understood as a luxury rather than a condition of life. Western understandings of sexual pleasure have been traced historically and variously conceptualised as 'sinful', 'dangerous', 'perverted', 'immoral', 'shame filled' and 'private' (Foucault, 1976; Hawkes, 2004). Given these meanings it is unsurprising that acknowledging and catering for pleasure has not formed part of sexuality education's objectives. Within a risk-averse society, discussion of pleasure in sexuality education is rendered irresponsible, inappropriate and dangerous. Pleasure is a focus that seems flippant given the sense of danger surrounding the otherwise treatment of young people's sexuality in school. In this climate, pleasure for pleasure's sake is constituted as wrong and can only be legitimately enjoyed in proscribed conditions such as marriage or a committed relationship, when safer sex is practised and with someone of the opposite gender. Foucault's notion of an ethics of pleasure, however, may hold some promise as a means of introducing pleasure within the constraints of schooling culture.

For Foucault, ethics is more than the moral values held by an individual that are tied to institutional imperatives. Drawing inspiration from ancient Greek ethical practice, ethics is understood as 'the activity of the self on itself' (Rabinow, 1994, p. 270). Ethics is not a field of rules and regulations but rather a field of our self-constitution as subjects (Rabinow, 2002, p. 11). This understanding of 'self' is not a given, but a task or work of art, continuously in progress (O'Leary, 2002, p. 2). Explaining these ideas Foucault says:

In antiquity, this work on the self with its attendant austerity is not imposed on the individual by means of Civil law or religious obligations, but is a choice about existence made by the individual. People decide for themselves whether or not to care for themselves... (Rabinow, 1994, p. 271)

In thinking about this self-fashioning, Foucault sought to understand how the subject actively constitutes itself through practices of the self,

without reference to judicial forms of power. He was concerned with an ethics 'that can be a very strong structure of existence, without any relation with the judicial per se, with an authoritarian system, with a disciplinary structure (Rabinow, 1994, p. 260). To this end ethics involves *rapport à soi*, 'the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions' (Rabinow, 1994, p. 263).

This understanding of ethics may have application for sexuality education in the way it integrates a sense of social responsibility which may be compatible with contemporary concerns around sexual responsibility. Inherent within a focus on reducing teenage pregnancy and STIs is the assumption that these constitute a social and individual 'good'. Foucault professed an interest in an ethics of acts and their pleasures that could take account of the pleasure of the other (Rabinow, 1994, p. 258). His concept of care of the self is understood as ethical in itself (Rabinow, 1994, p. 287). It is ethical not because it involves care for others, but because it implies complex relationships with others and rules of acceptable conduct. Care of the self is a way of limiting and controlling power. Exercising an abusive power over others means the individual is not taking care of themselves and is instead a slave to their desires (Rabinow, 1994, p. 288). As Foucault explains:

In the abuse of power, one exceeds the legitimate exercise of one's power and imposes one's fantasies, appetites, and desires on others. Here we have the image of the tyrant, or simply of the rich and powerful man who uses his wealth and power to abuse others, to impose an unwarranted power on them. But one can see – in any case, this is what the Greek philosophers say – that such a man is the slave of his appetites. And the good ruler is precisely the one who exercises his power as it ought to be exercised, that is, simultaneously exercising his power over himself. And it is the power over oneself, that thus regulates one's power over others. (Rabinow, 1994, p. 288)

O'Leary (2002, p. 5) argues this work harbours Enlightenment dreams of combining individual freedom with respect for the freedom of others. While this may be a valid point, an ethics of pleasure might offer a way of thinking about sexuality education that has benefits for young people beyond the disease and pregnancy prevention focus.

Reshaping sexuality education around a notion of an ethics of pleasure contains possibilities for understanding young people as sexual subjects. Rasmussen (2004) views an ethics of pleasure as opening new

discursive space for envisaging gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex youth which departs from a pathologisation and concentration on these students as 'wounded identities'. As a transforming work that one continually performs on oneself, an ethics of pleasure creates new possibilities for interaction that transcend hetero- or homonormative categories (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 456). This potential derives from Foucault's problematisation of the idea that 'sexual desire is able to reveal someone's deep identity' (Foucault cited in Rasmussen, 2004, p. 446). When the forms of pleasure one enjoys are not perceived as evidence of sexual identity this opens new possibilities for being and understanding sexual subjects. A Foucauldian ethics also enables an understanding of the subject as simultaneously an agent of pleasure and subject to power relations which constrain discourses of pleasure (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 456). With respect to young people and schooling this means:

An 'ethics of pleasure' allows for the recognition of individuals' agency in their own conduct and pursuit of pleasure, while concurrently acknowledging the power relations that operate to constrain discourses of pleasure, particularly within educational contexts, and to reinforce coherent identity categories. (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 456)

Possibilities for young people's pleasure are always constrained by their social and cultural location yet 'pleasure enables people to create new relationships, new ways of seeing and new ways of life' (Foucault cited in Rasmussen, 2004, p. 456). 'Pleasure' might offer young people a resource through which in a perpetual process of becoming, new ways of experiencing self and relating beyond coherent/normative identity categories are enabled.

Carmody (2005) also sees potential in an 'ethics of pleasure' in relation to violence prevention education in Australia, as a counter-narrative to a traditional programme emphasis on 'risk avoidance'. Her sample of 26 female and male participants of diverse sexualities revealed evidence of a *rapport à soi* and successful negotiation of sexual relationships. This practice was indicated by self-reflexivity and self-care, such as thinking through a previous negative sexual experience in order to avoid repeating it. A willingness to consider their own needs as well as the needs of their sexual partner was also indicated in interviews with participants. Negotiation of pleasure occurred through practices such as 'verbalising clear expectations and limits, non-verbal bodily movements, trial and error, time, taking risks of self disclosure,

trust, flexibility...self reflection and monitoring their own responses' (Carmody, 2005, p. 473). Using these data as evidence of successful sexual negotiation, Carmody proposes that anti-violence programmes might be more effective if more time was spent developing similar modes of relating. This strategy stands in opposition to 'avoidance anti-violence education' which provides advice that underestimates the complexity of sexual relationships and their power relations. Carmody's suggestion might usefully be applied to young people and sexuality education where developing their skills in successfully negotiating intimate relationships is valued.

Sexuality education informed by an ethics of pleasure may benefit young people beyond equipping them to successfully negotiate intimate relationships and help transcend normative sexual identities and practices. In their criticisms of sexuality education young people in the current study (see Chapter 5) as well as international research (Coleman, 2008; Measor et al., 2000; Strange et al., 2006) have noted how pleasure and associated logistics of sexual activity are missing from sexuality programmes. For many of these participants pleasure has a relevance and significance in their lives which sexuality education fails to acknowledge. Sexuality programmes informed by an ethics of pleasure might acknowledge this identified gap and address young people's desire for such information.

An ethics of pleasure may also assist in recognising young people as *sexual subjects* whose sexuality is viewed positively and as legitimate rather than a problem to be managed. Sexuality education that acknowledges young people as sexual subjects would also recognise their agency to make their own sexual decisions. Foucault's notion of ethics contains recognition of an individual's agency 'to take care of the self'. Programmes concerned with ethical pleasures might therefore offer young people an agency, which those focused on disease and pregnancy prevention deny. The only 'choice' for young people in prevention programmes is *not* to engage in sexual activity *or* to practise safer sex, options which fail to cater for the student who will reject these directives. The concept of caring for oneself, in a way that always necessitates caring for others, involves a social responsibility that may appeal to those who see sexuality education as a tool for social and individual 'good'. When care of the self is always ethical (Rabinow, 1994, p. 287) new possibilities for young people's sexual experience may be realised by sexuality education. Within such programmes (any) sexual activity which does not involve an abuse of power (and hence that an individual has not taken care of themselves) would be viewed legitimately. If this

framework of ethical pleasures was instituted in sexuality education it may potentially constitute students as sexual subjects in more varied and empowering ways than prevention focused programmes.

