

**What happens when the birds are sexting and the bees watch
pornography?
Digital sexualities, sexuality education and New Zealand adolescents**

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For all young people. It is not easy to be 'the future'.

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Abstract

The relationships between young people, technology and sexuality are highly contentious. We live in a digital age and young people are fully immersed. Increasingly, their communities are negotiated and formed in cyberspace. This historical moment is viewed as unprecedented, yet many persistent and historical structural inequalities permeate the digital sphere, framed as contemporary problems. This can be seen in cases such as the 2013 ‘Roast Busters’ scandal which I will consider in this thesis. The notion of young people in cyberspace has been considered and reconsidered by academics, the media and popular culture alike. Simplistic interpretations of complex realities have robbed many debates of the richness that they otherwise could have had. This has frequently seen young people constructed as corruptible, at risk, and in need of protection.

This thesis examines the diverse and divisive discourses that surround young people’s use of technology, particularly as it is utilised to negotiate their sexualities. Further, it interrogates governmental policy that is enacted to solve the social ‘problems’ associated with young peoples’ (digital) sexualities. I will reveal and dissect anxieties which regard young people and their bodies as problematic. Using a Foucauldian feminist framework, I ask who speaks and why, and locate biopower in the mechanisms and techniques used by the State to subjugate and control young ‘unruly’ bodies. I look specifically at sexuality education in New Zealand, and whether it has adapted to a transformative digital context. I will also contemplate interventions such as the Harmful Digital Communications Act and the relationship education programme Mates & Dates and ask if they simply add to the neoliberal ideologies that prop up decontextualized understandings of sexuality and health, or if they represent progress.

Introduction

We are none of us without a standpoint (Hartsock, 1983). Everything we think, the ways in which we comprehend and understand our lived experiences are so because we were born in a place and a time and a context. I would like to begin by locating myself in my own context, and thereby the place from which this thesis has been produced.

I cannot remember a time without cell phones and computers. They were not ubiquitous in my earliest years, but I was quickly aware of them. I remember the beep of a pager. I remember my Solicitor uncle's large but impressive cell phone. My small school had a computer on which we played *Treasure Maths Storm* to learn multiplication. My best friend at 6 had a computer which was connected to the bright shiny new dial-up internet. When I visited we would play for hours on Barbie.com which hosted an online game allowing us to mix and match Barbie's outfits. I was enthralled. When I was seven my mother was given a laptop by her work. It was fully black and white and my older brother and I would play an early version of the game *Prince of Persia*, which was considerably more violent than choosing Barbie's outfit. The prince would bleed when you made him jump to his doom and he became impaled on spikes. My older brother had a Playstation and we had earlier played on a Sega and a Nintendo at our grandparents' house.

I got my own desktop computer when I was around 13 and it was soon connected to the internet. Dial-up internet was the cause of many arguments at my house. Only one of us could use it at a time, and mum would yell loudly around the whole house 'I need to use the phone!' when she picked up the receiver to the shriek of internet connectivity. To her, the relatively new phenomena of communicating on the internet using email and chat programmes was not 'real' or important when compared with speaking on the phone. Around this time I also got my first cell phone. Its main function was to send and receive texts - \$10 bought you 2000 text messages, able to be sent only to other Telecom numbers. It was socially-imperative to be with Telecom, otherwise your friends would refuse to text you because it cost extra. I ran out of texts before the end of the month, every month. I had the first taste of relying on technology, of a constant technological companion. I used MSN messenger like my life depended on it. I watched DVDs on my computer rather than on the television. My older cousin bought one of the first camera phones for over \$1000 - we younger cousins were all very impressed. At 15 I got my own laptop and learned all about (slowly)

downloading music and movies. I had a patience for this process that I cannot fathom now. I also became very aware that many of my other friends, largely young men, used the internet to download pornography. Pornography was shared between friends to save on download time and bandwidth. One young man I knew told me he thought he might have an addiction to pornography, showed me his downloaded collection that totalled over a terabyte (a lot). I had no idea what to say to him.

I believe I first saw porn when I was around seven years old. My best friend and I knew some older boys had hidden some magazines down by a nearby river and we went to find them. I do not recall understanding at first exactly what pornography was, and the naked, spread women in the slightly muddy magazine meant little to me. My older brother soon had magazines, and later images and videos on his own computer. I always knew how to find them and was always curious. In later years he has never been shy about his porn use and has rarely been castigated for his defence of the 'fantasy' it evokes. Pornography and the internet became linked. My male friends would share it, put it on at parties. It became a challenge to get around school firewalls in information technology and invariably search for pornography. Porn became shock and spectacle too; at 16 my friend showed me *2 Girls, 1 Cup* which infamously shows two women eating faeces and vomiting into each other's mouths. It became a game to watch other people react to this video. Sometimes I wonder about the two women in that video, but I am too afraid to search and find out. I watched a famous big budget porn film with an ex-friend who turned out to have a propensity for sexual abuse. I do not remember finding it erotic, I just wanted to know what a multi-million-dollar porn production looked like.

I do not remember being terribly bothered by pornography until I was older. Truthfully, I was so aware of pornography being a part of the lives of many people that I cared about and on the fringe of mine that it is sure a process of normalisation had happened. If I ever was struck by the urge to find something erotic I was distracted by many of the hallmarks of standard pornography that I find anywhere from unerotic to problematic to horrific. Yet even early on I had a sense that to trouble the sexual 'tastes' of others was not often a done thing. People's sexualities were private, and yet many I knew were being decidedly public about watching pornography. There seemed to be an imagined division between sexuality and pornography, but it did not truly exist. I remember a friend of mine telling an anecdote about receiving an injury while his girlfriend was fellating him (I was around 16, as was he). He surmised that if one wanted to learn how 'do a blow job', one should simply watch porn. In my final year of high school I was similarly privy to a loud conversation in the back of a classroom where a group of young men spoke about how disgusting 'going down' on women

was.

I feel I have implicated my young male friends and acquaintances in this discussion, but I distinctly also remember an environment of sexual currency in my years at a single-sex girls school. If you were not doing 'it' you were frigid, and if you were doing it too much you were a slut. If there was a magic number that is cool I do not think anyone really knew of it, but to have committed boyfriend who did not end the relationship after it became intimate was certainly seen as a status symbol. Many of my friends formed romantic relationships with the same people that other friends had previously 'dated', and this caused issues. It was rumoured that this was sometimes to get back at another friend for supposed wrongdoing.

As Facebook dutifully reminds me of my Facebook anniversary, I joined Facebook at age 17. Facebook would contend that this is a 'life event' and I suppose it is, in a way. Before this I had engaged with the early social media site Bebo. My main memory of this had been hierarchically ranking my friends in a 'top 16'. This could be a cut throat and relationship-ending process and was dynamic - one who was in your top 16 one week could be demoted the next. In her book *American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers* (2016), Nancy Jo Sales describes similar tenets of digital social etiquette; it is imperative to 'like' your friends posts and photos, or you are not a friend at all. Young people today who have smartphones can have constant internet connectivity, constant engagement with their technology which facilitates communication, memory, entertainment, research, navigation, relationships. I often feel thankful that Snapchat did not exist when I was 13, as I had surely internalised the idea that my value as a young woman was tied to my (sexual) attractiveness. I am not sure I would have made the 'responsible' decisions society is demanding of today's teenagers.

We should remember that society is made up of communities, and for young people¹ the demands from their social community are often the loudest. Status is paramount. Young people's communities are often formed, reformed and negotiated in cyberspace. There simply is not a separation between young people and their technology, and there cannot be a separation like there once was. This is firstly on a physical level: once, not long ago, one had to sit in front of a large, wired desktop computer to access the internet. Those young people without access to technology in

¹ In this thesis I use both 'young people' and 'adolescent' to largely describe high school aged people 12-18 years of age. I have done this to avoid repetition. Various organisations have discursive definitions of young people and adolescents, highly dependent on their frame of reference, but most refer to the teen years and both are applicable to my research.

New Zealand will not only be disadvantaged in terms of difficulty in completing homework tasks which assume internet connectivity and literacy, they will be socially disadvantaged, even isolated. We need to relinquish understandings of technology as a force good or bad, and understand it simply as a force. Questions of the real versus the online are of no use when trying to comprehend young people's lived experiences. The online is the real.

I write all this because I distinctly remember growing up in New Zealand, negotiating sexuality and sex in an age of emerging technology (as a privileged, white, cisgendered girl, it must be said). I remember that it was, and still can be, complex and confusing. There were rules that were not written down, that changed constantly, that somehow one was supposed to innately know but were difficult to learn. Reprimands came swiftly. Patriarchy did not personally tell me to shave my legs, a 14 year-old female classmate did. Messages came from everywhere. My all-girls school still had '80s posters up proclaiming that 'girls can do anything!', but girls within the same walls would disagree and told you so. I was reprimanded for wearing roll-on deodorant, the 'wrong' coloured bra. Corporeality was watched by school administration and student alike. I was sent out of my year 12 biology class many times because I refused to remove my lip piercing; and it was the lip piercing that was viewed as disruptive to my learning, rather than my removal from the learning space. I feel that I was luckier than many to have at home a secret weapon - my supportive feminist mother who spent my first years as a sex educator and later years as a psychotherapist. I write about sexuality education because I know that what I learned, almost from birth, helped me build positive relationships with my own sexuality, my body, and with other people. I cannot give this same thanks to what I 'learned' at school. I support the kind of sexuality education my mother gave me, for it was education that criticised, contextualised and did not instruct.

When I was an infant, my mother was a sexuality educator for New Zealand's primary sexual health and education provider, Family Planning. She would regularly take me to work with her, several months old as I was, as she spoke to people of all ages about sex, sexuality, contraception, fertility, pregnancy and everything in between. She ran a radio show for a time, called 'Sex Matters' where she would answer calls from people asking her questions regarding sex and sexuality; questions that she would always answer honestly. This was a philosophy that my mother brought home with her and as my brothers and I grew up, any and every question we asked about the 'birds and the bees' was answered bluntly and honestly. As well as this, my mother would often bring home books that she would later use for teaching tools and use us as test subjects for the books' messages or methods. One of the stories that came from this time that has become family legend is when my mother took my brother and I with her on a flight to Christchurch and I got familiar with the

Stewardess, asking her about her husband and explaining in great detail how she and him would go about making a baby. I was four years old. Another, around the same time involved me sliding off the end of a slide and delightedly telling my conservative British grandfather that I was semen coming out of the end of a man's penis. This was a playful, joyous image to me I think. My grandfather was mortified, worried that others might think him a paedophile.

Starting school, it was quickly apparent that my knowledges about sex and sexuality were somewhat more extensive than those of my classmates. Sometimes, excited about a new piece of information that my mother had provided me, I would share it with my friends or others at school only to be rebuked by the teacher who overheard. In one case, my teacher received a complaint from a parent when I had talked to her daughter about what masturbation was. Fast forward to intermediate and high school and I started to experience what the curriculum had to offer in terms of sexuality education; it was but a fraction of what my mother had been teaching me my whole life, offered as an extensive and 'comprehensive' exploration of what had always been conveyed to me as a huge and important subject that connected to lots of other aspects of life. Pornography was never mentioned once. What is foremost in my memory is practising with condoms which I remember thinking smelled bad. I also recall achieving an excellence in the new NCEA internal assessment standard for sexuality education skills and knowledge. My classmates and I joked that this was in fact a 'sexcellence' and that to not achieve a sexcellence surely meant one was bad at sex.

Within our sexuality education we were also subjected to larger-than-life pictures of diseased genitals projected onto the wall in my high school's new audio-visual suite. I have wondered since how it might have felt to be in that room, having experienced or currently experiencing a similar infection - seeing your symptoms exhibited as a worst-case scenario, witnessing dehumanised, monstrous genitals that are disembodied from the people who own them. I do not think anyone left feeling 'empowered'. My school-based sexuality education was mostly over and done with by the time I was 15, but an open dialogue with my mother remained through the rest of my teenage years. She assured us there would be condoms in the medicine cabinet for my older brother and I to use if we ever needed them. She never spoke of sex or sexuality negatively, and when she observed my lack of interest in boys she even offered me a gentle question as an opportunity to 'come out' in case I needed an opening line. She did this because she had once read a study that said for young people who wished to come out to their families, one of the hardest things was knowing how to broach the topic.

Throughout my undergraduate Gender Studies degree my interest in sexuality education remained, coupled with a general confusion as I consistently saw sex education enacted as a topic of interest in the media and, in a way that seemed bizarre to me, as a site of constant moral debate over what should be taught, who should teach it, when it should be taught and even if it should be taught at all. To me, this exemplifies a larger anxiety surrounding adolescent sexuality. Many of my colleagues in my classes lamented the sexuality education they had received, or rather had not received. This inspired my undergraduate honours dissertation, and put me on a path that led me to working in governance for New Zealand Family Planning, one of the largest non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in New Zealand, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), one of the largest NGOs in the world. I met people working in sexual health and reproductive rights (SRHR) globally. I met the directors of many organisations from around the world: Thailand, Romania, Sweden, North Korea. I met Cecile Richards, CEO of Planned Parenthood twice. She travels with a security detail as she receives daily rape and death threats. I got a glimpse of New Zealand's place in the world of SRHR. When I explained our abortion laws to people, some found it difficult to believe that New Zealand, held up internationally as progressive and egalitarian, had such out-of-date, out of touch legislation. I deeply felt our privilege when I saw that one of the smallest grants given to an IPPF member association was for wheelbarrows in war-torn Yemen, so that pregnant women did not have to walk to the clinic to give birth. I think about that a lot.

Despite our differences, one theme it seemed like almost everyone could agree on was the paramountcy of education. IPPF mandated that all member associations must commit to providing comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), that focuses on a rights-based, holistic approach. In practise, differing religious, cultural and economic barriers meant that how CSE was understood was never uniform. I was part of multiple youth (25 years and under) forums, and despite being from so many different countries, the youth in IPPF knew that our knowledges, the knowledges of our young peers and the knowledges we were seeking were almost always in conflict with those of adults. My time with IPPF and Family Planning left me with a sincere belief that everyone should have the right to choose the number and spacing of their children, or whether to have children at all, that child marriage, rape and sexual abuse should be eradicated, and that heteronormativity and gendered binaries should be dismantled to properly recognise the multiple identities and sexualities that populate our world. I believe education is part of the path towards these goals.

Yet I know that education is never produced in isolation. Education is a mirror of the State, its institutions and of wider society. I support sexuality education, in the home, in schools, on billboards, on the street. Yet the neoliberal ideologies that permeate New Zealand society have

aided in the construction of a sexuality education that feels worthier of interrogation than support. While writing this thesis, this has been a tension I have felt acutely. How to support and simultaneously disassemble sexuality education?

When I began, I had a clear vision. I was inspired after attending a discussion session on pornography at the 2013 Family Planning Conference. This session was chaired by Michael Flood, an Australian sociologist who researches pornography. Flood identified that pornography was under researched, and his thoughts were echoed by Frances Bird, then director of health promotion at Family Planning. I would research pornography, I thought, pulling through the threads of second wave feminism's sex wars to understand where we are today. With pornography education as an emerging notion, it seemed terrain ripe for traversing. I watched pornography with an academic eye and took notes. I watched documentaries where ex-pornstars recounted experiences of abuse. I read Andrea Dworkin's seminal text *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* and I read her 1981 reflection on the piece. In it she said: 'Pornography has infected me. Once I was a child and I dreamed of freedom. Now I am an adult and I see what my dreams have come to: pornography' (p.304). Dworkin's words moved me. I could not watch videos any more, even academically, for I felt I could never truly be sure I was not a spectator of rape. I no longer wanted to centralise pornography in my thesis. Still, as my topic further took shape I could not ignore the pornographic elephant in the room. It is not possible to look at technology use or sexuality education without considering pornography. In this thesis, I do indeed look at pornography in the world and in lives of young people, as an invisible and visible presence in the classroom and I weigh the possibilities of pornography education. However, I do not subscribe to the monolithic status pornography has been given. I believe this has impaired our collective ability to reflect upon pornography in a meaningful way.

Centrally, this thesis examines the diverse and divisive discourses that surround young people's use of technology, particularly as it is utilised to negotiate their sexualities. Further, it interrogates governmental policy that is enacted to solve the social 'problems' associated with young peoples' (digital) sexualities. It is my aim to paint a clear picture of the current lived realities of young people in New Zealand and link them to the imagined solutions that come from people in 'power'. I use a Foucauldian feminist framework to do this, asking who speaks and why and locating biopower in the mechanisms and techniques used by the State to subjugate and control young 'unruly' bodies. I will reveal and dissect anxieties which often produce discourses that construct young people as problematic. These are anxieties which have lived discursively through many 'moral panics': the advent of television, radio and even jazz music (Kuipers, 2006). In all such

debates young people have been constructed as corruptible, as unsafe, at risk, and in need of protection. We live in a digital age, and young people are fully immersed. This historical moment is seen as a new frontier, unprecedented and I would like to ask – is it? What evidence is being used to illustrate the breakdown of morality that supposedly occurs in cyberspace? If this is such a gargantuan issue how shall we address it? I will look at current sexuality education in order to comprehend the space available to discuss the connection between sexuality and technology. Does such space exist? What is offered in sexuality education in the first place, and what are the intentions behind its implementation? This is the subject of my first chapter.

Methodology

Young peoples' sexualities are surrounded by a great number of influences and would be influenced. In its aim to paint a picture of this complexity this thesis mostly employs an analytical methodology, looking at content and discourse within governmental and media sources. As there is currently a dearth of independent research about Mates & Dates, I conducted an informal one-on-one interview to gain a better understanding of its iteration in the classroom and to bolster this section. Most relevant scholarship and my own experiences suggests that sexuality education is of hugely varying content and quality across New Zealand. Enacting sexuality education when investigating young peoples' lived realities may therefore be seen as inflating its importance in their lives. However, sexuality education is held up so often in cases of youthful sexual transgression, and often by the young people themselves. Sexuality education is seen as a key solution. I use official sources such as curriculum guidelines and the Education Review Office's reports because these are sources that all schools are given and have access to. They are the recommended and sanctioned texts, produced by the bodies that govern schools; a point of commonality. This being said, I considered it essential to analyse these sources against scholarship from those such as Louisa Allen, whose concern is what happens in the classroom and most importantly the opinions of young people themselves. Media analysis of the case studies of the Roast Busters and the Rack Appreciation Society illustrate an unequal digital context, the fear that surrounds this and differing notions of what should be done about it.

Foucault's work is foundational in my discourse analysis as his understandings of discipline, surveillance, the school as an institution, and sexuality, as well as subsequent feminist engagement with his work tie together many threads that are disparate with other methodologies. It is with Foucault that I will draw together threads in this thesis. Foucault is interested in knowledge, subjectivity and social relations, and saw the connections between these things as just as important

as the concepts themselves. Foucault also conceptualises power in a way that I use throughout this thesis. Power, he believes, operates in small ways, in everyday interactions. Power is in what is presented as knowledge and truth. Such knowledges and truths freely circulate on the internet and are presented in the classroom. Foucault saw power as everywhere, imbued in our everyday interactions and especially in the ways we discipline ourselves in order to fit into norms. In this thesis, my understanding of power is largely a Foucauldian one. Of particular relevance is his concept of biopower that theorises the ways in which bodies are subjugated to adhere to norms and avoid deviance. Elsewhere in this thesis though, I expand upon ideas of power that contrast to Foucault's and represent more traditional understandings of power, for example as coercive.

In Chapter One I will navigate through school based, state legislated sexuality education as it currently stands in New Zealand. I want to question the justifications, motivations and 'measures of effectiveness' put forth by the Ministry of Education. With a Foucauldian eye, I will scrutinize the ideals and pedagogy of school-based sexuality education that aims to promote the disciplining of the problematic young body. In 2015 changes were made to the main curriculum guidelines that would at surface level seem like they had considered the years of criticism and become more holistic since the last guide was published in 2002. However, the guide repetitively emphasises neoliberal ideas of health, 'choice' and best practise. I will argue that these ideas decontextualize sexuality education, and truncate its possibilities. Neoliberal ideologies, individualistic and limiting, do not allow for a complete understanding of gender and sexuality as socially constructed. I visit sexuality as a base concept, and critique the essentialism that is expressed in the classroom.

As much as we try to separate humanity from technology, it must be understood as a product of humanity. It is not objective, nor is it rational. Chapter Two delves into the digital context and furthermore the cybersexual context that young people inhabit. Socialisation, communication, creativity, entertainment and learning take place in this space. Using a range of theoretical approaches including ideas of discipline and surveillance and gender performativity I will attempt to locate young people's realities. Are young people truly digital natives (Prensky, 2001), or indeed, are young people human machine hybrid cyborgs (Haraway, 2000)? Where does the digital leave the body? False divisions between adults' and young peoples' utilisation of technology reveal more about understandings of adolescence as problematic, rather than actual generational differences. I look at the digital divide, and disrupt the idea of universal uptake of technology. Beneath this are social expectations and demands that are challenging and at times impossible to me.

Universalisation is not useful, as it erases the differences between young people that inspire diverse use of technology. While one young person is composing music using the latest application, another

is video calling their family overseas and another is watching pornography. My second chapter also includes exploration of the influence of pornography on cybersexualities. What is the shape of modern pornography and what kind of role does it play in the lives of young people? Is there any foundation to the fear that the combination of young people and porn causes moral break down? Central to this chapter is a move away from condemnation of adolescent sexuality as it plays out digitally. Decrying young people's experiences simply obscures the context that it is essential to consider.

