



Pedagogies of Possibility for Negotiating Sexuality Education with Young People

Debbie Ollis, Leanne Coll,
Lyn Harrison and Bruce Johnson

**EMERALD STUDIES IN GENDER,
SEXUALITY AND EDUCATION**

PEDAGOGIES OF POSSIBILITY
FOR NEGOTIATING SEXUALITY
EDUCATION WITH YOUNG
PEOPLE

EMERALD STUDIES IN GENDER, SEXUALITY AND EDUCATION

Series Editor: Professor Vanita Sundaram, University of York, UK

Emerald Studies in Gender, Sexuality and Education publishes short monographs that contribute to knowledge and practice in the field of gender, sexuality and education. The series is particularly concerned to publish work that has a focus on bridging fundamental, theoretical knowledge about how genders and sexualities are practiced, constructed and problematised in different educational contexts, with implications for practice in these settings. While not explicitly focussed on impact, the series seeks to publish work that can demonstrate the applied nature of research in this field.

The series publishes feminist scholarship which is intersectional in its focus. It welcomes interdisciplinary research from the social sciences, arts and humanities. Key topics of interest include but are not limited to: race and ethnicity, religion, intersexuality, trans* issues, sex work, disability and masculinities.

**PEDAGOGIES OF POSSIBILITY
FOR NEGOTIATING SEXUALITY
EDUCATION WITH YOUNG
PEOPLE**

BY

DEBBIE OLLIS

Deakin University, Australia

LEANNE COLL

Dublin City University, Ireland

LYN HARRISON

Deakin University, Australia

AND

BRUCE JOHNSON

University of South Australia, Australia



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Copyright © 2022 Debbie Ollis, Leanne Coll, Lyn Harrison and Bruce Johnson.
Published under exclusive license by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. No responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of information contained in the text, illustrations or advertisements. The opinions expressed in these chapters are not necessarily those of the Author or the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78769-744-7 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-78769-743-0 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-78769-745-4 (Epub)



Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>About the Authors</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xiii</i>
1. Introduction	1
Beginnings	1
Past–Present–Future Entanglements	2
Establishing the Context	4
Engaging Young People in Sexuality Education	5
Brief Outline of Chapters	7
2. Young People as Active Agents in Sexuality Education Reform	11
Youth as a Political and Pedagogical Site	11
Young People’s Gendered and Sexual Subjectivities	12
Landscape of Sexuality Education	14
Transforming Sexuality Education With Young People	16
Sexuality Education Futures	18
Towards Participatory Forms of Inquiry	20
Methodological Framework: What Might Be Possible?	22
Connecting People, Participation and Place	23
The Research Team	24
Co-productive Encounters	25
Embracing the Speculative	29
Doing Data Analysis Differently	30
‘Data-glow’s’: What are They?	31
How We Put Data-glow to Work	32
A Move Towards What Moves Us	33
3. From Procedural Ethics to Ethics in Practice?	35
Introduction	35
The Development and Enactment of Formal ‘Procedural Ethics’:	
The Neoliberal Turn	36
Ethics Regulation in Practice: The Critical (Humanist?) Turn	37
Ethics in Practice: The Subjective Turn	39

The Affective Turn	40
The 'Affect' of Turning Back to 'Procedural Ethics'	41
What Might This Mean for Sexuality Education Research?	47
A Note on the Victorian Context	49
Concluding Thoughts	50
4. Curious Encounters with Sexuality Education	51
Introduction	51
Encounter 1: 'Pleasure's Perils' (Allen, 2013)	52
Encounter 2: Tapestries of Learning	58
Open Ending	61
5. Ethical Encounters in Sexuality Education	65
Introduction	65
Encounter 1: 'I Didn't Want To Do It'	66
Encounter 2: Coming Out in Class	71
Open Ending	75
6. Unite, Empower and Disrupt: Transforming Sexuality Education With Young People	79
Introduction	79
Feminist Pedagogies	82
Becoming a Feminist Educator	83
Unite, Empower and Disrupt: Pedagogies of Possibility	87
Encounter: The Opening Ceremony	88
Affect and Intersectionality	89
Open Ending	92
7. The Im/Possibilities of Sexuality Education: Negotiating Our Way Through	95
References	103
Index	127

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Debbie Ollis is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Deakin University, Australia. Her research, teaching and recent publications focus on sexuality and relationships education, gender-based violence, sexuality, gender, young people and schooling.

Leanne Coll is a Lecturer at Dublin University, Dublin, Ireland. Her research and teaching are both concerned with approaches to sexualities, social justice and schooling.