Closing comments

In an attempt to re-imagine sexuality education, this chapter has sought to problematise the disease and pregnancy prevention focus that pervades many programmes and consider why it continues to be prioritised. Such discussion does not assume that information which alerts young people to the potential dangers of sexual activity is invalid or should be disregarded. Why this focus permeates sexuality education, its implications for young people's sexual identities and conceptualisations of programme effectiveness are instead questioned.

Several possible problems with the disease and pregnancy prevention focus of sexuality education have been identified. Such education disallows/makes unintelligible the subject who wants sexual danger, subsequently failing to offer them positive messages about their sexual selves. By confining its directives to 'don't do it' or if you must 'do it safely', danger prevention programmes may alienate the sorts of students they are hoping to address. Concentrating on preventing pregnancy also means that students may not receive 'the full story' about teenage parenthood and its potential pleasures and benefits. This focus may also mean young people do not receive information to support their decision-making should they become teenage parents. Prioritising the prevention of teenage pregnancy is another example of privileging heterosexuality that contributes to schools being heteronormative spaces. A danger prevention emphasis also means it is unlikely programmes are configured in ways that empower young people as active agents who can successfully negotiate sexual encounters.

To suggest that sexuality education might be conceptualised without this danger prevention emphasis necessitates an exploration of what might replace it. Applying a Foucauldian ethics of pleasure to sexuality education was one way of exploring the possibilities of reconfiguring these programmes. There are of course many others, as how sexuality education might be reconceptualised for positive effect would need to be contingent on contextual features such as student composition, the teacher delivering the programme and school culture. What it is hoped this discussion has highlighted is a recognition of the taken for granted nature of the prevention focus in sexuality education as appropriate, important and beneficial.

How schools might be encouraged to relinquish the disease and pregnancy prevention focus has not been addressed. While there may be no inherent reason why programmes should have this focus, the mechanisms which hold schools' investment in this approach are not removed by simply acknowledging them. Complex power relations operate to entrench these practices at discursive and material levels, despite policy level opportunities to change them. Negotiating these barriers in order to implement change remains a constant challenge for all those interested in re-imagining the design and delivery of sexuality education.

8

An Impossible Practice? Implications for Future Sexuality Education

A central theme of this book has been the importance of foregrounding and exploring young people's perspectives in relation to key debates within sexuality education. The purpose of collecting these views is to 're-imagine' sexuality education based on young people's ideas. This undertaking is not simply about including 'student voice', but providing the raw materials upon which programmes are developed. In this final chapter, I address contentions around the utility of basing sexuality education predominantly on young people's views. This discussion engages with the argument that it is neither desirable nor responsible to allow sexuality education to be determined by young people's needs and interests (Wight, 1999).

I argue that for sexuality education to be successful (whatever its aims) it is essential it be premised on young people's interests and concerns, as defined by them. However, I also acknowledge that such a philosophy is not without tensions. Some of these challenges are illuminated when sexuality education is shaped by a concern with social/sexual justice. As the ensuing discussion reveals, young people's needs and interests as identified in this research draw on dominant discourses of sexuality. Such discourses are often heteronormative, gender normative and negate social injustices relating to, for example, physical ability, class and ethnicity. How to reconcile a commitment to an educational paradigm that prioritises young people's perspectives with the creation of sexuality education which promotes social/sexual justice is discussed.

This chapter also summarises the main findings from the empirical research. My aim is to draw out themes in young people's critique of sexuality education across chapters. The implications of these findings

for sexuality education's content and delivery are also considered. This discussion draws together some key ideas for re-thinking future programmes in ways that take young people's interests seriously. In the final section, I consider some limitations of the empirical research and debates in sexuality education with which the book does not engage. With these limitations in mind, directions for future sexuality education research are proposed.

Should sexuality education be founded on young people's perspectives?

The idea that sexuality education should be based on young people's self-identified needs gained momentum during the 1960s and 1970s. As part of social movements around ethnicity and gender at this time, children were acknowledged as subordinated within social structures and disempowered like other groups such as women and ethnic minorities. Subsequently, efforts were made within diverse social arenas (e.g. the law and education) to 'empower' young people. Within education, empowerment-based approaches sought to increase young people's control over their schooling. This control was garnered through consultation with school authorities and saw students determining educational content and delivery. In some cases, their involvement included participation in educational provision, as evidenced in the philosophy of peer education.

These ideas about children and young people as socially subordinate appear in approaches to sexuality education from the 1980s. Programmes adopting this strategy acknowledged young people as adept at representing their interests and autonomous decision-making to improve their sexual health. Highlighting this approach Wight (1999) cites the following example from a guide to teaching sex education to boys and young men:

To be successful we must work with their agenda. To do this, boys must be actively involved in developing sex education programmes and have a real influence over the content and delivery of their sex education. In short, we need to ask them what they want and need, how they want it covered and by whom, listen and then feedback what we will do to accommodate these needs. (Sex Education Forum cited in Wight, 1999, p. 235)

This educational strategy has been increasingly adopted around the world. In New Zealand, for instance, when the new Health and Physical

Education Curriculum was introduced in 1999, *A guide for health coordinators and teachers* (Lusk, 1999) was produced by the New Zealand Family Planning Association to assist teachers in implementing sexuality education. This guide contains a section dedicated to informing sexuality educators of the importance of 'using a student centred approach' and suggestions for identifying students' needs as part of programme planning and development. Such a conceptual shift has also produced a flourish of academic research which endeavours to divulge how young people would like programmes to be taught (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000; Alldred and David, 2007; Buston and Wight, 2006; Forrest, Strange and Oakley, 2004; Measor, 2004; Measor, Tiffin and Miller, 2000).

There are, however, limits to what Fielding (2007) calls this 'call to voice', or the incorporation of young people's perspectives in educational pedagogy. A recent special issue of the journal *Discourse* has been dedicated to problematising the inclusion of young people's 'voice' in educational and research settings. This volume explores a multitude of barriers and difficulties to determining what constitutes 'student voice'. As these concerns do not take account of the specific context of sexuality education there is not room to explore them here (see Fielding, 2007 for explanation of these). Despite these problems, the special issue contributors do not advocate the abandonment of student 'voice'. Within the field of sexuality education this debate trails by some years, so that founding programmes on young people's perceived needs is believed by some to be fundamentally flawed. This stance is popular within the media and amongst some caregivers who believe young people should not be provided with the sexual information they request. Wight's (1999) work adopts this perspective and I unpack his arguments in some detail here, in order to propose a counter-argument.

Wight (1999) writes, 'there are strong arguments for not leaving the sex education agenda entirely to young people' (p. 233). This conclusion is based on three contentions which he analyses in relation to developing and piloting a school-based sex education programme known as SHARE (Sexual Health and Relationships – Safe, Happy and Responsible) with 13–15-year-olds in Scotland. The first argument Wight offers is that basing programmes on young people's perceived needs is problematic because these cannot be expressed. Young people might know what they want from sexuality education, but they are prevented from being able to ask for it. 'Embarrassment at disclosing one's needs' (p. 236) and 'the negative element of pupil culture which frequently makes it difficult to commend anything provided by the teachers, particularly

for young men' (p. 237) are seen as factors. The argument follows that young people can never authentically articulate their needs, as these must be censored to reduce embarrassment or consolidate an appropriate masculine identity.

According to Wight, studies in which young people's needs are collected are problematic because results vary contingent on methods employed. For instance, in group discussions conducted as part of the SHARE project's preliminary research, young people identified wanting more detail about 'menstruation (from young men), sexually transmissible diseases, AIDS, relationships, the attitudes of the opposite sex and contraception' (Wight, 1999, p. 237). These findings are contrasted with a survey assessment of the health and lifestyles of 16–19-year-olds by the Health Education Authority in England. While participants similarly identified AIDS as an important issue, this was surpassed by the topics of 'lesbianism', 'homosexuality', 'sexual feelings and emotions' and 'abortion'. In comparison with the SHARE study, contraception received a low response rate as something young people desired to know more about. For Wight, these discrepancies across studies pose an insurmountable dilemma regarding the 'truth' of young people's needs.