Chapter Three centralises media constructions of the combination of youth, sex and technology – particularly in the cases of Dunedin's 'Rack Appreciation' page and the 'Roast Busters' scandal. I aim to destabilise imaginations of these as instances of a 'new' problem. These are examples of a rape culture that predates the internet, but that is finding contemporary ways to thrive online. Structural inequalities are expressing themselves in the digital sphere and addressing these online is proving just as challenging as addressing them offline. Perhaps even more so - there is a widely held belief in internet exceptionalism (Stokes, 2014), the idea that in light of the digital advent entirely new approaches to solving problems and addressing harms must be thought of. The digital makes the personal the public and so we must locate the politics at play here. We do not need to entirely reinvent the wheel, I argue for a return to understandings of structural inequality that already exist. Observably, (young) women are disproportionately the victims of sexual abuse on and off-line, and the perpetrators of abuse overwhelmingly are men. Gender inequality is not new, it has simply expressed itself in new terrain. I use themes from Catharine Mackinnon's *Feminism Unmodified* to argue against ideas of gender as mere difference and expose the hierarchical structures which privilege (white) male knowledge and experience above all. Mackinnon's legal credentials also provide useful context for analysis of two recent interventions: the Harmful Digital Communications Act (HDCA), and the in-school relationship education programme Mates & Dates. I will consider the scope of the former, thinking about how justice is understood in New Zealand society. In the case of Mates & Dates, I will use an interview I conducted with a facilitator to gain a deeper understanding of the new programme, and to see where it fits in the broader context of health and sexuality education. While neoliberal ideas of health are still firmly at play in the programme, I will ask whether Mates & Dates can possibly add anything meaningful to the picture. Owing to the relative newness of the Mates & Dates programme I only conducted one informal interview to supplement the current lack of independent scholarship and research into the modules.

In my final chapter I will question the proposed ways 'forward' from here. Sexuality education is more accepted, but by no means universally embraced. Still, countless calls have been made to

expand and improve sexuality education. These calls come in the wake of easily accessible pornography that seems to saturate sexuality and in light of a pernicious rape culture which does not spare youth. Yet experiences of sexuality education are so varied and opinions of how to improve it also drastically differ. With this in mind, how might we understand what ‘better’ sexuality education is? Is it simply sexuality education which understands ‘modern’ dilemmas such as pornography? In such a case – how to cohesively understand something as divisive as pornography and furthermore, how to teach on this subject? Competition for space in the classroom is fierce and ‘marketable’ skills are prioritised. There is very little space for more sexuality education. The wider school and education contexts must be considered in this discussion. The focus is upon measurable skills and achievement in curriculum and I argue that this does not translate well to a subject associated more with the body than the mind, that often procures more questions than concrete answers. In such a case, it may be that better sexuality education is only possible if our entire education system is dismantled and reconsidered. Chapter Four also includes discussions of the forms of activism and backlash to limited understandings of sexuality young people are participating in, often facilitated by their relationship with technology. Young people are consistently seen as less than adults, as preliminary beings, and their participation in resistance activities and behaviours contradicts these ideas thoroughly.

Simplistic understandings of complex realities have robbed many debates of the richness that they otherwise could have had. Young people, technology, sexuality and the combination of the three all take on various meaning as constructed by the social contexts they inhabit. To understand these contexts, we need not conceptualise them as new, but rather examine what is unchanged and to reconceptualise harm. Unaddressed structural inequalities are expressed in digital terrain, and such terrain is problematised far more than the underlying inequalities at play.

One – The Current Realities and Criticisms of Sexuality Education in the New Zealand Classroom

‘Pedagogisation of children's sex: a double assertion that practically all children indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity; and that, being unwarranted, at the same time ‘natural’ and ‘contrary to nature,’ this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers; children were defined as ‘preliminary’ sexual beings, on this side of sex, yet within it, astride a dangerous dividing line’ (Foucault, 1978:p.104).

In the above quote from *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault theorises sexuality education as one of the mechanisms that governs the knowledge and power that surround and permeate sex and sexuality. If we accept sexuality education as vital, the quality of the content and delivery of any such education is of utmost importance to ensure effectiveness. Yet such notions as ‘effectiveness’ and ‘quality’ are highly subjective, dictated largely by what the underlying motivation to instruct in this subject truly is. In this way, we can understand sexuality education as a technique of governance, and a method of disciplining the problematic teenage body (Thorogood, 2000).

In 2012 I wrote my Honours dissertation on the subject of the fraught nature of sexuality education in New Zealand pedagogy. Four years later the cultural context young people are living in has shifted considerably, especially in terms of access to technology and thereby information. Such information is in a state of flux as long relied upon stalwarts such as television news are becoming obsolete in favour of massively curated ‘click-bait’ articles, shared mostly through social media. This has both widened and narrowed discussions around sex, sexuality and indeed sexuality education itself. I will discuss this further in my subsequent chapters, yet it is important to firstly have this wider context in mind when we question where we are now in terms of sexuality education policy and practise. In this chapter I will examine and critique sexuality education as it currently stands: its aims, content, delivery and measures of effectiveness. I will compare what serve as ‘official’ sources (largely produced by governmental departments) and relevant scholarship to pin point specific issues and short-comings. Here and throughout my thesis, I will use a Foucauldian feminist framework to examine the practises and ideals promulgated by school-based sexuality education that equate to discipline of the problematic adolescent body. Additionally, I will question the neoliberal notions of ‘choice’ that have been able to cement themselves into the delivery and content of sexuality education.

In this chapter I will show that while I am supportive of school-based sexuality education in general, I am also sceptical of what lies beneath its implementation. I am aware that this constitutes an inherent tension between a liberal feminist perspective and a Foucauldian perspective of sexuality education. A liberal feminist view of sexuality education is present in the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education, informed as they are by an impetus of health promotion (Garland-Levett, 2017). What is healthy and what is harmful is demarcated by a liberal feminist understanding, painted as achievable and avoidable respectively. In contrast, a Foucauldian framework invites us to question how the regulation of young peoples' sexuality is shaped and what discourses are at play to support such regulation. Health promotion through a Foucauldian lens can be seen as an expression of biopower. Biopower is a term to name the techniques of governing specific populations in terms of their morbidities, mortalities and demography (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). According to Foucault biopower is 'an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations' (1978:p.140). In this chapter and throughout my thesis I will look at sexuality education through the concept of biopower, viewing the subject as an example of one of the 'techniques' Foucault referred to. In this way, we can interrogate how and why schools and other institutions regulate young peoples' sexualities.

'Official' Sexuality Education

Why does sexuality education, which is only a small element of one component of the curriculum, cause so much anxiety and capture the attention of so many? Nicki Thorogood (2000) suggests that the immense discourse that surrounds this controversial combination of sexuality, school and young people reveals the magnitude it holds in our collective imaginations (p.428). This is reflective of cultural understandings of sex and sexuality, contradictory as they are. Scott and Jackson suggest that 'at the centre of many of the contradictions surrounding sex is its status as 'special', as somehow existing outside and apart from everyday life' (2004:p.242). Accordingly, when sex is combined with education it is treated as exceptional, separated from other subject areas and takes on a similar exceptional 'outsider' status (Thorogood, 2000). Helen Smyth, writing on the history of sexuality education in New Zealand, traces some of the impetus behind school-based sexuality education to the idea that family were not reliably communicating information about sex and sexuality to young people (2000:p.161).

In spite of this, it is frequently argued that such education should begin in and belongs in the home, within the family. The debate of home versus school reflects a tension of private versus public. Sexuality is so often coded as private, which to some justifies why sexual information belongs in

the home sphere. Such a view is widespread, even in education. In a 2017 *Insight* feature on RNZ National, Former Minister for Education Hekia Parata suggested as much, framing discussions regarding sexuality as a “family responsibility” (Graham, 2017). From this perspective, sexuality education can be seen as remedial for those young people whose families ‘failed’ them. Yet this same argument is sometimes used to oppose or limit school-based sexuality education. Sexuality education, say some opponents, takes away a family’s right to choose what is ‘best’ for their children even if that is to isolate them from sexual information. Parents are placed as gatekeepers in this view (Thomson, 1995), yet this position is just as easily occupied by teachers and lawmakers. Young people, contrastingly, are cast as in need of protection. Just as we can question what is said and done in a classroom context, the knowledges conveyed in the home are also of interest. A child asking ‘where do babies come from’ has been fodder for countless narratives, and yet there is so much more than this biological dilemma to consider. According to Foucault, compared to children, both parents and educators can be seen ‘qualified speakers’ when it comes to sex (1976:p.29). These speakers pull children into ‘a web of discourses’. These ‘sometimes address them, sometimes speak about them, or impose canonical bits of knowledge on them, or use them as a basis for constructing a science that is beyond their grasp’. The culmination of this reveals the link between increased conversation/debate around young people’s sexuality and the incitement to ‘intervene’ (1976:p. 30).

The legislative provisions made for sexuality education by New Zealand’s Ministry of Education are tangible examples of such intervention. The Education Standards Act 2001 made sexuality education compulsory in all state-schools as part of their broader health programmes. Schools are required by law to implement sexuality education until year 10, when students are approximately 13-14 years old. After this time, it is up to the individual school to decide whether senior students still studying health and physical education will be subject to further instruction about sex and sexuality. This in practise is a very small number and much official and anecdotal evidence suggests that even during the years it is compulsory, sexuality education is of hugely varying quantity and quality. As part of the health curriculum, it is intended that learning about sexuality is backgrounded against cultural influences and that outcomes will be for the good of the individual as well as society (Ministry of Education, 2007:p.23).

Space has been made within health curriculum decision-making processes for culture to influence programme and practise. The health curriculum, inclusive of sexuality education components must comply with section 60B of the Education Act that reads: ‘The Board of every state school must, at least once in every 2 years, and after consultation with the school community, adopt a statement on the delivery of the health curriculum’ (Ministry of Education, 2015:p.31). This means that a written

statement must be released to the school community before anything is put into classroom practise. Usually, this statement will be followed by hui (meetings) and discussion sessions in which parents, teachers, caregivers and other stakeholders are able to give feedback, outline priorities and make suggestions and contributions to the school who will then enact their policy accordingly. What this means is that any given school may have a different enactment of the curriculum and this will often (and is intended to) reflect the wider values of the community that the school is a part of. Rachel Thomson suggests that education as a whole ‘reflects the dominant politics of a society's institutions, and sex education reflects the sexual politics of those institutions’ (1995:p.281). Much of the literature surrounding sexuality education asserts that society’s values and morals will be communicated in the classroom, intentionally or not. Here we can see that New Zealand enshrines this communication as preferable, as a community’s right. While adult values surrounding adolescent sexuality are frequently caught within discourses of morality and a desire to control ‘deviant’ or problematic bodies, young people’s voices are silenced. In general, adolescents are ill-defined and understood, precarious between the clarity of childhood and adulthood. I will discuss this further in Chapter Four.

Once sexuality education had been compulsory for six years, after receiving a request from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Educational Review Office (ERO) conducted a wide review of school-based sexuality education in New Zealand (2007; 2007a). In the introduction to their report, ERO cites the trifecta of ills that sexuality education is supposed to be a remedy for: sexually transmitted infections (STIs), abortion and teenage pregnancy. In 2007 the rates of all three of the maladies was on the rise, and a multi-ministry approach was spurred to reduce these high numbers. Building on Foucauldian ideas of biopower, Jackson and Weatherall (2010) write that:

‘a bio-medical view is used to justify a focus on STIs, which lead to disease, infertility and, in some cases, death. The problem with adolescent pregnancy is also described in bio-medical terms, for example babies from adolescent mothers being at higher risk of low birth weight than those born from older mothers’ (p.50).

A focus on the negative consequences of sex serves to construct the act as risky and sexuality education as risk minimisation. ‘Safe’ sex discourses aim to regulate populations’ sex and sexuality, under the guise of protection, and ‘it is in this context that school-based sexuality education, representing as it does the confluence of sex and schooling, takes on particular significance as a site of governmentality’ (Harrison & Hillier 1999:p.280).

ERO measured schools’ success according to their criteria and found that most schools were lacking in their approach to sexuality education. Unprepared, sometimes unwilling teachers were found to be not meeting the needs of diverse groups of students; schools had few resources (often outdated or

of mediocre quality) or no resources and were not making connections with other areas of health education and the curriculum in general (2007a:p.34). Building on this, ERO examined the 'good practice' of four exemplary schools from the pool of 100. In accordance with the law all four schools developed individual approaches to this area of health but ERO shows the positive similarities between the schools. These were outlined as the schools having experienced teachers with empathy and approachability; a focus on positive relationships as well as the emotional and social aspects of sexuality; a large amount of teacher support; frequent review of programmes; ample opportunity for teachers to further knowledge and skills through professional development; classrooms with inclusive ideologies of respect and safety; communication with the school community; utilisation of many up-to-date resources; extensive analysis of student achievement; and many methods to meet the needs of diverse groups of students (2007a:p.28).

ERO's evidence of 'good practice' and their definition of what it is would seem to place some New Zealand schools as providing holistic and inclusive sexuality education. However, as Laina Bay-Cheng (2017) notes, concepts of 'good' or 'best' practise are usually neoliberal and serve to decontextualize sex and sexuality from the complex social systems they reside within. With this in mind, these reports were adopted by the Ministry of Education and were enacted as evidence of the need to revise the sexuality education guidelines, especially in light of the many shortcomings ERO identified in their original report. Understanding what ERO views as the successes and failures of sexuality education provides insight into what is prioritised by the New Zealand Government. ERO's measures of effectiveness in their report certainly reflect safer sex discourses that aim to avoid infections and pregnancy. Further, students' 'needs' (as understood by ERO) are spoken of in these reports (2007:p.14), but what their wants might be are not touched upon. In 2017 it was announced that ERO would once again be conducting a review into sexuality education with results to be released in 2018 (Graham, 2017). A decade on, ERO's aims and measures may be quite different to what they were in 2007, especially in light of the lower (and falling) rates and teenage pregnancy and abortion (Family Planning, 2017). As I will show in Chapter Three contemporary calls for sexuality education stem more from anxieties around young people and consent, not to mention sexualities as they are enacted in the digital sphere. These concerns appear to have somewhat eclipsed disease and pregnancy prevention, and any review that takes place will likely reflect this. With falling rates of pregnancy and abortion, one could suggest that new impetus for sexuality education are simply a new technique for controlling adolescent bodies when others become less relevant. Either way, the mere fact that another review is taking place tells us that the 'explosion of discourse' surrounding sexuality education is ever-expanding (Thorogood, 2000).

Reading Between the Guidelines

Foucault argued that the perception of silence around sex and pedagogy is a fallacy, and instead believed that the discourse had multiplied since the late nineteenth century (1978:p.29). Due in part to the arrival of the information/digital age, values around sex and sexuality seem to shift more rapidly than ever before. There are ten years of flux between ERO reviews. In a similar instance, after stagnating for 13 years, the official guide to sexuality education, first published in 2002, was updated. 13 years is a long time in the 21st century; it is the lifespan of one of the New Zealand adolescents deemed of ‘appropriate’ age to learn about sex and sexuality. The 2015 revised guide *Sexuality education: a guide for principals, boards of trustees, and teachers* reads as a progressive text, incorporating relevant academic critiques, years of monitoring and evaluation of programmes in schools, and holistic advice for programme content. The text also cites an ostensibly changing ‘social climate’ as the catalyst for change (p.3). Sarah Garland-Levett, a researcher in the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland, examines the new guidelines and writes favourably of the ground that appears to have been gained, as The Ministry of Education moves away from a focus on risk and gendered binaries. She states ‘these updates respond to a literature that has sought to legitimate the voices and sexualities of those often missing from the official curricula, including women, queers and students themselves, in the hope that school might become a safer and more affirming space for young people’ (2017:p.124). She includes admission of the limits of policy analysis and insists that classroom research (such as the work of Louisa Allen) is essential to a nuanced view of sexuality education. Yet Garland-Levett’s analysis points out that the ‘Guide’, the main policy document for sexuality education in New Zealand produces particular, idealised discourses about reality. It imagines a reality where ‘healthy choices’ are always freely made, rendering support and information for those who do not make such choices unnecessary. Social barriers that make these choices difficult or impossible are not identified, so therefore cannot be disrupted. It imagines willing and able educators and invested pupils who are driven and interested in academic achievement. Achievement which, as I will discuss throughout the rest of my thesis especially in Chapter Four, is incongruous with sexuality education.

Examination of these guidelines reveal biopolitical aims, framed as a rational and neutral response to social problems. Thorogood refutes this imagined neutrality ‘sex education, as any education, does not take place in a neutral environment. It is always about the transmission of values and by implication acts as a form of control’ (p.435). *Sexuality education: a guide for principals, boards of trustees, and teachers* (2015) cites feminist and sociological research, some which is highly critical of the state of sexuality education pedagogy. The shift in values in the guidelines can be viewed as a

win for those who challenged what was going on in the classroom. Conversely it may be seen that the Ministry of Education simply adopted such viewpoints in service of the same biopolitical aims of risk-aversion and ‘healthy’ choices. Perhaps it is both. Garland-Levett believes the aforementioned guide erases bodies and desire by moving towards a separation of sex and sexuality, and emphasises sexuality at the detriment of physicality (2017:p.124). Additionally, she argues that a neoliberal push for individualistic ‘healthy’ decision-making controverts the use of the Māori concepts of Hauora which understands wellbeing as collective rather than individual (p.128).

The intentions of teaching this area of health education would seem to be far-reaching and liberal, but empirical research done in this area suggests that there is a huge range of experience of this subject for students and educators, much of it incomplete and confusing. Parents, teachers and boards of trustees in particular have been granted the ability to interpret and to a large extent control what is said and done in the classroom. This positions them as best-placed to decide the needs of young people; they are the ‘qualified speakers’ to which Foucault referred. These qualified speakers act as gatekeepers, and are referred to in the guidelines as ‘the community’ (Ministry of Education, 2015). However, this ‘community’ as it stands appears not to include young people. Rachel Thomson, who writes extensively on the politics of sexuality education in the United Kingdom, tells us: ‘there continues to be a gulf between the public agenda of sex education as defined by ‘gatekeepers’ and policy-makers and the needs and opinions of young people’ (1995:p.295). This can be illustrated by the preservation of the right of any parent or caregiver to withdraw a student from any/all of the sexuality education components of a school's health program (Ministry of Education, 2015:p.33). Thomson wrote her piece in 1995, and although this is over 20 years old now, many of her points are as salient today as they were then. In this thesis I have used older pieces such as Thomson’s and Thorogood’s (2000) alongside recent scholarship. Their continuing relevance illustrates in many ways the lack of progress seen in sexuality education around the world, and in New Zealand.

We live in a society saturated by sexual messages and imagery, both overt and subtle, disseminated in large part by the mass media that we engage with on a daily basis, but also by institutions such as schools and in families. We must understand that these messages are real, they are contradictory, they have an effect and they matter. This idea is reflected in the both incarnations of *Sexuality Education: The [Revised] Guide for Principals, Boards of Trustees, and Teachers* (2002, 2015). The New Zealand Ministry of Education argues that the wide range of sexual messages that young people receive in modern times underscores the need for sexuality education. Yet this is built on the presumption that sexuality education can provide ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1979) that cannot be

found elsewhere.

Aiming for and Measuring ‘Effectiveness’

New Zealand’s neoliberal principles dictate that investment in ‘social good’ must have quantifiable outcomes. This social good is often decided by the people who control the investment. Thus, as with other areas of education, sexuality education pedagogy has aims and objectives built into it. Its success can be and is measured through its meeting of these objectives. On the other hand, within the health and especially the sexuality curricula there lies a relatively unique impetus to prevent social ‘harm’. Douglas Kirby and B. A. Laris submit that ‘typically, these programs strive to delay the initiation of sex, increase the return to abstinence, reduce the number of sexual partners, or increase condom or other contraceptive use’ (2009:p.22). In *Sexuality Education: The Revised Guide for Principals, Boards of Trustees, and Teachers* (2002) delaying age of first sexual contact for New Zealand school students is recognised as a key aim, though in the 2015 version this is not explicitly expressed, statistics around when young people have their first sexual contact are still included. This shows that this is still a statistic deemed necessary to measure, that it is still of concern to decision makers and is still a motivation. Age is equated with wisdom and experience, and the ability to make the ‘good’ decisions the guide emphasises. As well as age of first sexual contact, preventing STIs, termination and teenage pregnancy rates take importance as objectives in classrooms and low or high occurrences of these are used as a barometer of the success or failure of school sexuality education. A newer development and part inspiration for the revising of the guide to sexuality education was a report by the Health Select Committee entitled *Inquiry into improving child health outcomes and preventing child abuse with a focus from preconception until three years of age* (2013). Sexuality education was emphasised.

‘We recommend that the Government develop a co-ordinated cross-sectoral action plan with the objective of giving New Zealand world-leading, best-practice evidence-based sexuality and reproductive health education, contraception, sterilisation, termination, and sexual health services, distributed to cover the whole country. The plan should be developed within 12 months of this report being published and be matched with appropriate, sustainable resourcing. The plan should also be monitored by tracking trends in teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancy, and terminations’ (p.28).

Here we can see more of the same in terms of outcome focus, however, the correlation of these ‘negative’ statistics with child abuse serves only to further obscure the complexity of these issues. While I do not believe it is wrong to aim to reduce unwanted pregnancy or disease rates, I contend the health discourses woven tightly into the sexuality education classroom remain a barrier to young peoples’ engagement. I tend to agree with Sara Hayden (2001) who believes that measuring

effectiveness would seem a rational exercise, but hides the biopolitical motivations beneath. Few can argue that preventing STIs is desirable, but more is 'transmitted' when we teach young people how to avoid STIs. The measures of effectiveness in the majority of cases do not seem to include promotion of sexual agency and positive sexual relationships in and of themselves. These notions are secondary and a means to an end, if not invisible altogether, not to mention exceedingly difficult to measure in conventional ways. We can see biopower implicated in the disease and pregnancy-prevention focus in the classroom, which eclipses notions of desire and pleasure. The idea of prevention at all costs immediately invokes teenage pregnancy as problematic, marked and negative, teenaged parents are seen as a burden on society and therefore they are cast as other. Joseph Diorio remarks that 'many discussions of the transmission of sexual information to young people are conducted in the context of the pregnancy problem' (1985:p.241). Sue Jackson and Ann Weatherall as well as Louisa Allen suggest that under the biopolitical aims of sexuality education, schools are denying the sexual agency of students and as a consequence, a great many students are unsatisfied by the sexuality education they receive. As one student aptly put it in one of Allen's many surveys: 'They think you shouldn't be having sex anyway' (2008).