Lyn Harrison is an Honorary Associate Professor in the School of Education at Deakin University, Australia. She has been a Chief Investigator on three Australian Research Council funded Linkage projects.

Bruce Johnson is an Emeritus Professor at the University of South Australia, Australia. His latest publications provide a critique of contemporary research ethics review processes in SRE research.

This page intentionally left blank

FOREWORD

*Professor Tiffany Jones,
Macquarie University School of Education, Sydney Australia*

There has been great controversy about what sexuality education young people want and what they ‘should be’ getting in Australia, and other countries around the world (USA, UK, Canada and South Africa). If one were to rely only on media portrayals it might seem as though sexuality education was prolific and highly radical, exciting stuff flying in the face of all orthodoxy ... but listening to young people, one learns a very different perspective. One thing is clear – sexuality is the topic young people most commonly report they need improved education on. A call from young people that also holds sexuality education policy and practice to account (Allen & Rasmussen, 2017; Jones, 2020). Young people’s contemporary sexual cultures have different features, considerations, risks and potentials that can be at odds with the current (and past) sexuality education curricula and pedagogical frameworks. It is therefore important to not just recognise young peoples as key stakeholders in curriculum debates surrounding sexuality education, but also to actively reconsider new forms of inquiry and advocacy necessary to ensure that young people are meaningfully engaged in the decision-making processes (Lamb & Randazzo, 2016; Pihkala & Huuki, 2019; Quinlivan, 2018; Renold & McGeeney, 2017; Ringrose, Warfield, & Zarabadi, 2019; Wolfe, 2018). Further, adult allies need to tackle and set out strategies to overcome some of the risks inherent to their inclusion; embracing both risks of harm to young people and the risks of media and community perceptions over-stating or over-playing that harm in ways that prevent better work occurring. While sexuality education research books and sexuality education resources do exist, I am not aware of any other books that focus on young people’s engagement or provide useful models or resources to achieve this to the extent that this book does.

This book, *Pedagogies of Possibility for Negotiating Sexuality Education with Young People*, provides critical reflection, including a feminist queer lens, on the possibilities and challenges of working with, rather than for, young

people in the redesign and delivery of sexuality education. It takes a deeper look at this push to have young people actively engage in sexuality education praxis, inquiry, school policy and ethics deliberations. This book tackles the issues and problems around what young people want to learn more about and how they want to learn it. Every chapter includes young people's experiences (data varies from observation to conversation), and research artefacts are also used.

The book has been composed by an impressive team of authors led by Associate Professor Debbie Ollis of Deakin University – an internationally esteemed teacher educator who is well-known in both Australian academic circles and media for her influence on sexuality education curricula. Dr Leanne Coll, Lecturer at Dublin City University, a researcher-educator with significant national and international expertise in co-productive and action-orientated inquiry with young people and educators aimed towards transforming sexuality education. Honorary Associate Professor Lyn Harrison of Deakin University and Emeritus Professor Bruce Johnson of the University of South Australia have both attracted highly competitive support from the Australian Research Council in related fields and have had excellent track records in sexuality education research during their careers. Something notably novel offered in this work is the way this team provides a new deeper consideration on the *complexities* of working with, rather than for, young people – hardly simple terrain. This is a fabulous work which thoughtfully reflects upon the research and education processes of supporting young people as *active agents in* rather than *passive objects of* sexuality education. So much sexuality education is infantilising, or worse, where it recognises the agency of young people but does not allow for it in a practical sense as this book suggests will be important. This is only possible due to the broad range of experiences across the authorship team representing cumulatively many decades of experience.

The book has a logical, well-considered framework. The chapters are structured around the nature of ongoing, nuanced and emotionally charged engagements in negotiating sexuality education with young people – time (past, present and future) does not and has not automatically or easily been resolved and so beginnings and endings are not dressed up as more solid than they are. However, we do find a very loose time-based logic to the chapters – the earlier chapters looking more to past and current thinking, the latter to current and future opportunities. The book provides chapters which individually include clear introductions, literature reviews or ideological groundings, provocative scenarios and incidents it terms 'encounters', and concluding or transitional reflections. Chapter 1 offers some beginnings for the key theme; Chapter 2 explores its key concepts and literatures and the methodological

details of the larger ARC project *Educating Young People about Sexuality Education* reported in the book including the Victorian-based case study. Chapter 3 details matters of context and constraints and takes on the changes to ethics review processes necessary to work in this area – possibly my favourite part of the book. Chapters 4–6 are more pragmatically orientated moving beyond research institutional matters into pedagogical and methodological processes of negotiating sexuality education with young people in schools; project-based encounters around rethinking safety, inclusion and feminist forms of public pedagogies. Chapter 7 reflects on the key ideas of the text in a more future-oriented way, considering how ideas could be built on or responded to by a variety of stakeholders. The smooth transitions between the chapters made the book a relatively fast read in a world of theory that can be a difficult slog; the signposting and transitions are well-placed and well-paced.