Wight's concern about young people being able to express their needs rests on a particular ontological understanding of 'the truth' of these, namely. That is, young people have a true set of needs in relation to sexuality education which are obscured, either by social factors (having to appear appropriately masculine) or which are indiscernible because of conflicting findings. For Wight, the fact that young people's 'true' needs can never be uncovered poses problems for the development of sexuality education. However, these needs might be viewed in an ontologically different way. Instead of seeing them as 'true', in the sense that they are common across studies and what young people actually think (rather than say), these needs might be viewed as mutable and contextual. The fact that young people divulge different needs as paramount in focus groups compared with surveys is not problematic. Rather, this is a consequence of the way so-called 'truths' are fluid (see the section 'Thinking through apparent data discrepancies' below). Similarly, the fact that young men might only reveal an interest in learning about homosexuality in certain contexts, does not suggest dishonesty (i.e. holding something back in front of others) or confusion about their needs. Instead, this complexity provides important insights about how, and under what conditions, particular topics might be addressed in sexuality education.

For sexuality education to be effective it must demonstrate an understanding that young people's concerns and interests are ever-changing and contextually contingent. I would argue that while young people's needs are a constantly moving target, researchers and educators should not forsake attempting to base sexuality education on them. Sexuality education needs to pay close attention to apparent contradictions and complexities in order to learn how best to support young people in experiencing their sexuality positively. When young men silence their interest in learning about homosexuality in the presence of others, this suggests educational contexts need to be reconfigured in ways that enable such conversations to occur. I'm not implying we should employ 'boy-friendly' teaching practices or increase male teachers as is conventionally rendered the answer to educational issues for boys. What I would advocate is an examination of hegemonic heterosexual masculinities as they operate in sexuality education. Such an investigation might provide insights about reconfiguring classroom contexts in ways that make articulations relating to homosexuality viable/credible for all students (e.g. male, transgendered, female). In relation to Wight's point about conflicting research findings above, the issue is less about whether homosexuality 'really' is, or 'really' isn't the topic young men want to know most about. Rather, the focus might be on how sexuality education could prove flexible enough to accommodate young people's contextually changing needs and provide an environment that facilitates positive discussion of them.

The second argument Wight proffers as to why sexuality education's agenda should not be determined by young people relates to them being naïve or ignorant of what they need to know. With reference to 'needs assessment' exercises in general, Wight highlights that 'laypeople frequently have little idea of what kind of services could, potentially, be provided and what their benefits might be' (Wight, 1999, p. 238). Existing experience is seen to narrow perceptions of what is desirable/possible in programmes. With regard to sexuality education Wight proposes that:

How young people express their needs...will depend on their prior concepts of what can be delivered and how. It is therefore to be expected that, unless pupils are presented with various options...they generally come up with fairly conventional recommendations for sex education. These are usually limited by the perception of sex education as being primarily about biology and harm reduction.... (Wight, 1999, p. 238)

This statement fails to acknowledge the multitude of sources of 'sexuality education' to which young people are exposed and that offer other models/possibilities for learning about sexuality. School-based programmes are only one form of sexuality education alongside movies, music, magazines, internet sites, social networking, friends, family and community members such as priests and youth workers (to name only a few). The influence of these educational experiences is often to broaden young people's sense of the possibilities of learning about sexuality at school.

The idea that young people will generate 'fairly conventional recommendations for sex education' underestimates the imaginative potential of some young people. As indicated in Chapter 5, questions included in the current study's survey about including sexual pleasure in programmes were premised on previous research with 16–19-year-olds (Allen, 2005d). This earlier study was not concerned with the content and delivery of sexuality education *per se*, but instead with young people's sexual knowledge, subjectivities and (hetero)sexual practices (Allen, 2005d). In the course of listening to young people talk about these things across qualitative methods, it was apparent they were making a critique of the de-eroticised nature of sexuality education. The theme that pleasure was missing from sexuality education was not elicited by my direct questioning, but by young people's reflection on how, for example, their first sexual experiences might have been improved. Amy and Peter, for instance, explained they felt their first sexual experience together could have been more pleasurable if sexuality education had covered issues other than sexually transmissible infections and contraception (Allen, 2005d, p. 47). It was participants like these whose thoughtful reflection on their experiences generated this critical assessment of their sexuality education needs. By basing their critique of sexuality education on the lived realities of sexual experience they were able to innovatively re-imagine this subject. Their ideas were not restricted by the previous education they had received, but broadened by reflecting upon this in relation to their actual experience of sexual intercourse. While young people's assessment of sexuality education may be premised on previous experiences of this subject, it is never limited to them. This suggestion underestimates the diverse ways learning about sexuality occurs in young people's lives and subsequently shapes their evaluation of their sexuality education needs.

The idea that 'young people may not be able to anticipate their future requirements' (Wight, 1999, p. 239) constitutes them as naïve subjects without agency. This positioning invokes a historical notion of the child who is incompetent, unknowing and dependent on adult experience to make sound decisions. The idea that adults are somehow better able to

anticipate the needs of young people suggests they have a superhuman foresight by virtue of being older. The perpetually changing nature of our conditions of existence and the fact that all subjectivities (adult and child) are diverse on account of intersecting structural relationships (ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical abilities, gender, age, spaced and placed localities) mean we can never accurately anticipate future circumstances or another's needs. Even when we share ethnic, classed and gendered locations, temporal, spatial and experiential circumstances (or other structural features such as physical ability and sexual identity) can intervene to ensure we cannot 'know' someone else's interests. The power bestowed to adults on account of their age and 'experience' to better determine young people's needs is not 'real', but 'constituted'. In this sense, it is 'false' (although real as a lived experience) and therefore renders the idea that 'young people can anticipate their future requirements' as proficiently as adults highly probable.

To suggest that young people cannot express their 'true' interests implies they are generally (apart from an exceptional few) devoid of agency. Ironically, this constitution of the student is likely to be unhelpful in achieving the prevention aims of sexuality education. In order to practise safer sex and avoid unplanned pregnancy, young people need to be understood as exercising agency. This agency is necessary to successfully negotiate sexual encounters such as access to condoms/femidoms, contraception and asking a partner to use them. To expect young people to successfully engage in safer sex, yet deny them the agency to determine what they think sexuality education should teach, appears a significant contradiction. The didactic and oppressive undertones implied by such a lack of agency expose a fundamental flaw in sexuality education. Sexuality education communicates to young people that 'you must learn what we think is in your best interests' and the outcome of this will be that 'you must not have sex or at the very least practise safer sex'. Why would young people want to comply with such goals which demonstrate disregard for their own concerns and offer minimal agency? From a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault, 1976), such a repressive assertion of power is likely to increase resistance (rather than produce compliance) to these historical programme aims.

Wight (1999) draws attention to some perceived caveats for sexuality education if its goals were broadly based on young people's self-identified needs. He writes:

Even if pupils had a comprehensive understanding of what might be possible in sex education and could articulate what they wanted from

it, a secondary issue is whether their perceived needs should always be met... there are several reasons why it might be necessary to qualify the young person's perspective with adult considerations. (p. 328)

An issue here is the possibility that 'if really able to express their wishes, boys might seek to maximise their social and physical advantages over girls in order to gain sexual access' (p. 239). The idea that young people's prescriptions for sexuality education might contribute to social/sexual injustices is an important one. However, I do not think that young people have any greater propensity towards socially/sexually 'unjust' desires for sexuality education than adults. Social/sexual injustices are in part a product of dominant understandings to which all individuals are subject. Access to subordinate discourses of sexuality is not necessarily based on age, but may be engendered by other aspects of social location such as experiencing sexual discrimination. Despite this qualification I do think that there are challenges to enabling young people to set sexuality education's agenda and ensuring programmes adhere to principles of social/sexual justice and this issue is taken up below.