Putting the Sexuality into Sexuality Education

To instruct on the subject of sexuality education I believe requires a robust understanding of sexuality as a base concept. However, this presents a unique problem for educators even on this basic level. Sexuality is a fluid, multiple and complex concept that changes over time and place and most importantly 'at the level of our individual subjectivities' (Scott & Jackson, 2000:p.175). Kim Phillips and Barry Reay's exploration of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* shows that Foucault presented and reiterated this idea: 'Sexuality is not a phenomenon that exists transculturally, transhistorically, almost autonomously from human society, but is itself a product of discourse and therefore subject to constant transformation and re-creation' (2002:p.6). A Foucauldian understanding allows us to see the intersections between sexuality, knowledge, identity and power. Foucault produced ideas that challenged the very processes of defining sexuality.

'There is no single, all-encompassing strategy, valid for all of society and uniformly bearing on all the manifestations of sex. For example, the idea that there have been repeated attempts, by various means, to reduce all of sex to its reproductive function, its heterosexual and adult form, and its matrimonial legitimacy fails to take into account the manifold objectives aimed for, the manifold means employed in the different sexual politics concerned with the two sexes, the different age groups and social classes' (1978:p.103).

Sexuality is constructed and constituted. It is much more than the act of sexual intercourse; it speaks of power and is a part of our subjectivities as human beings. It involves our relationships and

connections with others, and definitions of ourselves and others (Scott & Jackson, 2000). Sexuality and power are interrelated, and indeed to speak of one is to speak of dimensions of the other, but Jana Sawicki (1986) laments the understanding of sexuality as a central site of oppression (especially of women). She says this obfuscates the complex, de-centralised and dispossessed power structures that operate within sexuality and oversimplifies solutions to complex problems. Sawicki argues for recognition and exploration of difference (of experience, of identity), and does not see this as antithetical to resistance or revolution. She used Foucauldian theory to support her ideas, suggesting that although Foucault's work was male-focused, he 'does not search for unity in difference' (1986:p.32). Sawicki applies her politics of difference to Libertarian and Radical feminist debates over sexuality, suggesting that they identify commonalities in sexual perspective and practise and what those things mean to individuals, and reclaim the ontology of sexuality from 'dominant culture'.

Within sexuality education, differences in sexualities and sexual practise are often not carefully considered, but rather reproduced and emphasised as separation. Considering the unfixed and complex reality of sexuality though, individuals and institutions tasked with imparting knowledge in this area often face extreme difficulty. Claire Gooder, a historian of sexuality education in New Zealand, positions sexuality education as an unfixed expression of the cultural values of any given society (2010). Indeed, this sentiment is enshrined in the curriculum. Schools are mandated to ensure that their policy 'fits' within their wider communities (Ministry of Education, 2015:p.11). This is an interesting notion. On the one hand, it could be seen to promote collective ownership of a given school's ideologies, and allow for a variety of perspectives to be given importance. On the other hand, how can schools incorporate conflicting ideas such as promotion of abstinence versus incorporation of discussions of pleasure? I will discuss pleasure at length in my fourth chapter. There are multiple conundrums at play here; if understandings of sexuality are unfixed, it is vital that this fluid state is communicated to young people in our classrooms, without reproducing the same contradictions. Sexuality education must always be recognised as being guided by society's pre-conceived notions of gender and sexuality.

Sex and sexuality are tightly linked ideas. However, in a classroom environment there is an observable emphasis on tangible skills related to intercourse, such as how to put on a condom. Jackson and Weatherall (2010) see this as an example of the 'coital imperative', which sees much of sexuality education fixated on concerns relating to (heterosexual) intercourse. It would seem that the 2015 revised guide to sexuality education is a road map for a holistic and positive classroom approach to sex and sexuality, but this is often unobservable in this classroom. Clearly,

contemporary sexuality education cannot escape from the debates that have raged throughout the history of its implementation. In 'Sexual Antinomies in Late Modernity' (2004) Scott and Jackson point out that hypersexualised popular culture often imagines a sexually liberal society, where people are free to act upon their sexuality as they wish, and that this imagination does not reflect reality. Perhaps we have not come as far as some would like to think. I will discuss this notion further throughout this thesis. It can certainly be observed that various forms of sexuality education in New Zealand schools can be traced back to early colonial times (Smyth, 2000:p.161). The curriculum has long been the site of fierce political struggle, illustrating deeper moral anxieties about the kind of citizens schools would be producing. What was contested when sexuality education was new is not so different to conversations that still exist today:

'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' (Allen, 2011:p.8).

Essentially Essential Sexuality

The most preferable expression of sexuality is still constructed as matrimonial, heterosexual, white, cisgendered, monogamous, procreative, and performed by those who are of 'ideal' age and status for procreation. This preference is communicated in multiple ways, through pop culture, media and interpersonal relationships. It is unsurprising that the classroom, as a Ministry-mandated expression of wider society, would also support and produce these normative ideas (Harrison & Hillier, 1999), thereby creating dangerous and deviant others in the process.

'If heterosexual copulation is not the natural essence of human sexual practice and if the maintenance of the belief that such copulation is essential to sex is part of the political institutions of patriarchy, then sex educators are serving, wittingly or otherwise, as agents of the political, sexual socialization of adolescents' (Diorio, 1985:p.252).

Even if an educator is determined to dismantle heteronormative domination in the classroom, time is a huge constraint. The schools that ERO praised for their good practise dedicated 12-15 hours per year to this topic, and this represents an upper limit and an outlier when compared with most (2007). Therefore, regardless of what intentions exist, there remains limitations on the space available for the communication of ideas. Perhaps this is why many remember sexuality education as symbolised by a condom on a banana. I would like to take this moment to lament the lack of similarity between a human penis and a banana, but I digress. Still, it holds that with limited space and time and 'targets' to aim for, precedence will be given to discussion about sexualities that are considered majority, 'normal' and the most desirable forms of these. The centralised impetus to prevent pregnancy also dominates the space. Many criticisms of sexuality education centre on this

idea: that normalised and naturalised forms of sexuality are as privileged in the classroom as they are in society.

By ERO's own admission heteronormativity is found within most New Zealand classrooms (2007). As the visibility of queer issues in public and in politics grows, it is sure that such issues will subsequently become more visible in educational spheres. However, this is often a slow process, hindered by institutionalised imaginations of and preferences for a heterosexual, cisgendered majority. A 2012 national survey of high school pupils, *The Health and Wellbeing of New Zealand Secondary School Students*, found that seven to nine percent of students surveyed did not consider themselves exclusively opposite sex attracted, one percent identified as transgender, and a further three percent were not sure about their gender identity (p.25). Similarly to other official sources I have looked at in this chapter, this survey is underpinned by concerns about high rates of pregnancy and low rates of contraception use – framing these as antithetical to 'healthy futures' (p.3). It is important to contextualise the data collection against its agendas, yet this is not to say that the information contained within is of no use, as data can be a catalyst for action. This survey also asked about sexual abuse and coercion and found that twenty percent of female-identifying respondents reported experiencing sexual abuse (p.26), and this can be seen to constitute a problem that requires solutions. It is notoriously difficult to pin down statistics about gender and sexuality while relying on socially constructed meanings and categories, but what the sexuality data in this survey does usefully suggest is that classrooms are not entirely populated by heterosexual and cisgendered students.

It is certain that heteronormativity remains a dominant discourse within sexuality education, both supporting and supported by structures such as the pregnancy-prevention focus – a focus which is of very little relevance to a teenager who only has or desires same sex encounters. The Ministry of Education's guidelines state that 'schools are encouraged to question gender stereotypes, and assumptions about sexuality' (2015:p.11) but this is said on the same page that is said that schools will 'reflect the values and goals of the local communities that they serve'. If the values of the community are largely heteronormative then surely schools' ability to question will be limited. As Jackson and Weatherall (2010) contend that the inclusive aims of New Zealand's sexual and reproductive health policy are contravened by a prevention focus which highlights heterosexual intercourse and little else. Schools are protected as institutions expressive of state interests, and the New Zealand health curriculum unequivocally identifies sexuality as one of the key areas of health education. Sexualities are a part of our individual and collective identities and encompass much more than intercourse. Yet sexuality education is so often debased and decontextualized (Bay-

Cheng, 2017) to a copulatory focus, especially when aims relating to disease and pregnancy prevention prevail. In New Zealand, as in other countries, the expressed aim may be to educate on sexuality but one way or another the coital-imperative (Diorio, 1985) overrides more diverse, inclusive and complex ideologies about sexualities that could be communicated in classrooms; penetrative, procreative intercourse is the only sexual behaviour recognised as ‘real’ sex (Diorio, 1985:p.247).

Examining history can provide some useful context here. Chris Brickell remarks that “[S]ex instruction’ played a significant role in the ongoing social construction of sexuality and its categories during the middle decades of the twentieth century’ (2005:p.130). Brickell tracks the historical emergence of homosexuality and its transformation over time. Through this we can observe links between ‘sex instruction’ and the historical construction of normative categories and ‘desirable’ sexualities. Modern sexuality education is similarly a conductor for the morals of its context. The Ministry of Education asserts that ‘sexuality education in New Zealand schools supports and acknowledges diversity among students’ (2015:p.11), and yet it is still entirely possible to see sexuality education as responsible for nurturing and further constructing heteronormativity. This can function intentionally and unintentionally, simply through omission, or by the ‘practical’ decision of pandering to the majority. Limited space and time is devoted mainly to the discussion of penetrative sex between young cisgendered men and women, and subsequent negative outcomes. Kerry Robinson and Cristyn Davies describe a contradiction at work here. While a non-sexual understanding and preference is communicated, a heterosexual adolescent subject is imagined: ‘despite the hegemonic discourse that sexuality is irrelevant to children, schooling cultures and official educational documents consistently construct children as heteronormative subjects with heterosexual futures, even when sexual knowledge is absent in the curricula’ (Robinson & Davies, 2008). I believe there remains potential for sexuality education to support these students, educate their peers and let them know that norms are socially constructed and maintained. Garland-Levett argues too for this critical deconstruction: ‘the unmarked systems of colonialism, patriarchy and heteronormativity can be denaturalised and made strange so that their norms cease to be the standard from which social values are derived and possibilities for being produced’ (p.131). For this to occur in the classroom will require a radical reconception of education itself, which I will discuss further in Chapter Four. Yet it remains that the sexuality education classroom is perhaps the only ‘official’ place in the school system where these discussions might be able to take place. The school is but one space in society, and being expressive of society itself, any system shake up must also be mirrored by cultural shifts away from biopolitically-sanctioned hegemonic heterosexuality.

The prevailing denial of adolescent sexuality as well as institutionalised heteronormativity contribute to the inherent problems within sexuality education. It is unlikely that any changes will be able to take place without foremost staging radical intervention and examining the attitudes in society that uphold narrow views of sexuality. Breaking down these tightly-held ideas is difficult, it takes many people's time and energy and often requires problematising something that many in power do not consider problematic or do not wish to bring attention to. There are a number of issues within this educational context which stem from the ideologies of wider society. For example, if we relinquish the view of the pregnant teenage body as a problematic body perhaps the classroom could become a site in which young pregnant people can receive non-judgemental, comprehensive education about their many options. Most of all support and understanding could be provided, the kind of support and understanding that could transform their situation from the currently perceived one-way-ticket to being a burden on society to an optimistic one. Nicki Thorogood (2000) suggests that without the dismantling of surrounding cultural ideologies, a broader remit for sexuality education will serve only to extend its reach as a regulatory force. As can be seen with the revision of the Ministry of Education's guidelines even when shifts take place these can be quite empty when the underlying neoliberal aims of 'healthy' populations persist. The subtext of sexuality education in New Zealand so often reads as a desire to control the bodies and behaviour of our young people.

A root cause of this is an inability to value young peoples' lived experiences and knowledges, or their status as sexual subjects. Scott and Jackson argue that this 'creates anxieties about children and young people's access to sexual knowledge and even greater anxieties about their sexual practices' (2004:p.235). Adult 'gatekeepers' rarely acknowledge their own standpoints (Hartsock, 1983) and view young people as sexual or non-sexual through their own scripts that are often at odds with the understandings of the young people themselves. These issues are in sharper focus in a digital age, where young people's access to information is unprecedented. This information is similarly evaluated according to criteria decided by gatekeepers, I will expand this discussion in Chapter Two and Chapter Three as we look at the digital context young people inhabit.

I do not wish to suggest through my interrogation of sexuality education that it has no place in society. Bay-Cheng notes that sexuality education is decontextualized, and argues that: 'It is not sex that poses a threat to young people, it is social injustice' (2017:p.344). A sexuality education that provides space for young people to question and critique the many socially-constructed norms that surround sex and sexuality could be a promising one. Yet an individualistic achievement focussed curriculum severely constrains this. There is power in education; what is said and done in the

classroom can positively and negatively promote ideologies about sexuality. I will address the possibilities of sexuality education further in Chapter Four.

It can be often seen that New Zealand's schools promotes a preference that adolescents are not sexual, focuses on the negative consequences of sex, and intentionally and unintentionally contributes to narrow, essentialist understandings of extremely complex topics. We must understand the education system as a political system and view the school as the state institution that it is.

Two – Sex? Lies? and the Internet: Young People Navigating the Cyber Sexual Minefield

‘For many girls, the pressure to be considered ‘hot’ is felt on a nearly continual basis online. The sites with which they most commonly interact encourage them to post images of themselves, and employ the ‘liking’ feature, with which users can judge their appearance and, in effect, rate them.

When girls post their pictures on Instagram or Snapchat or Facebook, they know they will be judged for their ‘hotness,’ and in a quantifiable way, with numbers of likes. Social media, which gave us selfies, seems to encourage an undue focus on appearance for everyone, but for girls, this focus is combined with a pervasive sexualization of girls in the wider culture, an overarching trend which is already having serious consequences’ (Sales, 2016:p.13)

In 2013 while I was at the New Zealand Family Planning Conference I attended a discussion about young men and pornography led by Michael Flood of the University of Wollongong, titled '50 ways to leave your lover: Social and educational strategies addressing the harms of pornography consumption among young men'. This three-hour session was lively and interesting, attended mostly by health promoters and educators who had an abundance of contributions to make and opinions on the subject of pornography. One particular exchange stands out in my mind. An older woman raised her hand and professed to the audience that she recalled finding a *Playboy* magazine under her son's mattress in the 1970s. Nothing has changed, she said. Another, younger woman then interjected; she would not be concerned by a concealed magazine. One browse of her son's search history had her reeling. *Playboy* had never depicted a man choking a crying woman as she fellated him. The internet has changed everything, she said. Only two weeks before this discussion the ‘Roast Busters’ scandal broke in the media. This is the story of what can be best described as a rape ring – a group of young men who set up a self-styled Facebook group to boast about their sexual exploits with young women, most of whom were intoxicated and under the age of 16.

We live in the age of social media, of Snapchat, of Instagram. We have unparalleled access to information, and in turn our lives and our bodies have unparalleled visibility. So rapid are the changes taking place that we are persistently in uncharted territory; we barely have time to critically reflect upon an advancement before it is obsolete. When it comes to technology use there is a separation between adults and young people, theorised as the difference between ‘digital natives’ and ‘digital immigrants’ (Prensky, 2001), but as the invention of the internet and the smartphone becomes a distant memory this difference becomes less marked. Adolescents are associated uncritically with technology as though it is their nature, it is important therefore to

remind ourselves that adults sext too. Not only do they sext, they do so at higher rates than adolescents but are able to avoid being defined by such an activity (Salter, Crofts & Lee, 2013). In this chapter I shift between adolescents/young people, and ‘we’ as my subject. I do this to show that many of the digital experiences of young people belong not only to them but to New Zealand society in general and to problematise the false dichotomy that is created. With this said, I will also introduce the idea of the digital divide to acknowledge that the ‘we’ that I speak of includes myself and the majority of my peers, but by no means does it include everyone.

In the lives of a majority of New Zealand’s young people internet immersion and visibility is a daily, if not a constant thing. Not only this, it is expected of them socially and in education contexts (Sales, 2016). I believe this requires us to reconsider a central proposition of the second wave feminist movement; if the personal is political, what changes when the personal becomes public? In 1986, Sandra Harding prefaced her famous book *The Science Question in Feminism*, telling her reader that ‘the social structure of science, many of its applications and technologies, its modes of defining research problems and designing experiments, its ways of constructing and conferring meanings are not only sexist, but also racist, classist, and culturally coercive’ (p.9). This frames her central thesis and for our purposes disrupts the troubling positioning of technology as an innocuous, rational, and objective force in our lives.

If young peoples’ lives are increasingly filtered and experienced through their technology and the internet, then it holds true that the many facets of gender and sexuality will be observed through these means too. In this chapter I will provide an overview of the contentious relationship between young people and cybersexuality. There have been and will continue to be various attempts to describe and understand the implications of the digital world we live in, and perhaps more importantly predict where we are headed. It is my intention to explore examples of the collision of young people, technology and sexualities against the backdrop of a number of theories including ideas of embodiment, Foucauldian notions of discipline and surveillance, as well as gender performativity. In this chapter I will also centralise the understanding that cybersexualities influence and are influenced by pornography. To speak of one is to speak of the other and I wish to question whether, as Gail Dines contends, young peoples’ sexualities have been ‘hijacked’ by the hallmarks of pornography (2010).

There is ample evidence to suggest that pornography itself is playing a preeminent role in young people’s imaginations of sex, sexuality, bodies and themselves. Yet I do not believe this is happening only in the lives of young people; there has been a pornographic spill-over in which

pornography has seemingly shifted from a segment within the wide subject of sex and sexuality to a monolithic force, difficult to separate from any other aspect of life. Yet with this in mind I wish to disturb the moral anxiety associated with young people and pornography, which I believe is symptomatic of the general anxiety that comes forth when young people and sexuality are discursively linked. I will draw out and explore ideas of young peoples' sexual agency, with a particular focus on young women who are often secondary in discussions around this issue, seen as passive or victims. The recognition of young people as sexual subjects has long caused discomfort, but it seems that the advent of the internet has required us to observe and ponder their subjectivities on a more regular basis. Condemning young people for their various participation in cybersexualities is reductive and does nothing to draw out the real issues at play here, only conceal them. To this end, this chapter will explore some of the broad, emotive media coverage of this area.

Young People and the Digital Divide

To begin this chapter I would like to dispel the commonly held idea that technology's access, use, literacy and engagement are universal amongst young people in New Zealand. Young people have been theorised in relevant literature as 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001). Adolescents in New Zealand today have no experience of 'before' – before the internet, before smartphones; they inhabit a world in which these things have always ubiquitously existed. Marc Prensky who developed the idea of the digital native over 15 years ago understood the young digital native's opposite to be the digital immigrant – adults who were introduced to technology rather than born into it. Prensky suggests that youth who are digital natives are socialised differently, and that many of the skills and knowledges acquired through this socialisation are not valued as they should be. He argues for a radical reimagination and reprioritisation of an educational sphere that he sees as irrelevant to the students within it, and that the digital should be incorporated into learning rather than separated and treated with suspicion.

Many schools in New Zealand are indeed embracing the digital. A growing number of schools, public and private, are requiring their students to bring their own laptop or tablet to school. Blackboards which were replaced with whiteboards are now replaced with interactive smartboards. Many of the digital natives that Prensky was originally writing about have now grown up and become teachers. Policy and curriculum are having to be rethought in the face of present and future technology. The implications of this all are enormous. Yet as educational institutions make leaps and bounds into uncharted digital territory, debates about whether young people's technology use is 'healthy' continue in wider society, and as ever, there are some who are left behind. The term

digital divide is used to name the social inequality that has stemmed from lack of access to information and communication technologies (ICT) in an increasingly digital world (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Those who speak on the topic of the digital divide often have a global view reflective of the global nature of internet technology, and use it to show divisions between the technological capacities of developed versus undeveloped nations. But it can also be seen on smaller scales within individual countries and the communities within them. The digital divide has been written about with regard to racial and class differences in use and uptake of technology, and the digital literacy and opportunities presented to those in different generations. Elderly people for example have been noted as lesser users of ICT. Young people on the other hand are assumed to be digital natives. In such a case we must view digital exclusion as contrary to their very nature. It is important to acknowledge that technology use among young people is far from universal.

Perhaps unsurprisingly due to the high cost of technology and the speed of obsolescence, young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are the most likely to be affected by the digital divide in New Zealand. Material deprivation means that young people are less likely to own their own devices and have internet connectivity at home (Hartnett, 2016). Yet Sonia Livingstone and Ellen Helsper (2007) assert that it is essential that academics look deeper into the digital divide, specifically at the ways in which it plays out for children and adolescents. They aim to look deeper into the different ways young people utilise the internet, believing it is too simplistic to merely examine levels of access. Contrastingly, they suggest that this is a difficult undertaking as it is impossible to unilaterally state what the most beneficial way to use the internet is;

‘Characterizing the nature or quality of use is tricky, and the literature offers little guidance here. Curiously, even policy or intervention-focused discussions pay far more attention to the conditions that encourage or hinder use than to the kinds of uses to which the internet might, or should, be put’ (2007:p.682).

How should the internet, and technology in general be used? Is there good use or bad use? The answer to these questions of course depends on who is speaking about whom. When it comes to the technology use of young people, they are the centre of many discussions and the object of much anxiety but are rarely consulted on issues relevant to them.

The Porn ‘Problem’

In the second, 2015 edition of *Sexuality Education: The Revised Guide for Principals, Boards of Trustees, and Teachers* the Ministry of Education suggests that the wide range of sexual messages that young people receive in modern times underscores the need for sexuality education. For better or worse, it can be observed that one of the main sources of sexual information available and easily

accessible for young people is pornography. Gail Dines is featured in the 2008 documentary *The Price of Pleasure: Pornography, Sexuality & Relationships*, saying: “we often make the mistake of thinking that pornography is just an image of people having sex. What pornography is is a world view, it is an ideology, it is a way of understanding relationships”. Her view is shared by scholars such as Michael Flood who posit pornography as having a significant detrimental effect on young people, especially young men, as it is permissive of the abusive and misogynistic treatment of women. It is certain that the omnipresence of the internet has given pornography unparalleled availability and, whether intentional or not, by the time young people are in high school the vast majority of them will have seen pornographic video or images (Crabbe & Corlett, 2010). Indeed, it is highly likely that even if it is not sought, young people using the internet will see pornographic advertisement or pop-ups. Many searches will similarly yield pornographic results.