Now is exactly the right time for a book like this; one which builds on the potential to empower young people and seeks to become attuned to, advocate for and negotiate with young people on matters that matter most to them:

- matters of sexual consent;
- new technologies shaping sexual cultures; and
- issues of sexual diversity in education around the world.

Ollis, Coll, Harrison and Johnson offer a well-researched academic contribution into possibilities for negotiating sexuality education with young people drawing on their different strengths and experiences. They deftly cite and source all the main recent contextual stimulants, smoothly traverse the key theoretical positions and thinkers in this area and take readers through the most important research-based angles relevant to their Australian sexuality education field and larger conceptual inquiry. They do so without being too heavy-handed or pedantic in their coverage as academic texts can be, leaving what was, frankly, an academically satisfying but none-the-less, most enjoyable read on potentials for negotiated sexuality education accessible to a range of audiences.

The wide audience for this book could be:

- education and sociology researchers;
- education policy-makers, leaders and administrators;
- those working in non-government organisations;
- teacher educators and teachers; and

- higher education students including pre-service teachers or psychology students looking to one day become teachers themselves or indeed school counsellors.

The focus on a very current and somewhat divisive topic is a strength of *Pedagogies of Possibility for Negotiating Sexuality Education with Young People*, as this will draw in a range of readers with different preconceptions. This book will also map out an area that is only very basically referred to in debates but never really given any detail. It could serve as quite a practical guide to teachers and sexuality education researchers and could also be useful for sociologists such as myself. Teachers and teacher educators, sexuality educators and people involved with non-government organisations who work directly with young people will especially get much from this book for its pragmatic offerings on young people engagement models for direct sexuality education. However, sexuality education researchers and research students may similarly find the unpacking of the messy, nuanced and charged processes of working with young people of interest to their studies, which could potentially feed into future projects with the potential to break new ground for co-productive, action-orientated and critical work with young people in the field of sexuality education. I hope readers enjoy this book and find it as useful as I did, in finding more collaborative and consultative ways to extend and update the content and value of their own sexuality education contributions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our appreciation to the Australian Research Council and the Linkage research funds that made the Engaging Young People in Sexuality Education (EYPSE LP130100350) project possible.

We would also like to acknowledge the very important contributions of Jane Flentje, from SHINE SA, who was a project partner in the larger EYPSE project. Jane's extensive professional expertise and knowledge in the area of sexuality education were invaluable assets to the project. She has been both a generous critical friend and trusted colleague.

There are many other colleagues who have supported us throughout this project. Claire Stonehouse who provided much needed observational data and sexuality education to the students when the need was identified. A special thanks must also go to Dr Emily Gray, who helped us on several occasions in ways that go beyond academic support.

We would also like to acknowledge our gender and sexuality education colleagues across the globe whose scholarly work has inspired us and pushed us out of our comfort zone theoretically. We would like to highlight the work of the late Professor Kathleen Quinlivan from Auckland University in New Zealand. Kathleen's work has long since challenged us to embrace the unruliness of pedagogical and methodological encounters which place young people at the heart of reforms.

A special acknowledgement must go to Fitzroy High School teachers and school leaders. To Linda Mitchell the principal, who allowed us to work with the school on transforming sexuality education. To Briony O'Keeffe whose commitment to the democratic classroom, feminism and the students she teaches is an inspiration. Her work with young people engenders a sense of hope that change is possible. Our time spent together has taught us much about the emotional labour of teaching and the feminist potentials of classroom spaces. Thank you for inviting us in and the opportunity to work in collaboration with the FemCo to respond to enduring injustices that matter most to them.

Most importantly, we would like to thank the young people without whom this project wouldn't exist. Working with them has been an immense privilege

and career highlight. Not only did they welcomed us into their classrooms but enabled us to learn from their lived experience of sexuality education at school and more broadly. Their perspectives, experiences, questions, debates and approaches to sexuality education not only challenged us to think differently but will continue to drive our practice as researchers and educators.

It is to the 4,000 young people who contributed to the EYPSE project that we dedicate this book to.