Another reason Wight does not believe sexuality education should be premised on young people's needs is that these may ignore or exceed the harm prevention focus of sexuality programmes. Following on from his comments above about boys he says: 'A less divisive requirement that both sexes might identify is to learn how to maximise their sensual enjoyment of sex, yet this would go well beyond the public health harm reduction rationale that is widely used to legitimate sex education' (Wight, 1999, p. 239). It is unclear exactly what Wight opposes here: young people's interests that exceed a harm prevention focus and/or that their agenda for sexuality education is perceived to de-legitimise these programmes' hard-won place in schools. Either way, Wight implies that 'maximising sensual enjoyment of sex' is beyond the serious harm reduction focus of sexuality education. He underscores this point with another he raises around 'the problem' with young people's perception of what makes an effective programme:

Broadly speaking, the pupil's assessment of the programme was based on whether it was interesting and provided useful information, but also on the extent to which it did not require hard work and was not embarrassing. It is understandable that pupils' main concern is the experience of receiving a programme rather than its effectiveness in terms of behavioural change, particularly since neither they, nor their teachers, generally know much about this. (Wight, 1999, p. 239)

In dismissing whether a programme is 'interesting' or 'not embarrassing' as markers of effectiveness, in favour of whether it engenders 'behavioural change', Wight re-inscribes the legitimacy and centrality of a harm reduction model of sexuality education. What counts as programme 'effectiveness' is the conventionally adult-defined goal of reducing unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmissible infections. These concerns are seen to override supposedly less pressing and youth-determined criteria around sexual pleasure and creating a comfortable context in which to discuss sexuality issues. This perspective serves to reproduce unequal power relations between adults and young people where the latter's concerns are undervalued and subordinated.

In the next section, I engage further with two themes raised by Wight. The first refers to perceived difficulties of basing sexuality education on young people's perspectives when these appear to diverge across studies. With reference to the current research, I explore how young people's needs can also differ across methods in a single piece of research. I argue that these need not be viewed as incommensurable 'discrepancies' that signal the impossibility of incorporating young people's ideas within sexuality education. Instead, thinking through these differences offers a means of understanding how young people's ideas are mutable, varying across temporal and spatial dimensions. Such apparent 'discrepancies' also shed light on dominant and competing discourses of sexuality in young people's lived experience.

Thinking through apparent data discrepancies

As indicated in Chapter 2, focus groups and questionnaires were employed in the current study to elicit topics students wanted to know more about in sexuality education. While many topics featured in focus group discussion also corresponded with those participants ranked highly in the questionnaire, there were some incongruities. For instance, when asked to comment generally in focus groups about issues for inclusion in sexuality education the topic of gay, lesbian and bisexual students as well as homophobia surfaced regularly. The following excerpt from a decile 1 school where all participants were Maori or Pasifika is typical of how these topics emerged and were conceptualised in this setting.

Louisa: Is there any other stuff you want to know about that a resource should cover?

Dennis: How about like, if you feel uhm that you are attracted (*pause*) if you are a homosexual and you are at school, then you know how

to open up about it and how to I don't know (*pause*) be accepting of it, of uhm of homosexual students

Rewiti: How to deal with it aye getting it into the open, I mean how to feel better about yourself without doing anything stupid.

(Decile 1, Co-educational School, Mixed Gender)

These two young men reveal how information to support same-gender attracted students and anti-discrimination work with those who are heterosexual is needed. Dennis explains that same-gender attracted students should receive support in 'coming out' or as he conceptualises it, 'getting it into the open'. Rewiti adds that such help should prevent homosexual students from 'doing anything stupid', the implication being that this might involve suicide. This comment can be interpreted in a context where connections have been publicly drawn between same-gender attracted youth and suicide (Beautrais, Collings and Ehrhardt, 2005, p. 20). Heterosexual students are also deemed as needing support, in order to be less discriminatory and more 'accepting' of homosexuality. Recognising the necessity of content that addresses the needs of same-gender attracted youth and which confronts homophobia were typical participant concerns.

The importance participants placed on issues of sexual diversity and homophobia was indicated by the often serious and intense nature of these discussions. Young people talked at length about homophobia and sexual diversity offering personal stories and anecdotes to demonstrate their points. Relaying an incidence of homophobia witnessed or personally experienced often characterised this talk. Below, Jackson offers a rendition of this narrative where a student is harassed for being (presumed) gay.

Jackson: ... one guy Sam, he's got like a shrink hip or something he walks funny...so he's accused of being gay by the way he walks...they start making up horrible jokes about why he walks like that being gay all that stupid oh it's just pathetic and you just want to say 'shut your mouth' but if you support him, I've seen someone do it before and they're like 'oh you his boyfriend or something'.

(Community Focus Group, Mixed Gender)

Within the focus group context these episodes illuminated participants' sense of the unfairness of homophobic harassment. Recounting these occurrences was a means of justifying the need for inclusion of content on sexual diversity and homophobia.

Despite receiving considerable attention in focus group talk, homophobia and sexual diversity were not topics a majority of participants named for programme inclusion in survey responses. Out of the list of 31 possible issues, 'homophobia' rated at 21, with 32 per cent of participants selecting it. 'Sexual diversity' ranked at 24 with 31 per cent of young people ticking this option. Such findings reflect and are an effect of dominant discourses of sexuality where homosexuality is marginalised in favour of the constituted 'norm' of heterosexuality.

There are various explanations for why questionnaire data produced heteronormative understandings and focus groups elicited more subordinate narratives. Those who participated in focus groups were perhaps more attuned to and interested in these issues. This propensity may have been a consequence of those who volunteer for sexuality research tending to hold more liberal sexual attitudes (Catania et al., 1990). When heteronormalising practices structure social reality, proposing the inclusion of sexual diversity in sexuality education offers a counter-discourse to dominant thinking. Focus group numbers captured a much smaller percentage of young people's perspectives compared to the questionnaire sample. Depending on how they are composed, smaller samples can reflect distinct interests or comprise particular sectors of a population.

Another reason for these data differences is that focus group participants may have been more highly politicised. Focus group participants had volunteered to discuss sexuality publicly and may have been motivated by an opportunity to voice their perspectives on issues they felt strongly about. Two of the ten groups also contained members of a community organisation supporting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth. These young people were likely to be more politicised given their own sexual identities represented a challenge to heteronormativity. All of these factors may have contributed to an emphasis in focus groups on sexual diversity and homophobia which did not translate in the ranking of questionnaire items.

Another topic which received considerable attention from participants in focus groups but ranked low in survey findings was 'sexuality and disability' (placed 22 out of 31). This issue was selected as a survey item after analysis of sexuality curricula indicated its absence (Allen, 2005d). It was not expected, therefore, that participants would know much about this topic or necessarily comprehend what it might entail. This prediction was confirmed when participants sorted topics

into categories relating to how comprehensively school had covered them.

Louisa: [reading from card] 'Sexuality and Disability' you've put that under 'no coverage'?

Chelsea: What does that actually mean?

Louisa: So that would be people with a physical or intellectual disability, they could be in a wheel chair or have any kind of disability

Kevin: So is it how they have sex?

Louisa: Well, that's part of it

Karen: We've not had anything like that

Cindy: I've seen it on *Shortland Street*¹ once (*others laugh*)

Louisa: Have you? I mean the common perception is that people with disabilities aren't sexual people

Chelsea: Aren't they?

Louisa: They are, of course. Everyone has a sexuality whether they are sexually active or not. But the common perception is that people with disabilities are not sexual, when in fact they are

Karen: I guess cause it's not talked about or we are not taught about it, we just don't think about it and avoid it

Ruth: Yeah

Sinita: I reckon

Kylie: Just like you see a wheel chair person you don't suddenly think, 'oh I wonder how they have sex'? (*laugh*) Yeah you don't think bout it at all.

(Co-Educational Private School, Mixed Gender)

Once participants understood what sexuality and disability referred to, they invariably decided this was a topic they wanted to know more about.

Louisa: 'Sexuality and Disability'

Christian: No that wasn't covered but that would have been interesting to be covered I think

Kassi: Yeah

Jessica: Yep

Christian: Cause like that's just something you got, that's one of the things that you don't know about but...

Jessica: You don't even think about it...

Kassi: Unless you are disabled.