Louisa Allen believes that the failures of sexuality education have helped to create the demand for pornographic ‘information’: ‘when images of real bodies and details about the logistics of sexual activity are missing in sexuality education, the power of pornographic discourse (which offers this information) is inflated’ (Allen, 2006:p.77). In such a case, rather than sexuality education being used as a tool to make sense of ‘information’ gleaned from pornography, what is seen in pornography is being used as instructive. Allen’s article “Looking at the Real Thing’: Young men, pornography, and sexuality education’ examines the sexually-explicit responses of some young men to a sexuality education survey she produced. For example: ‘Get some videos of nude women so that we can learn about the real body parts. No cartoons!!!!’ (2006:p.78). Rather than dismissing these young boys as rude and their comments as worthless, she views them as symptomatic of desire-denial within sexuality education; they are an expression of these young men’s sexual agency. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement that pornography is a less than adequate teacher. Some contend that the pornographic discourse is exceedingly harmful and constructs dangerous understandings of masculinity, femininity and sexuality itself. Anti-pornography feminist Catharine MacKinnon argues that:

‘Pornography is a means through which sexuality is socially constructed, a site construction, a domain of exercise. It constructs women as things for sexual use and constructs its consumers to desperately want women to desperately want possession and cruelty and dehumanization’ (1989:p.327).

Though broad and varied, feminist understandings of pornography are generally able to be categorised in two ways: pornography as harmful, and ‘sex positive’ pornography as freedom of sexual expression. Interestingly, anti-pornography feminists such as MacKinnon find common ground with groups they are at odds with, which has historically complicated their position. The

merging of opinion between anti-porn feminists and organised religions such as Catholicism presents a fascinating conundrum that it is a site of criticism for the feminists who support the prohibition of pornography. Some pro-pornography-leaning feminists have castigated their opposites for what they see as taking the side of the 'enemy' (Levy, 2005). Watching and/or performing in pornography in their eyes is part of the 'choice' that women are entitled to make and is empowering according to some. In *The Feminist Porn Book*, a collaboration of three scholars of pornography and a pornography director/producer, the possibilities and realities of 'feminist porn' are introduced. 'Feminist porn creates alternative images and develops its own aesthetics and iconography to expand established sexual norms and discourses' (Taormino et al. 2013:p.10). By their definition, pornography has the possibility to redefine and reinvent ideas of eroticism – an obvious antithesis to others who believe pornography produces negative ideas of eroticism. I believe a dichotomous interpretation of pornography does a disservice to its complex, fluid nature and as such find myself agreeing with aspects of both arguments. When young people are introduced as subjects within discussions of pornography consumption, debate tends to tip in favour of anti-pornography ideologies and I believe this leaves us unable to wholly address issues that need addressing. These issues include violence and aggression towards women, issues of mutual and ongoing consent, unrealistic expectations of embodiment and physicality and many more worthy of lengthy consideration.

The globalised pornography industry has remained financially viable (for those in the highest positions) through its willingness to embrace and adapt to change, particularly in technology. In 2016 for example, the pornography industry is capitalising on the advancements of cutting edge virtual reality technology and using this to deliver a sexology/pornography combination (Gaudiosi, 2016). Not only this, but we live in a historical moment wherein pornography is no longer imbued with the same taboos it once was. Gail Dines suggests that pornography's current ubiquity is the result of a calculated and deliberate campaign to normalise pornography use and content.

‘What we see today is the result of years of careful strategizing and marketing by the porn industry to sanitise its products by stripping away the ‘dirt’ factor and reconstituting porn as fun, edgy, chic, sexy, and hot. The more sanitised the industry became, the more it seeped into the pop culture and into our collective consciousness’ (Dines, 2010:p.25).

I am hesitant to portray pornography as unequivocally being a part of today's mainstream. In certain circles pornography use is more accepted than others, even normalised. For example, in our discussion I would suggest that teenage boys' pornography use has come to be normalised and expected, especially in a peer context. In contrast, teenage girls are less visible as consumers of pornography and as such there is dearth of literature around the effects of pornography use on young women specifically. I do believe that pornography has found its way into popular culture.

One could also say that pornography has spawned its own kind of pop culture. Ariel Levy's 2005 book *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* argues just that, and proposes that raunch culture is for some a modern answer to feminism: 'What has moved into feminism's place as the most persuasive phenomenon in American womanhood is an almost opposite style, attitude, and set of principles' (p.87).

Without a doubt, the raunch culture that Levy theorises speaks at least in part of the influence porn has had on our culture, our bodies and ourselves, particularly in the case of young women. It can be seen as part of the legacy of 'sex positive', liberal feminist thought around pornography. Levy points out that the 'options' of sexual expression presented to young women are not progress but 'testament to what's still missing from our understanding of human sexuality with all of its complexity and power' (2005:p.198). Within the media, public discussions of youth sexuality are frequent fodder but consistently ignore or sensationalise recognition of young people as having sexual agency. Accordingly, the absence of discourses of pleasure and desire enhances pornography's appeal to young people. An example of this is provided in the 2013 documentary *Love and Sex in An Age of Pornography*. Young gay and lesbian people are interviewed and speak of the power of their early exposure to any images that allowed them to explore their same sex desires. "Gay and lesbian porn is often seen as liberating for people whose sexuality is largely invisible in mainstream culture, but the common representations of gay and lesbian sex in pornography raise questions about the freedom it offers". Indeed, the interviewees reported growing older and coming to understand these pornography performances as just that – performances, which reinforce negative stereotypes and offer a limited view of gay and lesbian sexualities. Yet we cannot wholly condemn the pornography which offered the sexual legitimacy and information these young people sought when nothing else did.

Pornography is no new phenomena and at its centre is in a state of constant cultural flux. I believe the rise of personalised mobile technology has called forth a significant shift in the meaning and proliferation of pornography. Consumers of pornography can now themselves become producers with greater ease than ever before. Suddenly one does not have to be a pornstar to make pornography. Though this does not mean that filming one's sexual activity and uploading it to the internet is something that everyone does, in an era where women can become famous after a video of their most private moments is 'leaked' onto the internet it is difficult to deny that a shift has taken place. The problematic and reductive notion of the 'leak' is troubling, as it generally describes what amounts to a form sexual abuse but uses terminology that denotes that there was no intention behind it. A leak is an accident, a consequence of a faulty pipe or a hole in the roof; this is not an accurate

metaphor for what is happening when someone non-consensually releases images of another online. We are now faced with a world where whole websites are dedicated to non-consensual pornographic material: 'upskirts', porn featuring highly intoxicated women, sleeping women, unconscious women and even overt 'rape' porn. In many cases the non-consensual scenarios are simulated by actors, but with the rise in 'amateur' pornography comes the rise in the rise of images taken without consent and the publishing of images taken with limited consent. To provide a hypothetical example, a couple mutually agrees to film themselves engaging in sexual intercourse to be viewed only by them, thereafter one party uploads the video to a pornographic website. Situations such as this are often perpetrated by a man against his current or former partner, in retaliation for apparent wrongdoing. The term coined for this kind of material is 'revenge porn'. However, it is common to hear of these events described in the media as 'leaks'.

This phenomena can be seen in cases such as the 2014 mass release of nude photos of female celebrities. Hundreds of images of were released when hackers exploited a security flaw in Apple's online cloud storage system. The celebrities included gymnast McKayla Maroney, model Kate Upton, actress Kaley Cuoco and perhaps most notably Academy Award winner Jennifer Lawrence who invariably became the face and voice of the 'scandal'. In an interview for *Vanity Fair* magazine, she spoke out against what had happened: 'It is not a scandal. It is a sex crime. It is a sexual violation' (Kashner, 2014). This case very much brought this conversation into the public consciousness but insomuch as more people were participating in the discussion, consent discourses were often conspicuously absent - hijacked by concerns about internet 'freedom' versus internet security. I recall at the time of the release of the images I found myself privy to several exchanges where people were asking each other if they'd seen the photos. On one such occasion, friends of mine told me they had viewed them out of sheer curiosity, and I questioned what they thought Lawrence and the other women affected would think of their curiosity. I do not believe that they had considered it before then. Lawrence herself did not mince words in regards to this matter: 'Anybody who looked at those pictures, you're perpetuating a sexual offense. You should cower with shame' (Kashner, 2014).

Though perhaps seen innocuously I believe my friends' desire to see the photos speaks to our general collective understanding of celebrity bodies as public bodies, notions of women's bodies as being *for* men (Mackinnon, 1989) and the 'freedom' of information on the internet. Considered together, this paints a picture of why and how the celebrity photo leak occurred. Following on from the hack, there was a backlash consisting of reaction akin to Lawrence's, decrying the release of the images. Mostly this seemed to have a legal lens, framing the event as a breach of privacy. The

backlash to the backlash was that a juridical understanding alone was inadequate. The issue of the right to privacy is one that is worthy of deep exploration, and so too are the issues of consent and ethics that are raised as we move into an era of fathomless digital possibility. As I will show in Chapter Three, it is not only celebrities being held to such standards. Much is being said about young people sending sexually explicit photos and videos to one another, a practise known as 'sexting'. Whether a sext can be considered to be pornography or whether or not young people who sext consider what they are doing to be participating in a pornified culture is surely dependant on context. Nevertheless, I wish to suggest for the purposes of this chapter that the digital sexualities as experienced by young people today are undeniably influenced by and in some ways driven by pornography. That pornography causes harm should not be called into question, but I do not agree all pornography causes harm, or that young people who view pornography are in some way doomed.

Bodies and Embodiment

'Beneath the facade of clothing is a sacred sexual body—compartmentalized segments of flesh that we may touch only in private and share only with the closest of intimates. This body is protected by stringent rules and filled with profound meaning to the individual, to those who may see it, and to the larger culture. Under normal circumstances, access to the sacred naked body of others means power and privilege and therefore connotes specific rights and responsibilities' (Waskul, 2002:p.221).

We imbue both our bodies and the bodies of others with an unbearable weight made up of norms and expectations. This is particularly true in the case of adolescent female bodies, and especially when those bodies inhabit contexts of sexuality, for example in a nude selfie. Susan Bordo's seminal text *Unbearable Weight* discusses how culture is inscribed upon women's bodies to make them docile and compliant to the norms of acceptable femininity. 'The body – what we eat, how we dress, the daily rituals through which we attend to the body – is a medium of culture' (1993:p.165). I have wondered at times lately if we refused to subscribe to the meaning attached to nude (especially young) women's bodies, would the associated anxieties at play lessen when such images 'leak'? In the words of Martin Weinberg and Colin Williams: 'Being bare usually carries an erotic meaning - especially of women, who are believed to embody sex itself' (2010:p.50).

Weinberg and Williams describe the concept of the 'looking glass body' in their article 'Nudity, Gender, and the Looking Glass Body'. They tell us that this is the experience of the self as formed through 'imagined appraisals of one's body by others' (2010:p.48). Furthermore, they report that this experience is a highly gendered one, with women's bodies subjected to an assumed objectifying male

gaze that assesses their value against their perceived level of sexual attractiveness. I will explore the male gaze further later in this chapter. Weinberg and Williams' exploration of the looking glass body reflects Nancy Jo Sales' (2016) and Ariel Levy's reporting of examples of young women who are socially rewarded for sexual performance: 'these are not stories about girls getting what they want sexually, they are stories about girls gaining acclaim socially, for which their sexuality is a tool' (Levy, 2005:p.146). Levy also suggests that at the time she wrote the internet was being used by young women as a tool in this regard. More than a decade later, I argue that the digital presentation of one's body as sexual and indeed sexually attractive is a common experience and even an expectation, especially upon the young. The popular dating application *Tinder* is an excellent example of this, as one swipes either left or right to denote their disapproval or approval of the person's profile. *Tinder* biographies usually provide very little information and are often satirical in nature, thus the judgement is almost totally based on the information read from the images provided.

Today, images of our bodies frequently inhabit cyberspace and these digital presentations can surely to be said to play a part in experiences of embodiment. Dennis Waskul, who writes extensively on the sociology of the body, outlines the relationship between the body and the self as it plays out in televideo cybersex (2002). Though he was writing over a decade ago, many of his ideas play out in light of increased technological capability and usage. Waskul posits that the body and the self are separate but that enactment of one is enactment of the other (2002:p.202). Bodies are the bearers of meaning inscribed upon them by the societies and micro-societies they inhabit. Often rigid gendered ideologies for example are attributed and inscribed onto bodies, particularly naked bodies: 'the traditional micropolitics of sex become paramount—even exaggerated—when genders interact in the nude on the Internet, or anywhere else' (Waskul, 2002:p.220). The bodies in question in any 'leak' scenario are overwhelmingly young women's bodies. It is in these situations that we see the conflicting constructions young women are subjected to; young women are seen as objects who are punished directly and indirectly when they are found to digitally objectify themselves as expected, usually with a tide of victim blame. This conundrum reflects general ideas around adolescent sexuality, it is seen as a norm for young people to 'act out' sexually, but also seen as against norms to be young and sexualised.

Beyond this, I believe we have not yet fully accepted participation in cybersexualities as a norm (Waskul, 2002), not for adults and especially not for adolescents. Many such as Daniel Reyes assert that cybersexualities can be harmful: 'The fragmentation engendered by the cybersex encounter devalues the person, since his/her sexuality is solely reduced to utter eroticism' (2014:p.34). It is in all this confusion that one can see why regulation of young peoples' sexual behaviour is a fraught

task. However, if we question the motivations to regulate, and indeed deconstruct so-called ‘norms’ that contradict one another, perhaps this conversation may be able to truly take place. Waskul suggests that participation in cybersexualities speaks to the human propensity to be, at least in part, voyeuristic. This becomes complex in light of the burgeoning visibility of young peoples’ sexuality combined with the prevailing preference not to view young bodies as sexual. In a scenario that involves young people and taking naked or even sexually suggestive selfies, for example, I believe that some of the disgust stems from the discomfort of seeing or imagining young people in a familiarly marked sexual situations. Most adults do not want to be seen as recognising the symbols that mark bodies as sexual and for visual enjoyment when that body is also young.

As a society we are becoming familiar with the ‘scandals’ of consensually and non-consensually ‘leaked’ images of women’s bodies. I have spoken to several women who have been the subjects of so-called revenge porn, when their ex-partners sought to punish them by sharing sexually-suggestive or explicit images without consent. One particular example that stands out in my mind occurred when the woman was only 15 years old. This is an experience that many young women precariously share with celebrity women, and the outcry reaction to more public scandals speaks volumes. The only scandal here is that as a society we seem to be largely ignoring that these are issues of gender inequality. It occurs to me that if we did not view women’s naked bodies and women’s sexuality as scandalous, that there could be no scandal.

While we live in a world that sees fit to label, legislate and ridicule women who dare to express their sexuality, we create men who can ‘discipline’ (Burns, 2015) women through this very modern form of public humiliation and contend that they have only themselves to blame. Roxane Gay suggests in a piece for *The Guardian* on the subject of the mass release of celebrity nude photos, that privacy is a privilege that is not granted to bodies who are Other - including women, people of colour, trans people, Queer people and so on. For our purposes I would also like to add adolescent bodies to this list. ‘The further away you are from living as a white, heterosexual, middle-class man, the less privacy you enjoy’ Gay opines (2014). Celebrities, she says, have no privacy at all. The leak was ‘meant to remind women of their place’. The nude photo hack of 2014 and every mirror of the situation played out with women who have no notoriety in place of celebrities is retribution, telling us that women’s bodies are public bodies. This promulgates the understanding that celebrity women who take naked photos of themselves should do so accepting that the general population has more of a right to see it than they do to keep it for themselves. This is often offered under an excuse that is the modern incarnation of freedom of speech: you cannot and should not police the internet (more on this in Chapter Three). As Gay puts it:

‘Don’t do anything to upset or disappoint men who feel entitled to your time, bodies, affection or attention. Your bared body can always be used as a weapon against you. Your bared body can always be used to shame and humiliate you. Your bared body is at once desired and loathed’.

In contrast to the loss of control of one’s own image that occurs in cases of so-called revenge porn, when any woman seeks control of her own image, particularly in any way that is perceived to be sexual (for example sharing a nude selfie) the reception can be quite different. This can be illustrated by a very famous example. Kim Kardashian and her ex-partner Ray J made an intimate recording of themselves, which was ‘leaked’ and subsequently became the most viewed ‘x-rated’ video of all time, and one of the most watched videos on the internet (Marcus, 2017). Kardashian has firmly stated that neither she nor any members of her family were involved in the distribution of the tape, and filed a successful lawsuit against Vivid Entertainment, the pornography production company that marketed it. Doubt has been cast over Kardashian’s assertions however, as the release of the recording has been pinpointed as the catalyst for her and her family’s reality show deal and subsequent rise to fame.

Since the ‘leak’, Kardashian has notoriously consensually posed in varying states of undress (including nude) numerous times. On March 7th, 2016 Kardashian posted a selfie on her Instagram profile, showing herself in her bedroom mirror, fully naked but for black censor bars over her breasts and vulva. Kardashian has an enormous fan base, and while there are positive comments to behold, there is an overwhelming amount of shaming in response to this image. For example, user *evilkarmacums* commented ‘Please don’t be surprised when North [Kardashian’s daughter] is doing full spreads for playboy’ and along a similar vein *ms. _soland* said ‘You have kids. Wtf is wrong with you’. Similarly, many people implied that no one wanted to see Kardashian’s naked body because it was in some way repugnant or that she was in some way morally wrong for baring it. The next day, which happened to be International Women’s Day, Kardashian released a short essay to address the bullying on her Twitter and her personal website. ‘It always seems to come back around to my sex tape’, she contends, continuing to say that she deeply resents needing to ‘prove that I am more than something that happened 13 years ago’. By claiming her right to be sexual on her terms she is rejecting shame and telling her audience it is okay to be many things and also to be ‘sexy’. ‘It’s 2016. The body-shaming and slut-shaming—it’s like, enough is enough. I will not live my life dictated by the issues you have with my sexuality’.

Soon after this Kardashian and her friend actress/model Emily Ratajkowski (who was also implicated in the celebrity nude photo hack) posted a side by side topless selfie while extending

their middle fingers on their respective Instagram profiles. Ratajkowski captioned hers: 'We are more than just our bodies, but that doesn't mean that we have to be shamed for them or our sexuality #liberated'. Committed though they are to their message, so are their opponents. Instagram user coris.I7 commented:

'Sure but that is ALL Kim is and all she has to offer. She has no other talents. If Kim used her nudity in an artistic way or even in a positive way but let's be real here, Kim is as vain as they come. She posts for attention nothing else'.

What is meant by 'artistic' or 'positive' is not entirely clear, only that this user deems the way that Kardashian and Ratajkowski are expressing themselves to be neither. I argue that this is just further evidence of the minefield of acceptability women negotiate. If by baring their bodies Kardashian and Ratajkowski are evoking a self (Waskul, 2002), it is meant as a sexually 'liberated' self, freely choosing to be objectified and impervious to the criticism of their audience. Yet if our view of ourselves is constituted only through the assumption of this audience (Weinberg & Williams, 2010) this self would seem a contradiction of terms.

Gail Dines (2010) suggests that in a culture saturated by pornography ideology being sexualised has become synonymous with liberation, and is seen by young women as freely chosen. She speaks of her experience lecturing a Women's Studies Course about pornography. The students did not react well to any suggestion that pornography was harmful: 'They accused me of denying them the free choice to embrace our hypersexualised porn culture, an idea that was especially repugnant because, as rising members of the next generation's elite, they saw no limits or constraints on them as women' (p.100). Weinberg and Williams found that women who were comfortable with their nude body were more likely to report satisfaction with their sexuality and their sexual experiences (2010:p.62). I believe there is a conflation of these two ideas at work here; conformity and comfort however, are not the same thing. I tend to agree with Dines who suggests that in our hypersexualised (digital) culture: 'the only alternative to looking fuckable is to be invisible' (2010:p.105).

Foucault and the Internet

Michel Foucault died well before the invention of the internet, but as a myriad of scholarship shows, many of his theories can be enacted to make sense of the factors at play in our connected world. The internet, and social media in general, is an almost perfect example of the idea of panopticism pioneered by Foucault. The panopticon was a design for a prison in which the cells were placed around a central guard tower. Lights shining from the tower into the cells obscured the

presence of guards from the inmates, meaning that the prisoners would always be able to be seen, but did not actually need to be watched. The design was intended to result in the prisoners disciplining themselves, acting within guidelines because they never knew definitively that they were being surveyed – only that they could be. Foucault believed the panopticon was a metaphor for the ways in which populations have learnt to put themselves under surveillance – to act in ways that are deemed appropriate to avoid the punishment that comes with transgression (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). When we present our bodies and ourselves to an online audience (an audience which is both real and imaginary) we are engaging in disciplinary processes to ensure that we conform to norms and expectations and are thereby acceptable. We are forming and reforming ourselves as subjects. Foucault argued that the operation of power could be best seen in micro-form, as it played out through our engagement with social institutions and relations. However, it remains that power often operates perniciously and its dynamics are often subtle and ever-changing (Stern, 2011). The internet can certainly be seen as a social institution and it is the site of many forms of relating and communicating with others, especially in the lives of adolescents. It is also the modern site of the operation of many of the forms of micro-power that Foucault theorised.

Conversely, the internet is also the site of resistance. Foucault maintained ‘[Where] there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power’ (1978:p.95). Foucault’s theorised power as expressed in the minutiae of the everyday and resistance, an essential component of the operation of power, as the same. I believe the case of Emma Holten is a good example of the operation power in a digital world, as well as subsequent resistance to them. I will elaborate on several more examples in Chapter Four. Holten had two naked selfies she had sent her ex-boyfriend released online. As a young woman taking a naked selfie walks a precariously line between being seen as normative behaviour, but also deviant behaviour. The reaction to Holten’s experience shows this dichotomy. In an essay for feminist website *Hysterical Feminisms* (2016) about this experience and how she ultimately decided to respond to it, Holten outlines how she received messages such as: ‘Do your parents know that ur a slut?’ and ‘Send me more nudes or I’ll send the ones I have to your boss’. These messages were all from men; ‘The realisation that my humiliation turned them on felt like a noose around my neck. The absence of consent was erotic, they relished my suffering’. The key theme of Holten’s piece is that her experience was a dehumanising one, intended that way by men who see women as objects and intend to punish them for their supposed transgressions. Her response was to challenge the images that had been released without her consent by releasing more images, professionally photographed. Self-directed and intentionally infused with her sexual autonomy at every level, a counter to the ‘before’ images. ‘I would have to write a new story about

my body in order to make it possible to see myself naked and still see myself as human. I decided that a sort of re-humanisation had to happen' (Holten, 2016).