(Community Focus Group, Mixed Gender)

Young people's reaction to this topic reflects wider social perceptions that people with a disability are asexual (Shakespeare, Gillespie-Sells and Davies, 1996). Kass's and Jessica's statements echo this omission when they explain that sexuality and disability are 'one of the things that you don't know about' and therefore 'don't even think about'. The invisibility of these issues within wider social discourses of sexuality renders them unlikely to feature in young people's survey answers. When the sexuality of people with disabilities is acknowledged it is often constructed negatively as something to be managed. Describing dominant discourses of disability, Shakespeare, Gillespie-Sells and Davies (1996) indicate that 'A medical tragedy model predominates, whereby disabled people are defined by deficit, and sexuality either is not a problem, because it is not an issue, or is an issue, because it is seen as a problem' (p. 3). Management of the disabled person's sexuality is necessary because the expression of sexuality is deemed somehow 'inappropriate' or problematic because of the 'logistical difficulties' it poses (e.g. how to have intercourse when 'conventional' positions may be untenable).

These dominant social meanings shape possible responses participants can provide and are reflected in the low ranking of this issue in survey data. To think outside of this framework requires access to alternative meanings about the sexuality of people with disabilities. A challenge to the traditional view of disability as a medical tragedy is to configure this as a social construction potentially leading to oppression (Shakespeare et al., 1996, p. 2). When an alternative understanding of sexuality and disability was offered to focus group participants (i.e. that people with a disability are sexual) their sense of the importance of these issues altered. The mere appearance of sexuality and disability as a survey response option may have offered a disruption to dominant meanings of disability but was not enough to encourage participants to select it more frequently. Choosing this survey option was also hampered by the fact that as an invisible issue within public discourse, participants were unsure of its meaning. When it was possible to explain and elaborate this issue, participants were more interested in knowing about it. How research methods critically engage dominant discourses is likely to have a bearing on whether participants mobilise these and/or subordinate discourses.

A further difference between focus group and questionnaire data centred on the issue of 'pleasure'. As indicated in Chapters 3 and 5, the survey topic which ranked highest for inclusion in sexuality education was 'how to make sexual activity enjoyable for both

partners'. In focus groups, however, the topic of sexual enjoyment and pleasure did not emerge with the frequency and enthusiasm survey findings might suggest. While pleasure was talked about across focus groups, it was often inferred in banter rather than openly and vigorously discussed like 'homophobia' and 'sexual diversity'. Some focus groups were more comfortable and candid in their discussions than others. For instance, in focus groups where young people were drawn from a community support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth, talk about pleasure was frank and relatively frequent.

This forthright and detailed discussion of the importance of pleasure in young people's lives may be a consequence of these participants being more highly politicised. For gay, lesbian and bisexual young people, claiming a right to sexual pleasure is not simply an assertion of the importance of pleasure per se, but also about the legitimisation of marginalised sexual identities. Another reason for these focus groups' candour might have been that they were not inhibited by the institutional context of schooling. Community focus groups were conducted away from school, while all other participants took part in discussions in an unused classroom. The official culture of schools endeavours to deny the sexual and desexualise schooling relations so that talk about sexual pleasure as a positive entity is rendered 'wrong' and 'inappropriate' (Allen, 2007a; Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Kehily, 2002b). These prohibitions were less obvious in focus groups conducted in a non-school environment where reminders of this institutional culture were less prominent. The absence of anxiety about talk being discovered and judged by school authorities may have enabled less censored discussion.

Given the prohibitions around talking about pleasure at school the survey may have provided a 'safer' option for participants to demonstrate their interest in this area. The questionnaire was anonymous so individuals' answers were not identifiable. This technique meant participants could offer responses without fear of embarrassment or having to own or defend their perspectives. To reduce the likelihood that survey participants' opinions had negative repercussions for their schooling experience, students were informed that no one at school would read their questionnaires. The individual questionnaire format also lessened the possibility that responses would be publicly judged. In this instance, the survey method was more conducive to eliciting content preferences that challenged dominant discourses about 'appropriate' sexuality education material.

When findings from several methods are inconsistent it is not possible to draw conclusions about young people's preferred programme content *on the basis of a consensus*. However, this does not mean these findings are redundant for determining programme content. This would imply that a consensus offers the only verifiable way of interpreting data collected. The problem with a true consensus (in the statistical sense) is that it is rare and usually only achieved with small numbers. As a consequence, a consensus is typically diluted to a statistical majority. One of the dangers of catering to a statistical majority is that interests and needs of minority groups are subsequently marginalised. This consequence is unsuitable for sexuality education dedicated to social/sexual justice. What variations in findings across methods offer in this study is an understanding of how talk about 'pleasure' or 'homosexuality', for instance, may be produced as a consequence of contextual features such as who else is present in the room. These findings offer valuable insights about how a topic might be broached in the sexuality classroom.

What these differential findings across methods also reveal is that young people identify various priorities for sexuality education partially contingent on the research method and its application. For instance, the composition of some focus groups conducted outside of school, where young people identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual and were politicized, meant talk about pleasure was possible and candid. In other focus groups held at school, where youth did not publicly identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, narratives about pleasure were less frequent and more hesitant. Given 'the right' research context, young people can find spaces in which to feel comfortable in expressing interests that extend beyond the harm reduction model. From this perspective, what Wight characterises as 'limited' responses from young people are a consequence of what researchers ask and under what conditions. Rather than viewing young people as 'limited' in their thinking, the onus might be placed on sexuality researchers to find ways of opening spaces for them to convey less predictable thoughts.

How participants' responses reflect dominant discourses of sexuality

The second theme I want to explore raised by Wight relates to his concern that young people's self-identified needs may serve to reinforce inequitable social relations. This is an important issue for sexuality education which seeks to achieve sexual/social justice. In this section, I explore how young people's ideas for improving sexuality education

draw on dominant discourses of sexuality. These suggestions did not reflect dominant discourses in any simple way, but involved a complex interplay of these and subordinate meanings of sexuality. When attempting to re-imagine sexuality education in socially and sexually 'just' ways, these proposals can be problematic. As dominant discourses of sexuality often reinforce social inequalities, programme implementation of young people's suggestions may perpetuate these. Thinking through this dilemma for sexuality education dedicated to social/sexual justice is therefore explored.

The emergence of dominant discourses of sexuality in this research was particularly evident during focus group work, but not in any simple or blatant way. Focus groups are often utilised to generate group norms which result from the way accounts are articulated, censored and opposed in the presence of others (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). These norms can reflect dominant discourses that draw in other participants because their meanings appear most plausible and commonsensical. In the current research where participants represented a more politicised sector of the youth population, dominant discourses of sexuality were often challenged. However, participants' narratives were habitually configured in ways that supported the very inequalities they endeavoured to highlight.

An example of this complexity appears in the following discussion about homophobia. The sentiment expressed is one of social justice where participants criticise homophobic behaviour and advocate for programmes to combat this discrimination. This talk is framed by a sense of 'us' (heterosexuals) and 'them' (same-gender attracted youth), serving to reinforce a notion of same-gender attractions' 'otherness'.

Louisa: You think it's important to know about homosexuality?

Timara: Yeah, I think so. I think for people who are actually homosexual it would be really ...

Cindy: Or even for people who aren't like just to understand another person's lifestyle or ...

Chelsea: Especially cause like, I know a gay teenager and like everyone hassles him but I think it's good because he's like really openly gay and that's why people hassle him and that's probably because like we never get taught about it. And like my parents have heaps of gay friends and I'm not, like it doesn't bother me but heaps of people it does bother. I think it's because they don't know like anything about it, they don't know that it's completely normal

Timara: Like not talking about it sort of promotes homophobicness (*says unsurely*) or whatever (*others agree*)

Ruth: It's just giving us information so we know like to accept them and stuff

Sinita: It's not like saying okay you can go and be gay or whatever

Timara: No no, but like it's just telling you something. Like people always try and like they promote education of like racism or religions and stuff well why not sexuality as well?

(Private Co-educational School, Mixed Gender)

At one level these participants offer a counter-discourse to the heteronormativity of schooling contexts where same-gender attraction is often invisible and derided. This is achieved by identifying and criticising homophobic behaviour, an absence of teaching about homosexuality and calls for its curriculum inclusion. The configuration of this discussion simultaneously serves to maintain same-gender attracted youth as 'other'. The 'us' and 'them' distinction is apparent in Ruth's comment, 'It's just giving *us* information so we know like to accept *them*'. Heterosexuality is centred by the presumption that the 'us' is heterosexuals, powerfully positioned to 'offer acceptance' to same-gender attracted youth. Homosexuality is further decentred by its 'difference' and subsequent need to be understood by those who occupy the centre, as when Cindy says, 'Or even for people who aren't like just to understand another persons' lifestyle ...' Homosexuality is constituted as 'exotic other' which must be studied to be made intelligible (the implication being that homosexuality is not logical). The qualification for including this material is that it is not intended to condone homosexuality ('It's not like saying okay you can go and be gay or whatever'). These understandings draw on dominant discourses of homophobia that equate educating about same-gender attraction with 'recruitment'.