The release of Holten's images can be seen as punishment for her wrongdoing which was the act of taking naked selfies and perhaps for ending her relationship with her ex-partner, thereby denying him further access to her body. By releasing these photos Holten's ex-partner offered her body to the gaze that the internet provides a platform for. Holten's body was subjected to this gaze, judged and she was further punished for being a woman with a nude body who knowingly sexualised herself. In releasing these images, her ex-partner surely knew that it was not an act of generosity – he intended to punish her. Her choice to release more photos resists and subverts the gaze by offering the same body without the sexual scripts attached, on her terms. Foucault held sexuality as a site in which power operates, but perhaps more importantly that power and resistance are concurrent phenomena (Deveaux, 1994). Monique Deveaux writing on the ways feminist theory has utilised Foucauldian theory, acknowledges that this idea of power and resistance has been useful for feminist writers who write about the ways women participate in resistance. Despite this, she outlines what she sees as the shortcomings of this approach saying it fails to theorise the ways in which women are not the free subjects the agonistic model of power necessitates. Women are hindered by socially constructed internal barriers and are done a disservice by separating the concepts of power and violence. Finally Deveaux suggests the central problem with Foucault's model is that it fails to conceive that 'men's freedom (privilege etc.) is contingent upon women's unfreedom' (1994:p.237). Emma Holten was a subject participating in resistance, but it is important to locate the forms of power at play as gendered in nature.

Feminists have both embraced and criticised Foucault's theories of power and domination. Angela King (2004) asserts that Foucault failed to adequately provide a concept of gender, undermining his theories of power's effect on bodies. According to her, Foucault's 'analysis sidesteps how woman has been discursively identified with the body and downplays the objectification that feminists argue this results in in order to argue for the subjectifying power of discourse' (p.33). Without a concept of the way in which patriarchal cultural notions, micro or otherwise affect women, stories like Holten's cannot be fully comprehended. Nevertheless, many feminists have use Foucauldian theory as a starting point to dissect seemingly static ideas of sexuality, bodies and power.

'Foucault's work is of value to feminists because it disrupts, through its refusal of the notions of transhistorical and stable categories of sexuality/sex, any analyses of the cultural relationship between women, bodies and sexuality based upon the limitations of traditional understandings' (Bailey, 1993:p.102).

With the help of Foucault we can see so-called feminine ideals as disciplinary processes (Stern,

2011:p.249) and young women as active participants in these processes that often mark them as subordinated and secondary (Ramazanoglu, 1993:p.18). In our digital culture such ideals are created, reinforced and modelled. Pornography, ‘thinspiration’ images that inspire one to be thin, ‘fitspiration’ images that inspire one to be fit, many memes (satirical images and text), conspicuous and imperative consumerism (such as in ‘haul’ videos that display the multiple recent fashion purchases of the subject) variously communicate what it is and more importantly should be, like to be a young woman in the early 21st century. This is subtle reinforcement however and the source, veracity and purpose of any given piece of information on the internet is often extraordinarily hard to uncover and more often than not goes unquestioned. What is truly at play here then is often obscured making it difficult to point out power structures that may be present in a digital sense.

This difficulty also speaks to the libertarian ideology that surrounds and protects the internet. Attempts to critique the uncontrolled digital frontier are often unfairly cast as attacks on freedom of speech and/or information. James Boyle contends that ‘digital libertarianism is inadequate because of its blindness to the effects of private power’, and furthermore that the state holds considerable power in this arena which a libertarian perspective also conceals (1997:p.178). It is this defence that is frequently enacted when young women who have experienced unwanted releases of their private information or images. With this said, these type of instances are more frequently being put forth for better or worse as an argument for greater state influence in digital spheres and this has resulted in laws being drafted in many different jurisdictions to deal with ‘revenge porn’, as well as cyberbullying. In New Zealand this has taken the form of The Harmful Digital Communications Act (2015) which I will delve into in Chapter Three. Interestingly, touting of freedom of speech information to protect cyberspace is reflective of many of the historical arguments against the censorship of pornography. The protection of ‘freedoms’ raises questions about who really benefits and crucially whether they exist at all. Perhaps the most pertinent of Foucault’s theories to discussions of cyber spheres is that of surveillance. Foucault outlined that subjects discipline themselves under the presumption that they are being monitored. The presence or absence of the monitors was not especially relevant to him, as under this model the possibility of being observed in the act of transgressing was enough to elicit the self-disciplining response. In turn, this creates docile bodies, constantly visible subjects power has been enacted upon. Just like the panopticon where prisoners may be seen at all times (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000), constant visibility is a hallmark of the internet, particularly of the social media which young people interact with daily and in many cases on an almost constant basis. The difference I believe, is that evidence of being observed and monitored is inbuilt into most social media in the form of the proverbial ‘like’. Young people know they are being watched, and act accordingly.

The 'New' Gaze and Digital Performativity

'There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be at minimal cost' (Foucault 1979:p.155).

Foucauldian notions of surveillance necessarily invoke the idea of a gaze. The panopticon model suggests a disciplinary gaze could be and therefore is present at all times. Historically it had been questioned who is looking and who is being looked at. We now find ourselves in a moment where everyone is looking and everyone is being looked at. The internet has exponentially extended perceived peer groups, as engagement with the day-to-day lives of strangers is a ubiquitous experience as is strangers' engagement with the mundanities and 'highlights' of one's own life. For example, on Instagram, the popular image sharing application, if one has 1000 'followers' it is entirely possible that two thirds or more of those followers are unknown to the account holder. Those strangers can see, 'like' and comment on any image posted. The inclusion of the 'like' function on many applications gives those who are looking the ability to let others know they are looking and that they approve. It also lets the owner of the content know that they are being looked at and approved of. The consequence of all of this for many young people has been an experience of enormous social pressure (Sales, 2016). The failure to gain approval from one's audience, or indeed the lack of an audience is reckoned to be a personal failure. What must one do to be 'worthy' of likes and thereby acceptable to the gaze?

There is an argument to be made for equating the act of 'sharing' with performance. Daniel Reyes tells us that 'cyberspace is a digital site where people can coat themselves with multi-faceted identities' (2014:p.33). What is shared represents a deliberate identity construction process. One's sense of humour, one's friends, one's priorities, one's causes, one's dress, one's body can be all put on display, a sum total of a digital self. Much has been said about the 'curated' nature of what one presents online. There is a tendency to project a kind of perfection and quickly hide anything that does not meet that standard. If social media feeds were to be believed (in the Western context, at least) fantastically good-looking people take constant holidays in the perpetually sunny weather, eat and drink spectacularly and have a myriad of close friends and besotted lovers. It is no wonder the term FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) was coined, though admittedly is probably out of vogue as fast as it came in. Fear of missing out is understandable when it seems that there is something to miss out on. Within this process of identity construction, projection and maintenance it is possible to see

gender woven through at every step. Judith Butler famously posited gender as performative, ‘an identity tenuously constituted in time -an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*’ (1988:p.519). Yet she asserts that these acts have been pre-conceived, though they require individuals to reproduce them for legitimacy (p.526).

Gendered performance is conspicuous on the internet. Idealised forms of masculinity and femininity can be beheld everywhere. For young women this most often involves bodily display, whether in a gym selfie showing a) the ‘gym’ body, and b) the act of going to the gym in general, an outfit post, a shot socialising with friends, or a make-up selfie. Daniel Reyes critiques ideas such as these as stemming from a purported sexual revolution occurring alongside the digital revolution: ‘the cybertranscendence and gratification concocted in the web are not blameless in inducing detrimental issues akin to person’s body-self and gender relations, as well as, inter-personal communication’ (2014:p.34). Indeed, it is no new phenomena for women to be reduced to objects, whose value is tied to their physical presentation. Nancy Jo Sales (2016) tells us that the idea of young women’s value being tied to their perceived attractiveness has grown exponentially in the digital world. In 1975 film scholar Laura Mulvey pioneered the idea of the male gaze, since adopted and adapted by countless thinkers. There is indeed evidence to suggest that young women are disciplining themselves to appeal to a perceived heterosexual male gaze. We must never lose sight of the fact that the technologies and applications (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and more!), for all their intentions, forms, functions and ways they shape our daily realities were overwhelmingly invented by white, heterosexual, American men. They are also massive, multi-billion dollar industries.

Yet there is resistance. With gendered and sexual standards more and more conspicuous through their constant repetition and visibility, the internet also provides a platform for pushback. It has provided almost since its inception greater connection between those with marginalised and/or minority identities. This has allowed a kind of digital consciousness-raising to take place through the sharing of experiences and information. As an example, technological autonomy grants non-normative, non-‘ideal’ bodies unprecedented visibility. Those who have fat bodies, differently-abled bodies, non-white bodies, gender non-binary bodies with access to technology are able to present themselves as fashionable, sexual, artistic and more, inviting the gaze that has so often historically looked upon their bodies as deviant. It is not my intention to construct the internet as an egalitarian utopia, when it is anything but, merely to point out that inasmuch as the internet provides a platform to reaffirm norms, so too does it allow for transgressive representation. I will speak more about this in Chapter Four. Mulvey (1988) suggests that there is pleasure to be found in looking and being

looked at. Furthermore ‘a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world’ (p.60). We cannot underestimate the significance of recognition of one’s self in what one sees, or the desire for this.

With this said, the possibilities of representation are truncated when we consider the highly-mediated nature of what one sees on the internet. There is a significant amount of information we will likely never see because we never actively search for it and no algorithm will suggest it to you. We are exposed to what algorithms decide we might like based upon what we have liked in the past, we see what people we have decided to connect with particularly if their likes are similar to ours. Websites, applications and social media have stakes in competing for our attention and as such are trying to show us what they have surmised we wish to see. There seems to be some degree of acknowledgement of this by the sites themselves such as Facebook’s ‘why am I seeing this’ ‘I don’t want to see this’ options, but the real implications of how we see what we see on the internet are yet to be meaningfully deconstructed.

Adolescent Cyborgs

The near-constant interface of young people’s bodies and minds with their technology is a great source of cultural anxiety. A plethora of think pieces opine about young generations’ reduced empathy, social skills, appreciation for the natural environment and so on, citing digitally influenced narcissism. See for example Joel Stein’s 2013 article for *Time* entitled ‘Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation’. Yet we are remiss to focus on the negative consequences of young peoples’ internet use. When we are caught up in discourses around safety and addiction, it is difficult to separate adult anxieties from adolescent realities and get a sense of the complex digital terrain. Shannon Gleason (2014) proposes that we are living in ‘technoculture’, that challenges essentialist notions of human nature and supports the idea that the advent of near-ubiquitous technology (particularly mobile technology) has made us cyborgs. She tells us that the fear of technology stems in part from the idea that technology takes away from our humanity: ‘The central problem revealed by technology anxieties is the idea that humanity is central to everything, and if the idea of humanity changes or is called into question, that leaves room for us to doubt our place in the universe’ (p.128). There is a temptation to promulgate the idea that young people who cannot remember a time without wireless internet somehow possess less humanity than the generations that came before. Indeed, these young people are ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001), and even if they individually disconnect they still inhabit a world where their peers learn, experience and socialise

online. The question at this juncture is if adolescents are cyborgs imbued with less humanity, why is that a problem? Harking back to Donna Haraway's influential 'Cyborg Manifesto' (2000) originally published in 1991, we may actually come to see young people as less limited by the taxonomies of humanity.

Haraway defines her cyborg as 'a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction' (2000:p.291). She invites us to consider that technology is neither a force of good or ill and that such a dualism is reductive. We are cyborgs and this lived reality has influenced the way we think, the ways we produce knowledge and the politics of our institutions. Cyborgs will transcend false dichotomies and create new possibilities for gender, sex and sexuality. According to Haraway as boundaries between the body and the self become blurred in cyborg ontology they will shirk even Foucauldian biopolitics; regulation of the body can no longer take on the same importance when the body has less symbolic meaning (2000:p.305).

'The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential' (p.293).

Criticisms of Haraway's approach often centre around the idea that she has not paid due notice to the third world labour that contemporary cyborgs' existence relies on (Daniels, 2009). Indeed, we should be critical of the true costs of technology and not lose sight of the context in which first world adolescent cyborgs inhabit the same global context as adolescents who are poisoned by the by products of an industry that profits from speedy obsolescence.

People under the age of 18 can never experience a world where information and communication technologies are not omnipresent, they can only imagine it. Shannon Gleason, writing on embracing the cyborg, remarks that where boundaries were once clear they are now difficult to locate:

'Increasingly, we struggle to parse out strict binaries of human and non-human, machine and nonmachine, natural and unnatural—binaries that made modernism possible' (2014:p.125). In this, we can see the truth of Prensky's idea of young people as digital natives and perhaps too Haraway's cyborg. For young people, there is simply no division between the digital world and the 'real world', they are the same world. For those young people who own a smart phone, the device is an extension of themselves, a part as essential as an organ. The functions of a smartphone have observably replaced countless other pieces of technology that life was organised around, for example the camera, the alarm clock, the calendar – but more subtly it has replaced human functions. Young people construct identities through their online presence and come to understand

the identities of others in cyberspace. Gleason suggests that all this contradicts an essentialist vision of a biological destiny for humanity. On the other hand, questions linger, asking if technology has gone too far – whether tenets of our humanity such as empathy are being eroded. ‘The central problem revealed by technology anxieties is the idea that humanity is central to everything, and if the idea of humanity changes or is called into question, that leaves room for us to doubt our place in the universe’ (Gleason 2014:p.128). With increased expectation to ‘share’ one’s life and indeed to construct a life worth ‘sharing’ and inward focus has become necessary, but has equally been called narcissism.

Even for adolescent cyborgs, transcending the contradictory expectations of different parts of society remains complex but somehow mandatory. New Zealand’s society in general now relies on the interpersonal communication, relationship and community building facilitated by smart phones and consistent internet access. Neoliberal ideas of choice are void here; to choose not to merge one’s life, and thereby one’s sexuality, with technology is to choose to be socially isolated and disadvantaged. This is especially so in the case of young people.

Three – Proliferating Scandals and Dubious Monikers: ‘Roast Busters’, ‘Rack Appreciation’ and ‘Mates & Dates’

My previous chapter provides a range of theoretical approaches to aid in understanding digital culture and cybersexualities in particular. Young people, technology and the discursive combination of the two have been a source of anxiety throughout most of the 20th century and the trend has most certainly continued into the 21st. Even so, numerous think pieces using buzzwords about ‘millennials’ would contend that we have reached a historical moment where the new is truly to be feared and our anxiety is justified. Are we really living in the technological dystopia that some commentators would have us believe? To delve into these questions this chapter will explore some of the broad, emotive media coverage of this area, largely and notably disproportionate to the attention given to it by legislative bodies. Modern media has embraced editorial coverage in an unprecedented way, and as such what is published around emotive debates such as the ones we are discussing tend towards opinion rather than fact. There has been a rise and rise of the editorial. What is interesting is the dogmatic embracing of these opinions as if they were facts. Dogmatic sells. Emotive sells. We live in the time of ‘click bait’, and youth and sex as ever, sell.

I wish to navigate through two recent (stories broke in 2013/2014) local and national examples of ‘where it all went wrong’: the ‘Roast Busters’ scandal and Dunedin’s ‘Rack Appreciation’ page. Although these particular cases gained national and international notoriety, they are by no means the only instances of this kind in New Zealand. However, these stories were set apart by the feverish media attention they attracted. Moreover, and this is especially true in the case of the Roast Busters, these events appeared to catch the country by surprise. On multiple levels New Zealand as a nation has proven to be unprepared to deal with the clash of rape culture and technology that we are seeing. Frequently, this is iterated as a ‘new’ phenomena, but it has a history. When a story sparks the kind of far-reaching public debate that that of the Roast Busters did, we are forced to question our own understandings as we are submersed in and confronted by those of our peers and people in positions of power. Frequently the reality in this area in New Zealand does not fit with our vision of ourselves as New Zealanders. Therefore in this chapter, it is my intention to highlight the series of disconnects between technology, consent, sexuality, respect, relationships and media.

Perhaps what is at issue is that the national debate has never truly been engaged in, put in the ‘too hard basket’, a political hot potato. Years on and we have seen repeated similar examples gain the

media spotlight and as ever it seems much easier to join the chorus of victim blame than to address structural inequalities beneath these ‘contemporary’ problems. Yet an observable shift is taking place. The digital era has ripped away the rug that many complexities were swept under. We have seen livestreams of violent protests, police shootings and even rape. The personal is increasingly the public, so where does that leave the political? Neoliberal ideologies of personal choice and responsibility have taken root in New Zealand society, expressed most deliberately within State institutions and policy, so we must ask how such ideologies take shape in light of the technological leaps our society is making. Let us refocus upon the structural inequalities at work here. In particular, that (young) women are disproportionately the victims of sexual abuse on and off-line, and the perpetrators of abuse overwhelmingly are men. In her book *Feminism Unmodified* (1987) Catharine Mackinnon frames her argument by deconstructing legal and theoretical ideas of gender as simply difference, thereby uncovering its complex reality as hierarchical and unequal, with male knowledge, experience and governance privileged above all.

With reference to Mackinnon’s legal and ideological critiques, this chapter will also look at two recent and relevant interventions the New Zealand Government has actioned, partly in response to the cases such as that of the Roast Busters. These are the introduction of the Harmful Digital Communications Act in 2015, and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)’s piloting and subsequent implementation of the ‘Mates & Dates’ Programme which began in 2015. I will consider the scope of the Harmful Digital Communications Act and what it can, or what it professes to offer in terms of justice for those who have been ‘harmed’. Furthermore I will look into Mates & Dates, which was conceived in the wake of the Roast Busters investigation as an apparent response to the ‘need’ that was identified. I wish to investigate how this programme fits into the already fraught situation of school-based sex and relationship education. With input from a Mates & Dates facilitator I will attempt find out whether there is evidence of young peoples’ conjectured problematic relationship with sex and technology playing out in our classrooms. I want to know what the programme does to meet the needs and wants of digitally focused young people in New Zealand. Has vast media coverage of the debates in this area made it any more likely for people in positions of power to re-evaluate what and how young people learn about sexuality and relationships in school? Comparatively to the questionable quality of pre-existing sexuality and relationships education in New Zealand schools, is there anything that suggests Mates & Dates is using a new approach that subverts biopolitical aims to produce ‘healthy’ students who make ‘healthy’ choices?

Rack Appreciation Society

To begin, I would like to forefront an example involving people who attend/ed Otago University, the very institution to which I submit this thesis. In October 2014, just weeks after the hack and mass release of celebrity nude photos and resulting media frenzy which I referred to in Chapter Two, a number of women in Dunedin New Zealand found themselves facing their own ‘scandal’ involving the public posting of intimate images on a group Facebook page. This page at its height had over 4000 members and operated under the title ‘Rack Appreciation Society’. The context in which this page was spawned is important to note here. The proximity in time to the infamous release of the nude images of celebrity women meant that the discourse surrounding this event was still present in the media, social media and in broader society. Multiple calls were brought to the fore, suggesting if one did not want their intimate images stolen or posted publicly, then they should not take them in the first place.

This neoliberal sentiment based upon the idea of personal responsibility erases the broader structures that allow and even encourage such abuse (Stringer, 2014). This can be seen across many spaces and was enshrined in an 2010 Australian public service announcement ‘Megan’s Story’. In the video, a girl is shown buttoning up her blouse after it is implied that she sent an intimate picture to ‘Ryan’. Ryan is then shown forwarding it to other members of the class, culminating in Megan’s teacher receiving the image. The video ends with a voice and an image asking ‘think you know what happens to your images – think again’. Kath Albury and Kate Crawford (2012), writing on ‘Megan’s story’, contend that the tale is about morality, but the focus is always Megan’s morality, and her responsibility as a young woman, never of Ryan’s actions or those of the other young people forwarding an image that was not meant for them. It is decontextualized and uncritical of the social environment in which young people live, socialise and ‘sext’. This campaign is a powerful example of the way institutions and wider society view the combination of sexuality, technology and young people. Albury and Crawford suggest that ‘by trading on the propensity of teenagers to feel embarrassment about their bodies and commingling it with the anxiety of mobiles being ever present, the ad becomes a potent mix of technology, fear and body shame’ (2012:p.465).

The ‘Rack Appreciation Society’ (RAS) page featured images of topless/nude women which were mostly screenshots obtained from the application Snapchat. Snapchat image messages or ‘snaps’ are designed to disappear after 1-10 seconds, but the image receiver is able to use their smartphone to take a screen capture of this image if they so choose. With new social media comes new social media etiquette, and this can be exceptionally tricky to navigate. A person who used Snapchat to

send an intimate image does so with the knowledge that it can be captured (i.e. in a screen-capture or 'screencap') by the receiver (in which case the sender will be notified) but in practise may not want this to happen, and may have been intending to use Snapchat precisely because of the ephemeral nature of the image. Consent is often inferred or assumed rather than sought – the argument is if one knew it was a possibility to 'screenshot' a 'snap' then surely they should factor that in before sending it? How can we conceive of privacy and consent in such convoluted landscapes? Need we conceive of new understandings of these concepts? Mackinnon contends that privacy is ill-understood in a society formed upon gender inequalities: 'abstract privacy protects abstract autonomy, without inquiring into whose freedom of action is being sanctioned at whose expense' (1987:p.101). Privacy in her view is a male concept, infrequently granted to women, which denies the collective experiences which prove women's subordination. Women are overwhelmingly the targets and victims of revenge porn and in cases such as RAS, it is their privacy at question and at stake.

The images of women on the RAS page could be 'rated' and commented on by male page members. The behaviour was quickly confronted as a mirror group of women set up a page called 'Rack Appreciation Society Awareness', exposing the existence of the original page, needed as the privacy of RAS group was set to 'secret'. At this point that the New Zealand media caught wind of this page and ran the story for a public still reeling from the Roast Busters scandal of the previous year, which I will discuss in detail later in this chapter. The Rack Appreciation page was not an isolated incident. Other incidents of this type and similar have been covered by the New Zealand media. These include pages like 'Dunners Babe of the Day' (a format seen at one point across most of the country) which featured images and a description of a different daily 'babe'. Such pages claimed to be about celebrating beauty, but were criticised by as objectifying and limiting by many commentators such as Arena Williams, women's rights officer of the New Zealand University Students' Association (Kenny & Stewart, 2013).