This talk offers insight into the complexity of how discourses of sexuality are reproduced by participants. At the same time as young people's talk represents a challenge to dominant discourses of sexuality it is configured in ways which reproduce conventional understandings of homosexuality as 'other'/'abnormal'. These narratives represent an interplay of both dominant and subordinate discourses which are neither distinctly one nor the other.

Another example of the complex way participants' answers reflected dominant discourses of sexuality revolves around gendered notions of heterosexuality. Male participants' responses tended to both conform

to and challenge conventional notions of male sexuality. Conventional discourses of masculinity constitute young men as displaying 'healthy' (hetero)sexual interest, brandishing certain sexual knowledge and being less emotionally invested in relationships than women (Farvid and Braun, 2006). Questionnaire results reveal that young men's selection of issues such as 'pornography' (sig. 000) and 'prostitution' (sig. 001) in significantly higher numbers than young women position them in conventionally masculine ways. These responses constitute them as avidly (hetero)sexual and with a predominately sexual rather than emotional interest in women.

Such answers sit alongside findings indicating proportionately more young men than women wanted additional information about the following: 'physical changes at puberty' (sig. 000), 'periods' (sig. 000), 'reproduction' (sig. 000), 'using a condom' (.001), 'safer sex' (.000) and the 'effects of drugs and alcohol on sexual decision-making' (sig. 001). These types of issues can be characterised as 'basic' sexual knowledge usually taught in the early years of secondary schooling in New Zealand. Indicating an interest in such topics sits uneasily with a central theme in the demonstration of an esteemed masculinity, that of 'knowing it already' with regard to things sexual (Kehily, 2002b, p. 134). To admit a lack of knowledge in these areas by identifying them as important for programme inclusion requires an admission of ignorance that appears to contradict traditional masculinity (Forrest et al., 2004). Similarly, the males' naming of 'prostitution' and 'pornography' in higher numbers than young women also seems in tension with some of the top five items participants wanted to know about. Young men and women identified 'dealing with relationship break-ups' and 'emotions in relationships' as issues they most wanted programmes to address. In selecting these topics young men are positioned as interested in more than the sexual in relationships and seen to have emotional investment in them.

Demetriou (2001) explains that the practice of hegemonic masculinity (involving the performance of conventional masculinities) is not 'a closed and unified totality that incorporates no otherness' (p. 347). The sustainability of hegemonic masculinity relies in part on 'its constant appropriation of diverse elements from various masculinities' rather than a complete rejection of them (Demetriou, 2001, p. 348). Consequently, young men's apparently contradictory positioning as both interested in 'pornography'/'prostitution' as well as dealing with 'emotions in relationships' and 'break-ups' is explained by this theory. The constitution of conventional masculinities is rarely 'pure', but may involve an appropriation of subordinate masculinities (such as

displaying emotional investment in sexual relationships). These findings reveal that young men's answers reflect an interplay of dominant and subordinate discourses of male sexuality.

When Wight (1999) expresses a concern that 'young men might seek to maximise their social and physical advantage over girls in order to gain sexual access' (p. 239) he invokes an explicit manifestation of dominant discourses of heterosexual masculinity. These discourses (in the form of sexist and abusive comments) are clearly gender inequitable and would not be appropriate in a programme dedicated to social/sexual justice. However, the configuration of dominant discourses of gender (in relation to masculinity) and sexuality described above is more nuanced. Male participants' survey answers position them as masculine subjects in ways that simultaneously 'are' and 'are not' traditionally masculine. Similarly, participants' comments in focus groups do not appear to be heteronormative and may seem pro-gay and anti-discriminatory. What this finding suggests is that it may not always be immediately obvious how participants' responses might contribute to socially/sexually 'unjust' or 'just' outcomes. The complex and contradictory nature of discourse means participants' ideas that promote social/sexual justice cannot always be easily separated from those that circumvent it. Being aware of this complexity and critically analysing research findings with regards to their implications for social/sexual justice is therefore paramount.

The fact that some people's suggestions for sexuality education invoke discourses of sexuality which conflict with social justice goals does not preclude programmes being based on their interests. The key here is to access a diversity of young people's perspectives and not just dominant understandings from the majority. This may be facilitated by a variety of methods which will access minority groups' interests and open spaces for participants to mobilise subordinate discourses of sexuality. In the current research, using focus groups to supplement questionnaire data enabled minority viewpoints, often subsumed by the character of survey data collection, to be acknowledged and explored. Focus group composition was vital as participants comprised a more highly politicised sector of the youth population with access to subordinate discourses of sexuality by virtue of their own identities/experiences. Also important was the design of focus group discussion which aimed at opening space for subordinate discourses through the introduction of less traditional topics like 'sexuality and disability'. By providing these opportunities for minority perspectives and alternative discourses to emerge, it is possible to achieve social/sexual justice aims and base sexuality education on a variety of young people's perspectives.

When research methodology is designed to access a diversity of young people's perspectives and constructed in ways that enable the emergence of subordinate meanings, then adult intervention to meet social/sexual justice goals may be reduced. As argued above, I do not believe young people are more prone to drawing on 'unjust' dominant discourses of sexuality than adults. Some might argue that young people's structurally unequal relationship with adults means they are more attuned to power inequalities and therefore generally more empathic to some social/sexual injustices than adults. With a research methodology designed to elicit diverse perspectives, young people themselves may raise issues of social/sexual justice. This strategy helps tackle the problem of implementing findings which reflect only the needs of the majority. As suggestions implemented are drawn from young people themselves, this approach allows the research to be youth-centred and socially/sexually just.

Summary of research findings

The de-eroticised curriculum

In this next section the chapter shifts focus to draw out and summarise some of the pervading themes of the research findings. A theme which surfaces across young people's critique of sexuality education is that it is de-eroticised and lacking essential information to support important sexual decision-making. Chapter 3 examined young people's content preferences in light of debate around what should be included in sexuality education. Like other international studies, participants critiqued the emphasis on technical and physiological aspects of sexuality culminating in a danger prevention focus (Alldred and David, 2007; Forrest et al., 2004; Measor et al., 2000). This concentration was to the detriment of other sexual information, including emotions in relationships and how to make sexual activity pleasurable for partners. Participants communicated their frustration at being denied certain types of information around topics perceived as controversial such as 'homosexuality', 'abortion' and 'teenage parenthood'. These topics were either intentionally avoided or censored by a moral code that cast them as wrong and as something to be ashamed of. As a consequence, young people felt they received inadequate information should they choose to have an abortion or become a teenage parent or be interested in same-gender attraction.

If we take seriously young people's criticism of pleasure as missing, then it is imperative sexuality education be re-imagined in ways that redress this absence. In accordance with centring and valuing

young people's perspectives, participants' thoughts around some of the perils and positives of addressing pleasure were sought. Young people were not naïve about how such an inclusion might be received by the local school community and implemented in the classroom. In focus group discussion, participants anticipated resistance from conservative members of the school community and potential for teacher and student embarrassment. While this call to include sexual pleasure interrupts the conventions of sexuality programmes, participants' thoughts sometimes drew on dominant discourses of sexuality. These meanings invoked the idea that pleasure is something 'private' and 'natural' and therefore cannot/should not be broached in class.