Otago University's student magazine *Critic* ran a comprehensive story on the RAS page. The man found to be the creator of the page claimed that he had not intended it to be a place for non-consensual sharing of images. He is quoted in the article: '95 per cent of members had no idea who the photos belonged to. For all we know they could of [sic] just been pictures off the Internet which is what I assumed the majority of them to be' (Cochrane, 2014). There are billions of pictures of women shared all the time on social media. It is very simple to find and appropriate these images without knowledge and/or concern for the source. Yet justifying what was on the page by saying that most of the men involved believed they were just 'random' women speaks of an often-espoused

idea that understanding the degradation of women is only possible when they can be humanised by being seen in relation to a man: *girlfriend*, mother, daughter and so on. In this case however, many of the images were found to be of the friends and girlfriends of member of RAS, intimate pictures willingly taken and shared with partners that were then non-consensually shared with a much wider unintended audience. The claim that the images were ‘random’ is refuted by a female student who approached *Critic* anonymously. She suggested that the creator of and the participants in the Facebook group knew exactly what was happening on the page and furthermore that it was created for the purposes of sharing images, erotic precisely because they are non-consensual. There appeared to be an element of status in sharing these images also. Posting an image was to show that the young male poster’s appeal was such that women would send them intimate images. With this said, a large number of the participants claimed that they were added to the page against their will, and were unaware of and/or not responsible for the content.

When author Josie Cochrane sought comment from some of the men who were part of the group indicated that they believed the women in the pictures were responsible for acting ‘provocatively’ and taking such pictures. In these men’s view, a selfie is tantamount to self-responsibility and self-objectification. For example: ‘a few girls ranting about the boys objectifying them have been seen in wet t-shirt comps in the past’ (Cochrane, 2014). In this statement I believe we can see the entitlement men feel to women’s bodies is a group entitlement fed by notions of women’s sexuality being *for* men. The man quoted here clearly believes that by acting in a way that he considered to be sexually provocative in one context, that woman lost her right to consent to being viewed sexually in other contexts. If you objectify yourself why should others not objectify you? There is something unspoken here – a woman who acts out in a way codified as sexual by society should expect it, and she deserves it. I believe by using the woman in the wet t-shirt contest as representative of all the women on the page, this commenter is homogenising the group and implying that they have all chosen to be objectified: after all, they chose to take sexy selfies. The ‘choice’ that some feminisms have held so dear is used against women; choice has consequence. You choose to take nude photos and objectify yourself for a male gaze, little knowing that *a* male gaze is *the* male gaze. This idea is put forward by Anne Burns’ in her chapter ‘In Full View: Involuntary Porn and the Postfeminist Rhetoric of Choice’. She says

‘Within a patriarchal society, and particularly within a pornographic context, it is the voices of the male spectators, utilising the postfeminist rhetoric of choice, who are imposing their readings on these photographs to suit their own objectives’ (2015:p.99).

Heather Morgan and Karen Lumsden (2012) claim that young women’s relationship with social media casts them as victims or villains, depending on context. The third (continuing in to fourth)

wave of feminism has held that to be sexualised is to be liberated, a message that has resounded with many young women – one that is not delivered equally to young men. When young women embody this idea, and participate in sexualising themselves. This reinforces its truth and casts them as the villains in their own stories (Morgan & Lumsden, 2012). Jessica Ringrose and Emma Renold (2011) similarly see young women caught in dichotomies that fail to capture the complex realities of their lived experiences. They argue that there is a growing awareness of the ways in which young women are problematically sexualised, but this awareness often relies on adult commentators drawing arbitrary lines that decide what ‘appropriate’ sexual expression is and when it should occur.

This regulation of ‘appropriate’ behaviour through discourse is disproportionately focused on the actions of young women. Catharine Mackinnon asserts that ‘the inequality of the sexes is lived out, threaded from one moment to the next through millions of lifetimes of habit into individual identities and social relations’ (1987:p.2). The digital social context in which the RAS page was created should not be seen as exceptional; the inequality that Mackinnon wrote about in 1987 is clear in the content of the page, and in the subsequent reaction to its discovery. It was quickly shut down, a complaint was laid with Otago University and there was a subsequent investigation into creator of the page, Sean MacDonald, who soon moved to a different university. A press article from December 2014 featured comment from one of the women whose image was posted on the page, expressing how difficult the experience was for her and dismay that MacDonald remained remorseless and largely oblivious to the implications of his actions. In reference to a photo of MacDonald with a placard featuring the name of his flat ‘Rack City’, she is quoted as saying ‘I think he is just showing he doesn’t really care, he’s not remorseful about what he did’ (Hume, 2014).

In November 2014 the Otago Daily Times (ODT) ran a story in which Otago University claimed that MacDonald had faced disciplinary action and was no longer a student, while he claimed that he did not face consequences. Regardless, he was admitted to Canterbury’s Lincoln University and told the ODT that ‘no one gives a shit’ (McNeilly, 2014). Commentary also came from University of Auckland’s Sexual Politics Now group, formed by Nicola Gavey and others researching pornography culture in New Zealand. In a post entitled ‘This is what we mean by Rape Culture’ Gavey writes that the interplay between everyday sexism and genuine abuse is able to be seen in this example. In citing ‘appreciation’ the men involved could claim respect and admiration. Yet this is a debased, dehumanising form of ‘respect’ for women. ‘A culture that celebrates the sexual objectification and humiliation of women – which too easily go together – provides fertile

conditions for committing or enjoying other men's committal of sexual violation' (Gavey, 2014). In New Zealand judicial avenues for even the most 'clear cut' of cases of sexual violation are fraught. The digital context has seen lawmakers and enforcers floundering, unable to keep up the new arena in which perpetrators are working, though new legislation such as the Harmful Digital Communications Acts which I will investigate later in this chapter is attempting to remedy this.

Most of the young women affected and young men involved in the RAS fracas were 18 years old or above. I chose to include this example not only because it is a homegrown example that illustrates how far-reaching this issue is, but also because I want to point out that the collision of inequalities, technology and sexuality is something that affects adults as well as adolescents (Crofts & Lee, 2013). There are adults now who cannot remember a time that everyone did not own a smartphone or have access to broadband internet. Issues of non-consensual porn, online harassment, internet dependence/addiction – these are not just issues of youth. Nevertheless, adult anxieties centred on technology and sexuality have been allowed to shape debates (Albury & Crawford, 2012). Young people are rarely given space to contribute. Sexting is framed as an 'issue', a problem to solve to the point where governments (such as the Victorian parliament) conducted inquiries into the practice (Albury & Crawford, 2012). Still, society continues to look for answers that promote technological abstinence, and risk-aversion, rather than implicit understandings of the social space in which sexting occurs. Most sexting does not cause harm and that an emphasis on individual responsibility and even the drive for punitive measures fails to theorise the broader patterns of gender inequality at play.

The 'Roast Busters' Case

The breaking of the 'Roast Busters' case in November 2013 was a pivotal and divisive moment for New Zealand. What came to light was a Facebook page centred around a group of young Auckland men who styled themselves as the 'Roast Busters'. On this page the young men bragged of having sex with young girls who were intoxicated and/or under the age of 16, and at times posted photos and videos to 'prove' it. For the media, this case neatly captured anxieties around wayward youth, police ineptitude, (in)justice, contemporary rape culture (Gavey, 2013), the 'dark side' of social media, and the current state of mass media. As such, a national scandal was born. The story had international reach too, and was picked up by outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *CNN*. Firstly, I would like to echo the comments of *Nelson Mail* journalist Sara Dunn who decries the use of the perpetrators' self-styled shorthand (Dunn, 2013). In a sense, the continued adoption of the term 'Roast Busters' reinforces the boys' 'brand' and speaks to their notoriety

without adequate recognition of the girls they abused. This is complex, especially in light of the lack of consequences the young men in the group faced. It needs to be said that the Roast Busters, beneath all pretence, were a rape club. I choose to emphasise this now, as I will continue to use the title they coined for ease of reference. It is my hope that this title retains none of its grandiose ambitions due to its infamy. This is a case that elicited opinions from people in every sector and within every spectrum, and while the overarching theme was condemnation – exactly what was being condemned was not always as apparent. Nor was exactly what happened in the first place – in part because to protect the girls’ privacy and identities many details could not be released (Malthus, 2014). What emerged was that a group of teenage boys in Auckland had formed a ‘club’ which utilised social media (in particular Facebook and Ask.fm) to post pictures, video and text to boast about their sexual exploits. Many of the girls they bragged about ‘roasting’ were highly intoxicated, often to the point of unconsciousness; these girls were raped and often gang-raped.

The combination of teenagers, drinking, and non-consensual sex is not a new one, yet something about the Roast Busters captured the attention of the public. Nicola Gavey, in her research on the place of pornography, misogyny and rape culture in New Zealand society has written several pieces on and around the Roast Busters case. She writes that ‘something seems different about the narcissistic performative nature of these violations’ - these boys acted with impunity, as though they were not going to get caught and if they did it did not matter (2013). Evidently, they were correct. Gavey believes that what is new here is the use of current and emerging technology a tool of violation, and the implications every technological shift has in a society still structured on gender inequality. Gavey paints the Roast Busters case as an example of contemporary rape culture. In the 21st Century rape culture proliferates and morphs according to the space it inhabits. It is a combination of the old and the new. The internet is a space like any other, it does have emancipatory possibilities as counter cultural space (more on this in Chapter Four) but rape culture and all the other tenets of our unequal society are alive and well in its web. While we understand the internet as ‘public’ we must treat it like any other public space; it appears that all voices are equal in public but the long-standing reality is that they are not (Sills et al., 2016). Emma Jane, writing about what she calls ‘e-bile’ that encompasses harassment, ‘flaming’ and ‘trolling’, suggests that misogyny is everywhere on the internet, and has come to be seen as expected and accepted. ‘Online hostility is getting more prevalent, it is getting uglier, and it has a number of distinctly gendered characteristics’ (2014:p.535).

The Roast Busters’ hostility towards women seemed to have a sort of nonchalant quality to it. It appears the boys involved classed their behaviour as somehow normal. Though the original

Facebook page has been taken down the ask.fm accounts of the two main faces of the group, Beraiah Hales and Joseph Parker, remain online, though not posted in for over a year (ask.fm, 2017). These were used and quoted across many media sources. What is posted there is telling and challenging reading. Ask.fm is formatted so anyone may ask anonymous questions of a person with an account. Most of the questions on the two accounts seem to revolve around ‘roasting’, who was roasted (with many girls named directly), who did the roasting and how to become a roast buster. There are even several references to rape. A sample: ‘Go ahead, Call the cops, They can’t un-rape you’, and question: ‘ew, you know rape isnt even funny :o’, answer: ‘I take my job seriously’ (ask.fm). Another example:

Question: ‘How the fuck do you manage to a girl into roasting, coming from a wannabe roaster. ;p’

Answer: ‘99% of girls that we roast say ‘ew I would never roast I think its yuck’ what you need to know is girls dont mean what they say half the time. you just have to get them in the frame of mind that roasting is nothing major and they will love it blah blah, or you can just take the Down low route and just have 1 get with her normally an once they are doing they thang the other just creeps on over and trys to roast (keeping in mind you both MUST flirt an hit on her prior to this all going down)’ (ask.fm).

Social media is just that – social. Events like these take place in communities, and can only occur at this level with some degree of permission from those around them. The police noted that there was ‘considerable’ social media discussion between Auckland teenagers about this group and their actions. These discussions variously aimed to raise peer awareness of what was going on, sought to find answers of who had been ‘roasted’, and praised the young boys involved. These online exchanges would be later used as evidence (Malthus, 2014). It is doubtful that all involved in these conversations knew or believed that police officers would be privy to their thoughts.

Though Hales and Parker became the public faces of their group, it needs to be said that the police had 30 ‘persons of interest’ in this case, later narrowed down to five suspects. Selfies taken by Hales and Parker often accompany news stories about the case, sometimes with several other young people’s faces blurred. Their faces became familiar, a focus, representative of the case. In one way this can be seen as extending their notoriety. Conversely, Hales and Parker’s images came to embody the disgust that was widely felt. The selfies chosen showed them posing, narcissistic – the epitome of deviant youth, corrupted by sex and technology. According to Emma Blackett (2016) this acts as scapegoating and diverts focus away from the dynamics of domination at play. She submits that ‘the public moral panic about the Roast Busters illustrates how postfeminist discourses protect structural power from interrogation’ (p.46). The young women who were victimised could not be shown or identified, and in this way they can be seen as a footnote in the case. 110 young women were canvassed, 44 re-approached and 25 ‘potential victims’ narrowed down. Five girls

gave initial reports, with none proceeding to the formal complaint stage (Malthus, 2014). Eventually all the cases were closed.

According to the report commissioned by police into 'Operation Clover' the young women had many reasons for not wanting to proceed. These fell under three key themes. The first was confusion around the meaning of consent and their own culpability owing to their engagement in 'risky' behaviours such as underage drinking. The word underage was repeatedly emphasised by the police and the media. I believe this is problematic as it brought more focus on the age of consent rather than the concept of consent. This highlights a continual emphasis of 'appropriateness' (Ringrose & Renold, 2011), decided by qualified speakers (Foucault, 1978). Including age and thereby age-appropriateness is an attempt to locate the young girls in question on a scale of whether they should have been protected, or whether they should have 'known' better. The second reason cited for choosing not to proceed was aversion to further and more formal participation in the police/court process. Third, they worried for their place in social circles, their reputations and further reprisals in the form of bullying or harassment. This point was affirmed and emphasised by the victims themselves (Malthus, 2014:p.8). In an open letter published on the *Stuff* website, one victim said her experience 'ruined her life'. She describes what she came to understand as an abusive controlling relationship with one of the Roast Busters.

About six months ago I was asked if I wanted to press charges but I turned the offer down because by then time had passed and I was finally over it. I knew if I had gone ahead with it then this whole situation would never go away. I didn't have the energy for that (Dennett, 2014).

Victim blame is evident in all of the reasons the young women cited for not proceeding in the justice system. Inasmuch as the Roast Busters scandal brought conversations about rape culture to the fore in New Zealand, so too were we confronted by a torrent of victim blame. Rebecca Stringer (2014) characterises victim blame as a determined move away from seeing victimisation as political, to constructing it as the result of individual choices and shortcomings.

'This way of knowing victimization transforms social vulnerability into personal responsibility, erasing the social foundations of suffering in order to mask rising inequality, and making it seem logical to regard victims of poverty, inequality, discrimination and violence as the authors of their own suffering' (2014:p.9).

In this case, the young women are painted as having made a decision not to proceed with their complaints and although their reasons for this are outlined, they are left unexplored. The responsibility is still clearly with the young women, without reflection on the structures at play that made proceeding impossible for them. It is victim blame by stealth.

Cases like these, say Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell, are portrayed from all angles as issues of

the 'naiveté' of youth and furthermore as lapses in judgement on the part of young women (p.123). Young women, after all this time, are still cast as the 'gatekeepers', as the 'sensible' gender, as needing to identify, manage and avoid risk. Young men on the other hand, according to then Prime Minister John Key, simply need to 'grow up' (Stuff.co.nz, 2013). Yet incidents like this, according to Salter, Crofts and Lee, 'may signal a host of other issues beyond 'adolescent immaturity', including the willingness of boys or young men to use technology and other means to abuse, stalk and harass girls and women' (2013:p.303). These boys and their like do indeed grow up, perhaps some of 30 persons of interest in this case were among the thousands of members on the 'Rack Appreciation Society'. Minimalizing all this as problematic youth behaviour obscures the cultural structures that exist and nourish this behaviour. These ideas are deeply rooted in our social fabric. Though just a representation of a much larger sample, perhaps the most famous example of victim blame discourse was within the conversation between RadioLive presenters John Tamihere, Willie Jackson, and 'Amy' a friend of one of the victims. It quickly became apparent that Amy was most likely a victim herself. Within the short space of this conversation, Jackson and Tamihere called the boys' behaviour 'mischief', said that girls 'shouldn't be drinking anyway' and questioned Amy on her own drinking and sexual behaviours. The pair later apologised for their comments but faced a backlash as sponsors pulled advertising from their show and they were eventually taken off air (Gulliver, 2013).

Almost a year after the Roast Busters story broke in the media, the New Zealand Police announced that no charges would be laid against any of the suspects in the Roast Busters case (Stewart & Dennett, 2014). A core focus of much of the media throughout 2013/14 was around the shortcomings of the police approach. A 2015 Independent Police Conduct Authority Report found that there had been significant failings on the part of the police, especially in the initial stages of their investigation. This is especially apparent in early comments made by police, implying no victim had yet been 'brave enough' to make a formal statement. In reality, there had been four statements made. One of the girls who made a statement further alleged that the police had asked her what she was wearing when she was raped (nzherald.co.nz, 2013). This of course is a question with a history, that reveals the convoluted nature of traditional avenues of State justice for victims of sexual violence as well as the neoliberal finger pointed at the culpability of the abused (Stringer, 2014). Famously, in 2011 a police officer in Toronto's comments implying that women dressing like sluts was the cause of their sexual assaults inspired the Slutwalk movement that protested rape culture and of course victim blame (Pilkington, 2011).

Concepts of justice are readily circulated in public debate – almost all harking back to the police

and court process. The recommendation of State-sanctioned forms of justice fails to conceive of the ways in which the male-dominated State and law have failed to conceptualise gender inequality. As Mackinnon puts it: ‘the state has never protected women’s dignity or bodily integrity. It just says it does. Its protections have been both condescending and unreal’ (p.104). In the case of the Roast Busters, the burden was placed upon the young women to be a part of prosecution, despite what appeared to be overwhelming cyber-evidence. The Roast Busters repeatedly admitted to their behaviour, and their victims made it clear that they could not participate in the justice system without being further traumatised. The case was therefore closed. We must rethink concepts of justice when it comes to sexual violence, technologically facilitated or not, involving youth or not. The evidentiary burden remains upon the abused (Gavey, 2013; McDonald, 2014). It is certain that the lack of consequences for these young men is lamentable, but it must be asked: would branding them as criminals truly mitigate the harm that was done to their victims?

The Roast Busters case had enormous notoriety, but we must not elevate it to the point of isolation. It is but one of many cases. It is an expression of rape culture. Rape culture cannot be addressed without identifying and deconstructing the underpinning inequalities that form its ‘cultural scaffolding’ (Gavey, 2005). In November 2015, two years after the case broke, reports surfaced about a group of young men in New Zealand who had created a Facebook community to share their humiliation of women. Lynley Bilby’s revealing titled *New Zealand Herald* article ‘Warnings for Roast Busters II’ (2015) outlines the actions of these young perpetrators who would ply girls with alcohol until they were unconscious, at which point they would place their penises and testicles on the girls faces and take photos which were later uploaded. It is said that there was a ‘competitive’ element to their posts and the more photographs gathered of young women being ‘tea-bagged’ the greater the respect gained. Lizzie Marvally comments in her blogpost about New Zealand’s rape culture problem: ‘Teenagers wanting to have sex is old news, but sexually assaulting young girls is a mind-boggling leap. You can’t tell me that those young men waving their balls around young girls’ faces were acting out of lust’ (Villainesse.com, 2015). In the end, these boys received a warning and were not prosecuted, not even under the newly created Harmful Digital Communications Act.

The Harmful Digital Communications Act

‘Now I want to consider with you the role of the law in the future of women’s rights. The law alone cannot change our social condition. It can help’ (Mackinnon, 1987:p.26).

Before announcing that a law commission review into the relationship (or lack thereof) between the State and the internet in New Zealand, then Justice Minister Simon Power called cyberspace ‘Wild West’ (Vance, 2010). The State would be attempting to regulate what has been viewed as practically and desirably unregulatable: ‘Legal engagement with the Internet is impeded by the characteristics that make the system such a powerful publication and communication medium: geopolitical fracture, asynchronous remote operation, and universal access’ (Barrett & Strongman, 2012:p.129). Specifically legislating against cybercrime feeds into what Jenna Stokes calls ‘internet exceptionalism’, whereby the internet is perceived as somehow separate from society and thereby impossible to be held to current standards and jurisprudence (2014:p.930). A good example of this lies in the Frequently Asked Questions document for the Harmful Digital Communications Bill: ‘The internet and digital technology provide a forum for a unique form of harassment that is easy to create and distribute and difficult to remove’ (Privacy Commissioner, 2015a). Internet exceptionalism is also observable in the constant reiteration of the dichotomy of the ‘real world’ versus the virtual/digital/cyber world. It is a largely false division, especially in the lives of young people. In the words of Donna Haraway:

‘Throughout the field of meanings constituting science, one of the commonalities concerns the status of any object of knowledge and of related claims about the faithfulness of our accounts to a ‘real world’, no matter how mediated for us and no matter how complex and contradictory these worlds may be’ (1988:p.591).

The discussion that has surrounded revenge porn and other interpersonal cybercrime thus far is often based in legal frameworks, with many attempting to develop or critique methodologies that will allow perpetrators who post images non-consensually to be prosecuted. An interesting aspect to this is the readiness of States around the world to enact legislation to combat revenge pornography where they were resistant to restricting pornography. There are certainly arguments against restricting the internet in any way, qualified by the same ‘freedom of expression/speech/information’ reasoning that shielded pornography. However, protectionist fundamentalism appears to have overcome these arguments, especially as children are framed as most at risk. This has resulted in legislation such as New Zealand’s Harmful Digital Communications Act (HDCA). A distinction to note here is who is producing the content in each case and why it may be easier or more desirable for states to restrict revenge pornography and not pornography. Revenge pornography is the province of ‘deviant’ individuals, pornography is a product of corporations. I use this example not to implicitly argue against such legislation, as I concur with Mackinnon (1987) who suggested that law can help to illegitimate tangible forms of gender inequality (she was speaking of sexual harassment), but a law enacted from within a fraught, unequal justice system cannot constitute a radical solution to issues such as revenge porn.

Seeking juridical solutions reinforces the notion that the New Zealand's legal system is lagging behind only inasmuch as these 'new' crimes were undefined. As such, in 2015 the New Zealand government introduced HDCA, which provides avenues for those experiencing cyberbullying or online harassment to seek reparation. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's 'Consumer Protection' Website breaks down the Act, stating that: 'The test for determining what is a harmful digital communication is whether the communication was designed to cause serious emotional distress. This is also very wide in its scope' (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2015). According to a press release from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner this broad scope was in part designed to combat revenge porn, as before this point the Privacy Act did not cover publication of communications between intimate partners. This is referred to as a 'loophole' which is now closed, as the act prohibits publication of 'highly offensive' images, video or text that. Privacy Commissioner John Edwards is quoted in the release, saying: 'The domestic affairs exemption has been problematic in this context as smartphones and social media have turned everyone into a publisher'. However, he subsequently states that the legal threshold for offensive is high. It remains to be seen how high. The idea of intent to cause distress is a problematic one that burdens victims and narrows this so called broad scope. A perpetrator need only pass their actions off as a joke, or feign misunderstanding of the seriousness and it is up to the defence to prove otherwise (Upperton, 2015:p.21). This has a minimizing affect according to Salter, Crofts and Lee (2013), and paints examples of gendered abuse as little more than 'raging hormones'. Furthermore, they argue that 'criminalisation and responsabilization, both of which either censure or shame the individual, overlook sexting as part of a broader pattern of gendered sexual negotiations' (p.304).

The broad scope of the HDCA can be further seen to be a weakness. Victoria University of Wellington produced a paper in its Alumni series entitled 'Criminalising 'Revenge Porn': Did the Harmful Digital Communications Act Get it Right?' (Upperton, 2015), which concluded that a law specifically written for revenge porn offences was needed that does not ask for the burden of harm, and simply condemns the non-consensual release of intimate images when there was a reasonable expectation of privacy. Privacy and consent however, remain buzzwords in this debate that are discursively ill-defined and ill-understood. Experiences of privacy depend hugely on privilege. In a gendered sense, Mackinnon suggests that privacy has often served to isolate women and hide the realities of their subordination (1987:p.101). Universalising women's experiences is not desirable, but to draw publicly draw parallels can highlight structural and shared inequalities. To bring a case to court is to focus on the merits of one case and several individuals, but rarely to connect such a context to its causes and effects.

Looking at women one at a time rather than as women ensures that it is only the exceptional woman who escapes gender inequality enough to be able to claim she is injured by it. It seems that we already have to be equal before we can complain of inequality (Mackinnon 1987:p.74).

Such a critique holds the state's approach as toothless against the inequalities that are playing out in cyberspace. Governing and regulating the internet is an enormous and convoluted task. The nature of the internet itself means that even in a circumstance where an injunction is reached, the erasure of the images from the internet is certainly not guaranteed. In fact, in some instances attempts to remove the images have fuelled debates around freedom of expression and information that have taken on new meaning in the age of the internet (Calvert, 2015). It is the belief of some that the internet should not be policed or filtered, that by legally requiring the removal of images for the benefit of some, others' rights are being impinged upon. Such arguments are reminiscent of the opposition Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon faced as they sought to create a legal framework (the Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance) for those who had been harmed by pornography to prosecute producers and distributors. Unsuccessful in their ventures, Dworkin and MacKinnon found legislators reluctant to create a precedent which would seem to violate the pornographers' right to freedom of speech (Mackinnon, 1987:p.140).

Dworkin and MacKinnon's work took place in the early 1980s. Fast forward three decades and this debate retains these same hallmarks, but takes place in a very different context. Those who are fighting to get images of themselves removed from the internet understand that it is an almost impossible task. The HDCA has had success in rallying support from search engines such as Google, who can petition to remove content, partly due to their own international efforts to combat cybersexual crimes (Netsafe.org.nz) In The Law Commission's press release 'Law Must Adapt to Combat Harmful Digital Communication' Media Law Professor John Burrowes is quoted as saying:

We endorse the views expressed by Google and Facebook in their submissions that user empowerment, digital citizenship and self-regulatory solutions must be the first line of defence in tackling harmful communication in cyberspace. But there are significant power and information asymmetries in cyberspace which mean not all are able to harness these new technologies to defend themselves from illegitimate attack (2012).

Burrowes argues for individual responsibility in the first instance, yet he also subverts the neoliberalism of such ideas by drawing attention to the inequalities that prevent the ease of 'self-regulation'. Andrea Shaw sees the eclipsing focus on individual responsibility as the dream of the 'civil' internet: 'good neoliberal subjects are ultimately responsible for themselves. They produce content freely and are supposed to be personally responsible for all content they upload. If they reveal too much, they failed at self-regulation' (2014:p.274). In Burrowes' view, those who are less

digitally literate and therefore vulnerable are in need of protection that only the State can provide. This is the panopticon that Foucault wrote about, the assumption of a consistent but unverifiable gaze that prompts one to self-regulate. Those who fail at this task digitally must be subject to further attention, to ensure healthy digital citizenship, and the curtailment of harms.

The HDCA has provisions through which the host sites of 'offensive' images can remain safe and avoid prosecution to incentivise their co-operation with the new legislation. However, the problem remains: even if one manages to compel a site to remove images, the images may have spread to many other locations. Under the HDCA sites who follow a clear complaints process have 48 hours to remove harmful content. 48 hours is a long time on the internet. If there is no complaint however, host sites have no obligations, and while the individual (if they can even be traced) is held as the responsible party, these sites can continue to function with impunity. Conversely, this overemphasis of 'platform liability' serves to shift blame from perpetrators of this form of sexual abuse (Upperton, 2015:p.15). Sites may also have nothing to fear from a New Zealand justice system. This is exceedingly complex legal terrain. It raises the question: is the law the best remedy? It is possible to argue that we are overemphasising this form of 'justice' in lieu of others, and indeed in lieu of prevention. Many of those who argue for internet freedoms are highly sophisticated users of technology. Co-operation is key here, and the combination of victim blame and sympathy for 'freedom of information/expression' is a pernicious one.

It remains that new legislation and new technologies sit alongside old attitudes and enduring issues of injustice for victims/survivors of sexual abuse within legal frameworks. There is a growing number of cases within the courts using the HDCA legislation to seek justice, and successful convictions are on the rise. Yet it remains that we are relying on systems that have historically underserved victims/survivors of any manner of sexual or gender-based crimes (McDonald, 2014). The system itself, as experienced by the young women in the Roast Busters debacle, is often stressful, daunting and deeply flawed. Creating and directing people to legislation as their main avenue of justice means that only those who have access and the wherewithal to participate will be allowed this 'justice'. 'At this interface between law and society, we need to remember that the legitimacy courts give they can also take' (Mackinnon, 1987:p.104). Justice is never guaranteed in the courtroom: a case in which a conviction was not initially secured drew the attention of the media and scrutiny from the social sector when the judge in the case ruled against the plaintiff. This was because, according to Judge Doherty, she had succeeded in showing that the images were intimate in nature and not intended for a wide audience but failed to prove the 'serious emotional distress' that the Act stipulates must be present. The woman's ex-husband, against whom she had a

protection order, had posted photos of her in her underwear on Facebook after repeated threatening to do. She testified to becoming depressed and anxious, but was not deemed distressed 'enough' to prove she had been seriously harmed by the images being posted, and thereby could not meet the standard for prosecution (Brett Kelly, 2017). The Judge stated that 'the intended harm must be more than trivial' and furthermore: 'Being merely upset or annoyed as a consequence of a digital communication would not be sufficient to invoke the sanction of criminal law'.

The case was successfully appealed and will most likely be heard again in front of a new judge (Hill, 2017). Despite this, it is clear that the burden of proof is still on the victim – not only to prove that their perpetrator intended to cause harm or distress, but that they were 'legitimately' harmed or distressed, to a degree that is legally measurable. Mackinnon, a scholar of legal feminism, is supportive of laws which intend to combat issues of gender inequality and yet she contends that even laws that have been pushed for by feminists have failed to understand the ways in which the state and law are themselves a part of women's subordination (1987). The HDCA is the culmination of many people's work and multiple recommendations to pay greater attention to harm in cyberspace. The scope lent to this act comes is so broad that it simply cannot be specific and lacks concepts which address anything more than individual transgressions. The internet exceptionalism that spawned this act obscures the inequalities that have moved from one historical moment to the next.

Mates & Dates

The Accident Compensation Corporation's (ACC) in-school relationship education programme *Mates & Dates* is another reaction to the Roast Busters scandal. Believing the case to be evidence of society's failure to protect and to instil necessary morality in young people, repeated calls were subsequently made for schools to address consent and respect. These calls came from across the spectrum, from the media and the public, Rape Crisis centres, survivor advocate Louise Nicholas (Leask, 2014), academics such as Katie Fitzpatrick from the University of Auckland's faculty of education (Fitzpatrick, 2013), and the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (Moir, 2014). On ACC's website, the aims of the programme are outlined and intend to delineate healthy and healthy relationships, appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and promote strategies to cope with harmful situations. This is framed as a response to research which shows 15-24 year olds as most 'at-risk' of intimate and partner violence and that they experience sexual abuse at high levels: 10% of young men and 20% of young women will experience this and often tell no one (acc.co.nz, 2016). One *Mates & Dates* resource available to secondary schools describes the programme as: 'a best

practice, multi-year programme designed for NZ secondary school students across years 9-13 to promote safe, healthy and respectful relationships' (ACC 2015:p.3). Mates & Dates is not shown to be a direct response to the Roast Busters case. However, the programme was piloted in 2014 and when Operation Clover controversially concluded later that year with no charges laid, Mates & Dates was mentioned multiple times to prove the government was not guilty of inaction (Leask, 2014).

In Chapter One I questioned some of the hallmarks of sexuality education, proposing that many of them are neoliberal (Bay-Cheng, 2017) and furthermore that they are expressions of biopower, intending to control the bodies and capacities of unruly populations – in this case young people. It would seem that Mates & Dates occupies this familiar territory, not only by fitting itself into the mould of the same curriculum that sexuality education does, but by clearly constructing qualified speakers, precise ideas of 'healthy' and thereby creating the unhealthy deviant. With this said, Mates & Dates has formally created space for discussing issues which may have been previously constrained in a school environment. It is a relatively new programme (piloted in 2014), but high-profile government support including full funding has meant high uptake. As of February 2016 over 13,000 young people had participated in the Mates & Dates programme. Considering its infancy and lack of presence so far in New Zealand scholarship, in order to gain a fuller picture I conducted with an interview with Penelope², a Mates & Dates facilitator. I asked Penelope a range of questions around her impressions of the content and her in-class experience as a facilitator.

As I introduced in Chapter One and will revisit in my next chapter, young people's voices represent the most relevant source for understanding the value of education aimed at them (Allen, 2005). These important voices largely go unheard, often due to a lack of forum to be heard but also due to the privileging of adult perspectives and knowledge. The voices of adults who make up governing bodies are privileged above all – from government agencies like ACC and the Ministry of Education, to the individual Boards of Trustees of schools. To evaluate Mates & Dates ACC worked with two consultancy companies and conducted a student (online) survey. 3227 students took part, mostly from years 9 and 10, female and Pakeha. 64 percent of students rated the course as 'good' (Synergia, 2016). The full range of answers is not published in this report, but it is said that 18 percent of students did not rate it as a 'good use of their time' (p.2) Comparisons were made between demographics showing for example, according to the survey results, the course was working well for female students and Māori students but less so for Pasifika. The meaning of

² Name has been changed.

working well in this case is linked to whether the students answered positively to questions about the course, and whether it had changed their views or likelihood of behaving in certain ways. It is clear there are right and wrong answers here. Students were asked about their understandings of gender, consent, and healthy relationship behaviours. They were specifically asked about whether their views around 'healthy' relationships had changed positively, and whether they thought they would change their behaviour positively. In the Mates & Dates facilitator's manual healthy relationships are defined as: 'relationships involving communication, negotiation and consent. They are respectful and positive relationships – from family/whanau relationships and friendships to dating relationships' (ACC, n.d.:p.6). Unhealthy relationships conversely are: 'relationships that involve controlling, harmful or abusive behaviours. Unhealthy relationships are disrespectful and negative and can leave someone feeling sad or afraid' (ACC, n.d.:p.7). It is certain that Mates & Dates aims for modification away from 'unhealthy' behaviours that constitute costly social problems, and this is being communicated to students. Space seems to have been made for students to comment, but only one comment is quoted specifically in the report and it is one that praises the programme (Synergia, 2016:p.3). In the report's conclusion, reference is made to the themes of student suggestions.

'There is a need to ensure that course content is relevant to young people's experiences today and is inclusive of the experiences of different students, particularly male students and the LGBT community. Students also wanted to learn more about safe sex, mental health and alcohol abuse' (p.7).

I asked Penelope about her observations of how the course has been received in her sessions, and she recounted that students had responded especially positively to the gender and sexuality components: "They always get really involved in that and want to ask lots of questions". Yet some students had also found the material repetitive: "They want to be challenged a bit more". She did not elaborate further on what this meant, but it seems that some students within the Mates & Dates programme find the content to be too simple, comprised of knowledge they already have.

As it is in the case of sexuality education, schools opting into Mates & Dates do so by incorporating it into the enactment of the broader health curriculum. This will subject it to the same stipulations and limitations such as the community consultation process, in which the health programme of any school must be agreed to and overseen by parents and whanau from the wider community the school is a part of. The five 50 minute modules that make up the Mates & Dates structure are relatively inflexible and thus this consultation process is unlikely to alter the content of Mates & Dates. Yet while the programme is non-compulsory the community consultation process is very likely to influence whether or not any given school implements it. With this said, during our interview Penelope told me that originally pornography had been a larger feature in the content of

Mates & Dates but that parent intervention had altered this. 'I gather there used to be a bit more about porn in there, but that got taken out because some schools' parents really didn't like that being part of the syllabus. Which is challenging, obviously, because it comes up'. When I asked about this further, she referenced themes that crop up in the anonymous question box:

"It comes up sometimes in the questions, especially among the girls, you know, if it's okay to watch porn and touch themselves. Whereas with guys they're very in touch with their masturbation (laughs) and masturbation habits. Whereas the girls seem a bit uncertain again, going back to what's 'normal', yeah what they think is normal and appropriate".

Penelope highlighted the question box as her favourite aspect of her Mates & Dates sessions. The question box is a literal box where students handwrite on a piece of paper and anonymously submit any questions they may have arising from the content of the session, but general questions about relationships, communication, sexuality, sex, and gender are encouraged. This is done at the end of the session to allow facilitators to review the questions, and they are answered at the start of the next session. Penelope saw this time as when the sessions are "the most real [and] an opportunity for them to really engage with what interests them". LGBT issues crop up frequently in the box, according to Penelope. She observed that at the single sex boys' school she facilitated at many questions in the box were concerned with whether their friends might be gay:

"Almost always in the anonymous questions in the guys' school, someone will ask what to do if their friend might be gay, or sort of like thinking their friend might be gay and they won't admit it, sometimes you know worrying about if their friend checks them out, that kind of thing".

She differentiated this to her experience at an all girls' school, where it was also clear that there were several questioning students within the classes, but a more supportive attitude in general rather than the anxiety expressed by the young men.

As she facilitated sessions, Penelope saw it as part of her role to help deconstruct ideas of 'normal'. According to her, many students asked questions along this line, such as what age it is 'appropriate' to form relationships and participate in different forms of sexuality. This emphasises their desire to have knowledge of normal in order to be normal. Additionally, this reveals the gatekeeper position that facilitators are put when asked to define normal. Penelope remarked upon this herself, when I asked her about what positive possibilities she saw within the programme:

"Well, that's something I often think about as a facilitator. You know, what gives me the right to be telling these teenagers all this stuff, telling them what's right, when you know things are just so different with their generation compared to my generation. So to me, the Mates & Dates programme looks really great compared to anything I had in high school around sexuality education, consent, anything like that, but in a lot of ways I think a lot of it is quite basic information to them and again isn't very challenging".

I wanted to know if there were any indications that technology was playing a preeminent role in young people's relationships and whether Mates & Dates had much to offer to specifically address issues that might arise from relationships facilitated by technology. In some of its role play exercises Mates & Dates includes texting or similar, but Penelope identified this as one of the areas where facilitators may have to add their 'own thing'. She used the example of communication styles that Mates & Dates centralises, that is assertive versus passive aggressive versus aggressive communication. Such discussions and suggestions for 'healthy' assertive communication usually assume in-person conversations, when in practise many young people will save challenging content for conversations on online messengers or via text. Penelope also highlighted a particular example in which many of the anonymous questions featured the theme of bestiality. She surmised that this perhaps had something to do with a viral video or meme that was current that brought up these issues. Penelope observed a generational difference in the way the students were interacting with their technology compared to her now, and her as a teenager. Another anonymous questioner asked whether it was okay to share 'nudes'.

"We tried to sort of break down, you know thinking about why they're doing it, what they get out of it, different things they could try, things to consider, sort of had a discussion just about how it can be - you know sometimes it's just fun just taking pictures of yourself. Maybe you don't need to send that on to someone, you can take them for yourself, or you can take them and show them to your partner in person and still maintain control of where that photo is, it's just on your phone. And they just like looked at me like I was insane when I said that, like they were like 'pfft, why would you do that?'"

These examples show that technology is present and perhaps even integral in young people's lives and relationships and present a compelling case to further examine how to address and acknowledge this. Penelope further revealed that critiquing the media's portrayal of gender and sexuality is a central component of several of the Mates & Dates modules. Yet there is also an implication that Mates & Dates is more concerned with broader issues of respect, consent and 'healthy' relationships. This approach has merits, yet for such issues to resonate with young people they must understand and reflect the context in which young people socialise. I conducted only one interview, intended to supplement the lack of information currently available about Mates & Dates. This interview yielded some very interesting perspectives from Penelope. As Mates & Dates is implemented in more schools and more students take part in programmes, further research will be essential and interviews represent an excellent way to understand the programme from the perspective of those participating in it.

Government interventions can never be objective. Mates & Dates, the Harmful Digital Communications Act, and the police investigation into the Roast Busters case (as well as the investigation into the investigation) are all expressive of state interests and understandings of the

social 'problems' they are intended to remedy. Neoliberalism as expressed through these interventions obscures structural inequalities, inequalities which are maintained through and by the state itself.

Four – Now What?

‘We have to change the world that young people live in rather than treat them as the problem to be fixed’ (Gavey, 2014)

Many feminist scholars and commentators have long seen the classroom as site where we may intervene in young people’s problematic understandings of sex and sexualities. Yet the classroom is similarly held as culpable in the construction and delivery of limiting and essentialising sexual information. The call has echoed for many years now: compulsory sexuality education, expanded sexuality education, more sexuality education!

It is now over 15 years since sexuality education was made compulsory in New Zealand and these calls are no less present and the debate continues in the media. Overall there is more prevalent demand for ‘better’ sexuality education. While a growing faith in the power of sexuality education is observable, the lack of a cohesive sense of what sexuality education currently is or should be makes any calls to make it ‘better’ exceedingly complicated. For many years now, as I have already outlined, sexuality education has been seen as the remedy for ‘curtailing various social problems’ such as teenage pregnancy and high rates of STIs in adolescents (Allen, 2004). Notions of sexuality, and indeed sexuality education shift as the context around them changes (Goode, 2010). As modern ‘problems’ present themselves, the scope of sexuality education is expected to broaden to address these ill-understood ‘modern’ dilemmas. Some examples include: the pervasiveness of pornographic discourse, growing concern for young people’s perceived lack of sexual ethics, and sexuality as it takes place in the digital realm. In an already crowded neoliberal curriculum that is asked to prioritise literacy, numeracy and marketable skills this seems a momentous task.

In this chapter I will evaluate some of the ideas put forth to improve the sexual information we provide to young people, especially in a school context. As always, who is suggesting these improvements and why must be interrogated. Who are the qualified speakers whose voices are being elevated above those affected (Foucault, 1978)? I will look into where sexuality education is now, and suggest what I think the most pertinent foci are and should be going forward. The wider school context must also be examined. As we move further and further towards achievement-focused, skill-based education it is difficult to promote subjects that may have more questions than answers. Many promising ideas around transforming sexuality education require more than just

extra time allocated in the classroom. Rather, these ideas presuppose a radical shake-up of our entire education system. If we are to include notions such as critical media literacy, or discourses of pleasure and desire – how are we to translate these into the achievement demanded by our current state-mandated curriculum?

Another question I wish to pose is whether we are overemphasising state-mandated solutions to problems that young people themselves are working to solve. There has been an observable backlash to events such as the Roast Busters case, and young people are connecting, organising and sharing. When given the opportunity to speak, such as in the Mates & Dates student survey mentioned in Chapter Three (narrow as it was), they ask for broader, more relevant topics that address issues that affect them. They ask to be challenged. In this way, they are asking adults in positions of authority to recognise and respect their subjectivities. As concerns about young peoples' digital engagement are rife it is also possible to observe tangible examples of the unifying and educative power that the internet holds for them. I argue that awareness of complex issues around sex and sexuality is growing in young people. This awareness is by no means universal, though, and there still are many counter examples that support the need to educate on issues of consent and respect. Though I do not wish to make any unequivocal recommendations on how to proceed with sexuality education in New Zealand, I am supportive of approaches that encourage and build skills around questioning norms, pointing out social constructions and critically analysing 'realities'. Yet I do not support the measuring of these skills in a traditional sense – critical thinking is a process that is difficult to assess.

The classroom is a space where we may disseminate information, and I argue that the same is true of the internet. The difference is that currently, for many reasons, the internet does a better job of facilitating the exchange of ideas among young people than teachers do. Emma Blackett believes the internet has a powerful ability to bring together 'voices of discontent' (2016:p.44). Certainly, its presence has removed some barriers and emphasised others. We can connect geographically with those we may never have been able to before, but similarly those who are socioeconomically deprived are presented with yet another unequally accessible aspect of life. Certainly, the more time we spend debating the medium of the message the less time we have to devote to the much more important content. Yet it seems strange that we are so concerned about the harmful information that can be found within the internet's fathomless depths but we cannot entertain the notion that there may also be positive, useful information in accessible existence. What is so compelling about the 'harmful' information found online that it appears to eclipse all else? The digital sphere could hold the key to the future of sexuality education, or even just be a part of it. One can learn endless skills

from the internet, and skills and knowledges around sexuality are not exempt from this. Surely not, when so much has been said about what is ‘learned’ from pornography.