Having witnessed pleasure being taught in sexuality education classrooms and professional development training for teachers anecdotally, I share young people's caveats for the introduction of this issue. In Chapter 5, I signalled my concerns around a 'pleasure imperative' creeping into programmes in hetero- and gender-normative ways. In these instances, the achievement of sexual pleasure constitutes a regulatory practice by which young people measure themselves and their sexual activity as 'successful'. This standard negates the varied and complex reasons why people engage in consensual sexual activity and which may be as equally 'valid' as pleasure. I argue that sexuality education's substitution of practising safer sex with the need to practise pleasurable sex replaces one regulatory practice with another. However, regardless of the aims of sexuality education, it will always have regulatory effects because these are an inescapable consequence of discourse. Although I interrogate the inclusion of pleasure in programmes, I do not wish to abandon it. Instead, I want to draw critical attention to the assumption that pleasure's inclusion is inherently 'progressive' and offers young people more opportunities for the exercise of sexual agency. Thus, in Chapter 7 I attempted to theorise and re-think pleasure's inclusion with reference to Foucault's ideas around ethical pleasures. While Foucault's work is no more immune to the regulatory effects of discourse than any other, the concept of 'ethical pleasure' holds some promise for sexuality education dedicated to social/sexual justice.

Young people re-constituting the sexual self

Another theme throughout this book is that young people's responses indicate they view themselves differently from how sexuality education currently conceptualises them. One of this book's concerns has been to engage with young people's perspectives in more than a

one-dimensional manner. Employing tools from post-structuralism, I endeavoured to build another layer of analysis into young people's responses in order to examine what these convey about how they view themselves as sexual. When young people critique sexuality education as de-eroticised and for censoring sexual information, their comments position them as particular types of sexual subjects. By casting reproduction, puberty and menstruation as redundant at senior school level, participants are constituted as knowledgeable about sexuality's basics. This positioning sits in tension with the way much sexuality education views students, as preferably non-sexual and ignorant about preventing 'negative/unwanted' outcomes of sexual activity. Through their assertions for uncensored knowledge about 'pleasure', 'abortion' and 'teenage parenthood' young people might be seen to re-negotiate this constitution.

The current findings imply sexuality education might benefit from recognising young people as sexually knowledgeable and legitimately sexual subjects. Regardless of the philosophical approach favoured, programmes are unlikely to be effective if they do not engage young people's interests. If sexuality education fails to address young people in ways they understand themselves (i.e. as sexually knowledgeable) then it is unlikely to capture their attention. This situation is akin to someone trying to engage in a conversation with a red-headed stranger on the other side of the street by yelling the words 'hey, blonde'. The red-head might look round to see who is yelling, but they are unlikely to think the call is relevant to them and walk on. On the other hand, they may find it offensive, become angry and walk away in annoyance. Either way, the opportunity to engage the red-headed stranger's interest as originally intended is lost. Without addressing young people in ways they understand themselves, it is improbable that sexuality education will encourage students to listen to and implement its teachings.

Another overarching theme from young people's responses is the way these constitute their sexual subjectivities as complex and nuanced. Through its curriculum content and approach, sexuality education constitutes an easily discerned student subject with clear tendencies and characteristics (Allen, 2005d). Crudely, this student will have an interest in sexual activity which needs to be curbed and regulated by the teachings of sexuality education. Gender also plays a role here, with young men perceived to show more interest in sexual activity and thus as more difficult to 'tame' through classroom teaching. Young women, on the other hand, are seen as less likely to be 'overrun' by hormones and

consequently make 'easier' students. This flat and binary constitution of young people's sexuality is contested by the current research findings. Participants' responses in each method positioned them in ways which showed much more fragmented and contradictory gendered sexual subjectivities. Young men's and women's answers revealed them as simultaneously supporting and disrupting conventional femininities and masculinities.

These multifarious and ambiguous subject positionings pose a challenge for sexuality education to cater to this complexity. Researchers have noted the way sexuality education promotes these gender binary understandings, for instance when programmes convey the idea that girls are less likely to want sexual activity and be subsequently more sexually responsible than young men (Garcia, 2009). The challenge for programmes is to offer students more than these traditional gendered notions in order to acknowledge young people's more complex understandings of themselves. I would argue this means reconfiguring programmes to disrupt gender normativity and opening up gender's possibilities so that transgendered and intersex young people can positively locate themselves. Failure to do so risks losing young people's attention and making sexuality education irrelevant to their lived realities.

There are other implications for these findings in relation to debates around boys' engagement with sexuality education. Boys' perceived lack of interest in programmes rests on the notion that they are essentially different from girls. The current findings dispute the view that young men's content preferences diverge significantly from young women's. These data also point to a more nuanced understanding of masculinities where young men have 'diverse' rather than exclusively traditional 'masculine' interests in sexuality education. Existing approaches to these debates suggesting boys should be taught according to their different interests re-inscribe gender-normative assumptions. As a result, these strategies are unable to address the diversity and complexity of masculine identities. Treating young men as one-dimensional subjects with distinct preferences from young women has the potential to constrain young men's expression of self in ways that deny them particular experiences and joys. If we are really serious about improving sexuality education for young men (and all other expressions of gender) then sexuality education needs to expel its gender-normative assumptions.

Un-settling pedagogy

Young people in this research indicate there are aspects of programme pedagogy that need re-imagining. One of these is the composition of

classes. As indicated in Chapter 4, single-gendered classes have been a common feature of sexuality education historically and advocated on a variety of grounds (e.g. modesty). More recently, single-gendered classes have been presented as a solution to engaging young men, by focusing on boys' needs and interests. In contrast to much current literature, young women and men in this study revealed largely similar content preferences. In addition, when questionnaire participants were asked whether they preferred 'single-' or 'mixed-gender' classes, 65 per cent signalled they wanted mixed-gender. Operating separately gendered classes on the basis that this is what most young people want and that young women's and men's content preferences are substantially different is not supported by these findings. However, this does not preclude the possibility that there might be utility in having some lessons separately on other grounds, such as for ethnic or religious reasons. Measor (2004) also signals the need for single-gender lessons in some contexts to allow young women to learn unimpeded by the interruptions and harassment of some young men.

Another area of classroom pedagogy which young people hint might be re-imagined is who makes the best sexuality educators. As one of sexuality education's perennial debates, much research indicates peers as the preferred educators. When participants were asked in the survey who made the best educators answers ranked 'peers' first, followed by 'teachers' and then 'public health nurses'. The reasons participants gave for choosing any one educator were the same across all categories. That is, young people selected peers as the best educators for the same reason they selected teachers, namely, that they were knowledgeable. In focus group discussion, talk cohered less around 'who' made the best educator, and concentrated more on why someone was deemed 'best'. These qualities were identified as 'being knowledgeable', 'able to relate to young people' and characteristics linked with professionalism such as being well trained.

What these results suggest is that young people were less interested in 'who' made the best educators and concerned more with 'what made them the best'. In making this distinction, participants question the relationship between educator identity and teacher effectiveness. This connection is articulated when it is asserted peers make the best educators because they are better able to relate to young people. Young people's engagement with this debate suggests that certain qualities may not be the preserve of particular educator identities. The implications of these findings for sexuality education suggest a shift in framing 'the best educator debate' away from *who* makes the best educator to what

qualities are deemed best. Findings also cast doubt over the utility of measuring programme effectiveness in ways that implicate educator identity. For instance, it is currently popular to determine programme success by comparing 'peer-led' with 'teacher-led' programmes. If who the teacher is, i.e. their identity, is not directly aligned with the quality of their teaching then framing evaluations of effectiveness in this regard may be misleading.

These findings also have implications for the argument that young men's experience of sexuality education would be improved by male teachers. This 'solution' matches an aspect of educator identity (i.e. gender) with the quality of being able to teach young men effectively. The responses of young people in this study imply that teaching 'qualities' may not be so neatly aligned with gender or any other identity marker (e.g. age). These results may assuage educators' fears about being the 'wrong' age or 'wrong' gender to teach this subject successfully. Findings also suggest training sexuality educators in those qualities young people signal as most helpful may facilitate their learning about sexuality in positive and empowering ways.

Study limitations and directions for future research

In this re-imagining of sexuality education the question remains what might this look like in practice? How to implement this conceptualisation in the classroom was not the focus of this book. Instead, I have deliberately attempted to untether this re-imagining from institutional constraints as a means of pushing the limits of sexuality education's possibilities. Given an increasing uptake of ideas around pleasure in programmes in the last couple of years, it is important to know what addressing pleasure in the classroom might look like. What are its possibilities for supporting young people to exercise agency in ways that enhance their experiences of sexuality? Also, what challenges exist to including pleasure in programmes and how might they be circumvented? The anecdotal moments I recount in Chapter 5 do not equate to a systematic empirical study of how the issue of pleasure is being broached in schools. These hint at possible perils with introducing this topic, but more extensive examination is needed to provide substantive evidence of these.

A related issue here raised by young people themselves, is that given the institutional constraints of schooling how might some of these re-imaginings be possible? At a fundamental level, this question grapples with how to reconfigure the operation of institutional power in schools

so that young people can *really* shape their education. At another, this question addresses the pedagogical minutiae of implementing ideas eventuating from the research. For example, analysis of the findings highlights the potential benefits of sexuality education disrupting gender normativity. The issue of how sexuality education might do this in the classroom was beyond the scope of the current research methodology. A next step in this process is translating these conceptual and theoretical imaginings into practical application at school. To realise their social and sexual justice potential necessitates more than a standard curriculum template which teachers can follow. These issues warrant a bespoke approach, where how they are addressed is contingent upon existing classroom and school cultural dynamics. For instance, in relation to disrupting gender normativity how this might occur will be contingent on taking account of features such as how gendered understandings currently shape classroom pedagogy and interactions.

The focus of this book has been firmly on young people's perspectives to the extent that data originally collected from teachers were left out. The rationale for this concentration on young people, as explained in Chapter 2, was the difficulty in centring young people's voices in the presence of the 'authority' and 'logic' bestowed on adult perspectives. In leaving out teachers' perspectives I do not want to suggest they are unimportant. On the contrary, teachers are integral to the effectiveness of sexuality education and, as the responses of young people in this study testify, can make or break lessons. The current research raises a number of questions which involve teachers. For instance, what do they think about teaching students about pleasure? The existing literature predominantly presents teachers as hesitant and uncomfortable about this task (Munro and Ballard, 2004). We know little about teachers who enjoy this teaching and what kinds of benefits and challenges are produced by it. There is also a paucity of understanding about how secondary school teachers work to open spaces for students to disrupt gender and heteronormative constraints in sexuality education. Exploring these episodes may provide insights into how to achieve social and sexual justice in/through sexuality education.

Analysing key international debates in sexuality education and offering young people's perspectives on them have been central concerns of this book. Out of a plethora of debates, space constraints have meant it has only been possible to consider a few. An important debate which is not examined is how to address religious and ethnic diversity effectively in sexuality education. Limitations of the current methodology where that participants were volunteers which meant that

significant numbers of ethnic minority youth could not be guaranteed to participate. Similarly, the methods did not ask participants to identify religious affiliation, which meant analysis of responses on this basis could not be undertaken. Coleman (2008) has conducted research around sexuality education preferences with a religiously diverse sample of young people in England. This study revealed that 'how to make sex more satisfying' was a popular topic across religious groups. As data were collected via questionnaire, further research is necessary to understand why various ethnic groups demonstrate this preference and how they would like sexuality education to address it. Specifically targeting the views of ethnic minority groups in relation to sexuality education is a rarity in the existing literature. If we are to address the ethnocentrism of programmes in ways that speak to young people's cultural diversity, then this important work must also be undertaken.

Another pressing debate this book does not engage with is around the best pedagogy for programmes. Throughout the literature on young people's perspectives of this aspect of sexuality education there is a call for more interactive pedagogies (Allred and David, 2007; Measor et al., 2000). Young people often complain that 'paper and pencil' methods of teaching are uninspiring and fail to provide skills around decision-making and sexual encounters. The use of theatre as a means of modelling how sexual decisions might be negotiated and providing the opportunity for young people to act out various sexual decision-making scenarios has offered an alternative teaching method in this area (Ayedime Kafewo, 2008).

Research with young people around gender offers other innovative possibilities for programme pedagogy. Charles's (2007) use of digital media to investigate how girls at an elite Australian school construct their femininity is one possibility. In this study a web-based communication software package was employed to conduct a 'virtual discussion' during class around a set of media images representing different forms of femininity, e.g. pictures of KD Lang, Lara Croft and Paris Hilton. Using their own laptops, students were invited to respond to questions from the researcher as each image was displayed, and then follow threads on other participants' comments which interested them. This strategy tapped into these young women's interest in media and technology as well as reconfiguring the power relations of the classroom through the 'poly-vocal' nature of chat (as opposed to teacher-led discussion where students are expected to participate on cue). Such tools could have application in the sexuality education classroom with students discussing media representations of sexuality. Ascertaining whether

young people think this or other media technologies might be a useful pedagogical strategy is an area for further investigation. In conjunction with the need to address cultural and religious diversity in programmes, exploring whether this kind of pedagogy is preferred by all ethnic, religious and classed groups of young people would be of benefit.

This book does not presume to offer a definitive answer about what sexuality education should contain, and how it might be taught. It has instead attempted to be exploratory, thinking about the possibilities for sexuality education as grown organically from young people's critique. In this respect, this book is only one possible re-imagining. In refusing the constraints of typical institutional and policy prohibitions, I hope to have opened spaces for other re-imaginings, especially those that seek a social/sexual justice agenda.

Notes

2 Doing 'it': Researching Sexuality

1. In New Zealand the 'Maori Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender community have adopted this word to identify as being Maori and queer' (Definition from the New Zealand AIDS Foundation Takataapui Pamphlet).

3 'They Think you Shouldn't be Having Sex Anyway': Young People's Critique of Sexuality Education Content

1. The use of 'child sexuality' here is not an exclusive reference to 'young children' but deliberately invokes the way *all* young people (regardless of age) can be imbued with 'childhood innocence'. This interpretation is drawn from the context of the quote which proceeds to refer to 'young people' rather than 'children'. The quote is also located within a discussion of sex and relationships education content as delivered to older students.
2. 'This ruling pertains to heterosexual couples. The 1986 Homosexual Law Reform Act set the age of consent for male same-sex couples at 16 also. There are no specific laws relating to the legal age for sexual relations between women. However, if one partner is over 21, and the other is under 16, the older partner can be charged with committing an indecent act' (Crockett, Woolley and Johnson, 2002, p. 49).

4 Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus? Re-thinking Gender Differences in Sexuality Education Content

1. Participants in this research were males aged 5–17 years in the United Kingdom. The sample size is not given by the authors.
2. Significance has been determined at the 5 per cent level. This means that all figures under $p < 0.05$ are significant.
3. 'Secondary school' is the name given in New Zealand to schooling for years 9–13 or forms 3 to 7 (age 13–18 years).
4. These statistical results were: 'Physical changes at puberty' (sig. .000), 'periods' (sig. .000), 'reproduction' (sig. .000), 'using a condom' (.001), 'safer sex' (.000) and the 'effects of drugs and alcohol on sexual decision making' (sig. .001).
5. 'Pornography' (sig. .000) and 'Prostitution' (sig. .001).
6. 'Abortion' (sig. .000).

5 'Pleasurable Pedagogy': Young People's Thoughts about Including 'Pleasure' in Sexuality Education

1. 'Zine' is short for 'fanzine' (a version of the word 'magazine'). Zines are 'a kind of personalized newsletter and forum for rants originating in punk and anarchist circles, they are alternative media for the voice of the ordinary person' (Harris, 2004, p. 160). The form of zines can vary from print and on-line newsletters to comics, artworks and poetry.

6 'It's not *who* they are it's *what they're like*': Re-conceptualising the 'Best Educator' Debate

1. The mythopoetic men's movement is a group which Connell (1995) identifies as part of a spectrum of 'broader irrationalist trends in the world of advanced capitalism' (p. 177) .
2. Fa'afafine are biological Samoan males who express feminine gender identities. Takataapui is the Maori word to describe an intimate companion of the same gender.
3. For example, Family Life Pasifika, which provides information about sexuality to Pasifika youth and Te Puawai Tapu, a sexual and reproductive health service for Maori.
4. Pakeha is the Maori word for non-Maori of European descent.

8 An Impossible Practice? Implications for Future Sexuality Education

1. This is a popular New Zealand soap opera based around the lives of doctors and nurses working at an Emergency Medical Centre.

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