Sexy sexuality education

Michelle Fine’s 1988 article ‘Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire’ portrays the historical lack of attention paid to discussions of pleasure and desire in a sexuality education context. Fine states:

‘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).

Desire has been a primary concern of much of the feminist literature on this subject since. Fine and McClelland’s piece ‘Sexuality Education and Desire: Still Missing after All These Years’, written almost two decades after Fine’s landmark essay, outlines that although young women’s sexuality has become more visible in forum such as music videos, advertising campaigns and across social media, it is still largely absent in the classroom. They show this by analysing the federally funded presence of abstinence-only education in North American schools. In his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault asks: ‘Are prohibition, censorship, and denial truly the forms through which power is exercised in a general way, if not in every society, most certainly in our own?’ (1978:p.10). The shift away from denial and prohibition of sex in the classroom has brought us to a point where very specific ways of knowing and behaving are made paramount, but we should see this as no less restrictive or prescriptive.

Throughout sexuality education literature there are multiple calls for positive depictions and promotions of sexuality to be centralised in sexuality education. Mellanby, Newcombe, Rees and Tripp, for example, refute understandings that positively depicting sexuality will ‘encourage’ sexual behaviour. Sex is part of most people’s lives, they say, and even if the young people within the sexuality education classroom are not currently they ‘will hope for long and positive sexual relationships in their adult lives. The prime aim of any sex education should be to make such an outcome more likely for a greater number of individuals’ (2001:p.491). Despite the authors’ invocation of sex-positive notions, the above quote positions positive sexual relationships as something individuals desire in their ‘adult lives’. I counter that sexually active young people are desiring and deserving of the same. However, as with any other component of the sexuality education curriculum, the inclusion of dialectics of pleasure must be interrogated.

Investigations into sexuality education often consider whether programmes incite young people to ‘delay’ the timing of their first sexual encounter (for example Kirby et al., 2007). The fight for the inclusion of pleasure and erotics in classrooms is often backgrounded on these same aims. Suggestions that ‘sex-positive’ sexuality education may delay age of first intercourse are often held up as successes, such as in the case of the Netherlands which has famed sexuality education and young people who engage in sexual activity later, are less likely to experience teen pregnancy and less like to contract STIs (Weaver, Smith & Kippax, 2005). If pleasure is enacted in pedagogy only in the service of ‘healthy’ outcomes in terms of sexual practise, then it represents another discourse enacted in service of biopower. This is complex terrain: ‘binding pleasure to political aims such as social/sexual justice saddles it with normalising and regulatory practices’ (Allen & Carmody, 2012:p.45). Whether abstinence or pleasure is emphasised, the ultimate aim remains to modify and direct the sexual behaviour of young people – or more accurately, to instruct them on how they may modify their own behaviour. I do not wish to suggest that there is no merit in helping young people to avoid infections that cause discomfort and pain, or unwanted pregnancies, and certainly there is much anecdotal evidence to suggest many sexuality education programmes offer little more than this information. However, Foucault theorised the school as a key disciplinary site in which biopower operates to control its young at-risk population and the health curriculum is put in place to aid in the production of risk-averse subjects. Within a neoliberal curriculum it is extraordinarily difficult to overcome such a reality, and if we are to transcend this it will require radical intervention to re-evaluate the way health is viewed and measured in an educational context.

At school students’ corporeality is often tightly regulated too, which communicates its own messages about how sexuality and students’ bodies are viewed in a school context. In my time at a single sex girls’ school sock length, skirt length, nail colour, piercing presence and hair colour were all monitored and regulated, along with many other aspects of appearance. Our assistant principal, a man in his late 50s, announced to senior assembly he would not hesitate to separate young women and young men who were getting ‘too familiar’ at the Winter formal. Later, when I moved to a co-educational school and no longer was required to wear a uniform, all the young women in year 13 were called together on three separate occasions to discuss the inappropriateness of showing cleavage. Louisa Allen states that: ‘A school’s sexual culture pertains to those discursive practices which constitute and demarcate the sexual in educational institutions’ (2009:p.443). Through regulation of what is ‘inappropriate’ and ‘appropriate’ schools clearly construct what is sexual. Further, Allen outlines rules similar to those I described above such as the ‘5 cm rule’ which requires students to stay 5 cm apart at all times, discouraging physical contact. This blanket ban was

enacted to eradicate unwanted or ‘inappropriate’ touching that implicated students and teachers, allegedly aiming to protect girls from boys’ advances, and teachers from girls’ false allegations through such regulation. This move supports the separation of the rational mind from the unruly body, which casts it as a contemporary expression of Foucault’s concept of biopower. Rational minds that overcome the unruly body are less likely to become a burden on the state – uneducated, distracted by the carnal. Students’ sexualities, associated as they are with the body, are thereby cast as ‘unruly’ and problematic (Allen, 2009). Rules such as these are the norm in New Zealand schools, and any sexuality education programme that takes place in schools that govern their students’ bodies and sexualities in this way will be stunted as a result. Any examination of sexuality education is incomplete if the surrounding environment, its disciplinary practises and ideological tenets, are not taken into consideration.

Louisa Allen has written in support of inclusion of pleasure, desire and erotics in the sexuality education classroom. Her calls echo those of feminists such as Fine who came before her and were well supported by Allen’s extensive empirical research with teenagers attending New Zealand high schools. In her 2008 article ‘“They think you shouldn’t be having sex anyway”: Young people’s suggestions for improving sexuality education content’, Allen contends that young participants’ responses ‘positioned them as sexual subjects with the right to sexual knowledge that will support their engagement in relationships that are physically and emotionally pleasurable’ (p.576). A majority of the young people Allen interviewed identified that a key concern for them was how to make sex pleasurable for both partners, and this is information that was missing from sexuality education (2008). In 2012, Allen produced two articles, one written in conjunction with Moira Carmody, reflecting on the efficacy and practicability of calls for pleasure discourse in sexuality education (Allen & Carmody, 2012). A number of shortfalls of this approach are highlighted in these articles. These shortfalls include producing a pleasure imperative whereby pleasure is expected and failure is felt if it is not achieved. There is also an automatic equation of pleasure with positivity that fails to account for those who unwillingly experience sexual ‘pleasure’ in cases of assault and abuse (2012). She also points out the feminist beginnings of this discussion suffer accordingly with some of the typical failings of feminism – gender equity is privileged while issues of social class, race and sexuality are rendered invisible. In spite of this, Allen and Carmody still see pleasure’s potential and show that young people guided much of this research focus. They saw sexuality education as irrelevant to them as it took place ‘de-eroticised’ within a hyper erotic culture. Pleasure, write Allen and Carmody, has the possibility to offer young people a way to view themselves imbued with sexual subjectivity. Without this, understanding oneself as part of wider communities of gender and sexuality is difficult. Moreover, within sexuality education a

combination of pleasurable and ethical ideologies represents a ‘counter discourse to education based on fear and pathology. Caring for the self and considering the impact of your desires and wants on the other require a process of dynamic mutual negotiation and reflection’ (2012:p.462).

Learning from and about Pornography

Partially behind the call for pleasure and erotics in sexuality education is a fear of young people’s relationship with pornography (Allen, 2012). As I explored earlier in this thesis, pornography is complex in nature and difficult to pin down in a theoretical sense. It is hard to refute that for young people seeking these things depictions of pleasure and erotics can be found in pornography, yet as Allen argues the usefulness of these depictions is limited: ‘it is unlikely to be helpful in enabling young people to experience sexual activity in mutually negotiated and pleasurable ways.

Mainstream pornography is based on a fantasy where partners are always willing, always easily pleased and have ‘normative’ bodies that work as expected’ (2012:p.460). Incorporating discussions of pornography into sexuality education is necessarily predicated by understandings of the multiple reasons why young people consume pornography. Though much is said of pornography as education and what young people learn from it (Crabbe & Corlett, 2010; Flood, 2009), surely a major reason to watch pornography is for pleasure. Associated as it is with masturbation and sexual gratification, it would be to remiss to separate pornography from pleasure. In a society that has not settled debates around sex and sexuality’s presence in the classroom, suggestions to educate about pornography are controversial. Much of the literature contends that there is a dearth of reliable information about the effects of pornography (Crabbe & Corlett, 2010) and yet is overwhelmingly referred to in the media as a ‘problem’, and fraught with ‘dangers’ which needs to be solved. These calls therefore come from theory, anecdote and experience and are often imbued with emotion. The scholarship that does exist in this area is often empirical research done with students and teachers that highlights the want and perceived need to include pornography into classroom discourse (Ollis, 2016; Allen, 2006). Other research is broadly concerned with the ‘information’ that young people glean from pornography. In an examination into the online pornography use of young Australian men Michael Flood suggests that pornography communicates misogynistic ideas that can enforce and encourage violence towards women (2009). Flood’s are not contemporary ideas of course, these mirror the contentions of Andrea Dworkin (1981) writing in a very different context, nearly three decades earlier:

‘pornography is the orchestrated destruction of women’s bodies and souls; rape, battery, incest, and prostitution animate it; dehumanization and sadism characterize it; it is war on women, serial assaults on dignity, identity, and human worth; it is tyranny’ (p.xxvii).

The language that is used in discussions linking pornography and young people is an insight into views that seem collectively pessimistic. Young people are ‘exposed’ to pornography as if it was radiation. Building pornography education on this pedigree immediately disempowers young people and constructs their sexualities as passive in the face of pornography and its horrors. Perhaps this reflects the powerlessness adult parents and educators feel when considering the pervasiveness of pornography. Historical methods of censorship are ineffective in our internet age (Graham, 2017) and the skills of young ‘digital natives’ (Stokes 2010) often surpass those of their parents who would seek to mediate what they are ‘exposed’ to. If pornography is constructed as a problem then a search for a solution is necessarily created. Former New Zealand Minister of Education Hekia Parata suggested that talking to young people about pornography is foremost a family responsibility, but that the curriculum and sexuality education guidelines give schools the scope to include discussions of pornography in the classroom (Graham, 2017). Evidence tells us that sexuality education is crowded, complex and at times inadequate, therefore asking schools to include further material is no simple task. Yet Debbie Ollis asks if school-based sexuality education ‘not going to provide accurate information that enables young people to see and explore what equitable, inclusive, consensual, pleasurable sex looks like then where do they get it?’ (2016:p.52). In a 2017 episode of RNZ National’s *Insight* series entitled ‘Online porn – the new sex ed teacher’ Karl le Quesne from the Ministry of Education is interviewed and criticises the overemphasis on schools’ responsibility. He argues that ‘schools are ‘being seen as the silver bullet to address the world’s ills’ and that there are increasing demands on their time and resources. At the same time, some call for expanded sexuality education inclusive of pornography literacy, others appeal for financial literacy, expanded knowledge of New Zealand history and a greater presence of food and nutrition information (Graham, 2017).

The implementation of pornography education brings manifold challenges. In the first instance, it is illegal for people under the age of 18 to view pornography and certainly for people over the age of 18 to show or supply pornographic images, therefore in a classroom environment it impossible to show this content and it must only be spoken of in abstract. Pornography education in schools will therefore never allow for ‘close readings of actual explicit texts nor allows for direct discussions of specific texts’ (Albury, 2014:p.176). Any classroom discussion must simply rely on descriptions where students or teachers must ‘out’ themselves as consumers of pornography. Yet how can we be sure we are all on ‘the same page’? What is pornography to one, is erotica to another, is nothing to another (Dines, 2010). I am interested in radical ideas, and showing pornography in a classroom is one such notion. If students and teachers could respond to the same text, as they do in English class, what might happen?

On top of the many other constraints preventing pornography education from utilising pornography texts, even those voices that support pornography education usually speak from a standpoint that aims for ‘critical disengagement’ from pornography (Albury, 2014). This reflects undertones of preferable abstinence in wider sexuality education beneath ostensibly egalitarian and liberal goals. These undertones do not escape the notice of young people (Allen, 2008). Kath Albury points out a further dilemma: amongst the concern for what young people learn from pornography there is an overarching assumption that heterosexual men and boys are the ‘students of pornography’ (2014). Not only does this obscure the experiences of young women and non-binary young people, it further promotes the construction of their sexual subjectivities as passive versus the active sexualities of young men. Additionally, as this assumption permeates the research sphere we are deprived of vital knowledge around young women and non-binary young people’s experiences of pornography.

Kath Albury also offers us the possibilities that pornography education could have in the right environment.

‘In an ideal educational setting, porn literacy education might permit a dialogue that offers the opportunity for educators to learn more about young people’s sexual cultures, and for both teachers and learners to extend their knowledge and understanding of the intersections between mediated representation and lived experiences of sex, sexuality, and gender’ (2014:p.176).

Pornography education is most often built around promoting ideas of critical media literacy. The aim of teaching critical media literacy is to provide space in which young people can question the images they see and separate ‘fact’ from ‘fiction’ to gain perspective on these texts. Marie Crabbe and David Corlett have developed resources for schools and teachers on this topic and they suggest it equips students to contextualise pornography and consider the related concepts of consent, gender, inequality, sexism (2010:p.5). Debbie Ollis (2016) surveyed a number of Australian students who had taken part in exercises designed by Crabbe and Corlett, particularly an exercise entitled ‘Porn World vs. Real World’ which encourages participants to categorise sexual scenarios as stemming from the ‘real’ or the porn world. There was a positive response from many of the students to whom the logical, comparative, and hands-on nature of the exercise appealed to. Students could practically relate to it in terms of their experience and work together to problem solve the scenarios that were less easy to categorise. In a situation like this though, it still seems as if a right and wrong answer is built into the exercise. In this case, students may know what the ‘right’ answer is without reflection on what that means for them in terms of their sexuality or sexual practise (Albury, 2014).

When many other spheres of life construct pornography as normal, fun and fantasy, notions that have an undertone of distaste will always be competing. We must take care not to demonise pornography, says Ollis (2016), and show that what is negative and positive about sexuality can be closely linked. The ideologies and aims underpinning what pornography education and critical literacy should be are not fixed. Yet without a reprioritisation of young people's voices as the most important in discussions of their own sexual wants, needs and confusion, adult discomfort will continue to dictate understanding.

Critical adolescent subjectivities

There are emancipatory possibilities in greater space for conversations about young peoples' lived experiences of gender and sexuality, but these must be precluded by the understanding and respect of them as sexual subjects. Such a notion can contravene reductive, fear-based knowledge and information (Allen & Carmody, 2012:p.462). In this section, I argue that young people are already doing the questioning that they are largely thought incapable of.

'Child' and 'adult' are socially constructed categories. This is observable through the shifting of these categories over time and place (Robinson & Davies, 2008). 'Adolescent' then is the middle way between the two, no less constructed but seemingly less defined. No longer child, but not yet adult – both and neither, 'preliminary' (Foucault, 1978). Speaking of 'teenagers' Nicki Thorogood tells us that these between years are socially 'allocated as the space for notoriously wild and socially deviant behaviour, it is also the space most in need of policing' (2000:p.429). Sue Scott, Stevi Jackson and Kathryn Backett-Milburn describe the contradictions inherent in the consideration of children and sex, and many of their considerations are also applicable to the lives of adolescents. This in part is because of a prevailing view that only an adult can be considered a full subject, casting children and adolescents aside as 'other' and as adults-in-waiting. The result of this is a blatant disregard for the gravity of the immediate lived experiences and knowledges of children and adolescents (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn, 1998). Rather, adults are understood by society as 'gatekeepers'. Crucial in the construction of categories is a comprehending their perceived relationship with risk. For adults taking risks is often viewed positively, risks to children are to be mediated and minimised, this leaves adolescents straddling that dividing line where they are both at risk and 'risky' (Bond, 2010). Emma Bond strives for a greater critique of concepts of childhood and adolescence, that casts aside developmental essentialism. She believes the sexual subjectivities of young people have been ignored amongst these ideas and a discourse of protectionism has been allowed to proliferate. Adolescents, it seems, are not only in need of protection outside forces such

as the ‘dangers’ of pornography, but also from themselves. Laina Bay-Cheng tells us that the combined social understanding of the concepts of adolescents and sex ‘drive’ promote a moral panic which necessitates mediation. She states that this ‘succeeds in giving inevitable and natural cause for adult intervention and surveillance’ (2003:p.62). Bay-Cheng highlights that framing sexuality education as a ‘need’ also positions it as a disciplinary force, intentionally or not.

As it currently stands under law, schools, teachers, principals, boards of trustees', parents and the wider community have the opportunity to contribute to what should and should not be included in their schools' health education classrooms. Gill Mullinar outlines what 'high quality' sexuality education is: ‘to deliver this effectively, schools need a clear policy developed within a framework of values and in consultation with children and young people, parents and carers and professionals from the wider community’ (2007:p.75). Mullinar's ideas are reflected in many ways by the consultation process that takes place in New Zealand. However, this process often misses out ‘children and young people’. Many schools do make allowances for student contribution by asking them what they want to know beforehand and conducting opinion polls and similar after a program has concluded (ERO, 2007). Unlike community consultation though, this is not required by law and seems to be often no more than a formality. To change this requires a skewing of perspective which would see students become not only a part, but the most important part of the consultation process. ‘If we are to empower young people to act in ways that support their sexual health and wellbeing, then measures of programme success must be designed to acknowledge young people’s sexual agency’ (Allen, 2005:p.390). Simple as this may seem, giving students equal or even greater representation in order to get their voices heard incites one of the very things that makes sexuality education so controversial: a latent uneasiness surrounding matters of adolescent sexuality. Yet failure to acknowledge students this way unavoidably positions sexuality education as risk management.

While we see adolescents as preliminary, their agency and voices are largely rendered invisible across a multitude of issues and especially in the realm of sex and sexuality. Scott and Jackson remark that:

‘children and sex are seen as antithetical, both being defined as special and bracketed from the ‘real’ world. Thus there is little focus on becoming sexual as a process; rather it is seen as a matter of leaping a chasm between ‘innocence’ and ‘knowledge’ (2004:p.235).

This reference to separation from the ‘real’ world is reminiscent of the false dichotomies which suggest the internet is similarly divided from the tenets of reality (Stokes, 2010). Yet as we communicate, bank, order food, buy clothes and find entertainment on the internet – it cannot be

demarcated from reality. Some scholars, including John Krejsler, reject denouncing the dangers of the internet in favour of understanding its power as a conductor of knowledge for young people. Krejsler contends that the internet helps to build individual subjectivities. Furthermore, in a digital age, schools are no longer able to ‘monopolise’ the education of young people and must adapt to ‘accept the challenge of individualization and the explosive proliferation of knowledge’ that the internet brings forth (2004:p.490). Emma Bond (2010) similarly argues that modern technologies, in particular mobile phones, allow young people to experiment with sexual and gender identities and relationships. She equates them with the bike sheds of the past, a proverbial meeting place where information is shared, relationships blossom and break, and sexuality is explored. This analogy evokes the idea of past sexual subjectivities that have continued to the present and simply adapted to inhabit new space.

Resistance and... hope?

‘The enclosure of school is under siege. Learning that is organized in accordance with military principles of hierarchy, obedience and discipline increasingly dissipates into more volatile forms. Computers and the Internet threaten to distribute knowledge and learning from the authorized enclosures of school to a virtual ubiquitous space’ (Krejsler, 2004:p.495).

In Chapter Two I used the case of Emma Holten releasing her own nude images as a response to revenge porn to illustrate the possibility and presence of resistance to harmful norms in our society. The emphasis on demands for the government to address the ills of adolescent sexuality/cybersexuality serves to obscure the grassroots resistance which is taking place in New Zealand whereby young people are advocating for themselves both online and on the streets. There are a multitude of ways in which we can observe this resistance, and in this section I will explore several examples that can serve as a counterpoint to narratives which consistently paint a pessimistic picture of young peoples’ lived realities. Understanding perspective is important when considering resistance, as what is considered a pushback by some may be problematised by others. A prolific example of this is the act of taking a selfie, especially a naked or semi-clothed selfie, and posting this to an online forum such as Tumblr or Instagram. This act is frequently construed as narcissistic, especially participated in by a young person. Furthermore, it is an act associated with many types of risk: risk from predators, risk to reputation, risk to future job prospects, the list goes on. Young people and young women face an enormous amount of pressure to be sexual, and are often sexualised by society whether they choose this or not, erotic self-shooting can be seen partly a response to this. Taking a selfie is a way to present oneself as one wishes to be seen, and at times to

broaden the conversation on who and what ‘should’ be seen (Tiidenberg, 2014). For young people who are consistently excluded from discussions that position them somewhere between nonsexual and hypersexual, taking an erotic selfie could be part of taking back a portion of the agency consistently denied them. Whether absent in the sexuality education classroom or even in pornography, for young people who find their bodies less visible in a sexual context, such as those who have fat bodies, intersexed bodies, non-white bodies, non-able bodies, erotic selfie-taking is a doubly transgressive act.

There is a growing awareness of online harassment, particularly as several notorious cases have played out in the media depicting far-reaching consequences for the victims, overwhelmingly women. In a 2014 case dubbed ‘gamergate’, an independent game designer Zoe Quinn was the target of a vast campaign of ‘e-bile’ (Jane, 2014) after her former boyfriend wrote a blog post in which he outlined alleged infidelities and included accusations of her sleeping with powerful men to secure distribution and positive reviews for her work. What followed was thousands of messages from strangers in which Quinn was abused and threatened with rape and murder. Her personal details including her address were published (a practise called ‘doxxing’) and she was forced to leave her home (Wingfield, 2014). Many of the women from her industry who spoke up in support of Quinn faced similar consequences. This is not an isolated incident. A further representative example of the consequences of online harassment is the 2012 suicide of 15 year-old Audrie Pott. Pott was sexually assaulted at a party, and images of the assault surfaced online. She was sent abusive messages by many of her classmates who had seen the photos and was met with denial when she confronted the boys who abused her. She committed suicide only days later (Audrie & Daisy, 2016). Audrie Pott’s story is but one of a great many similar. I highlight these examples to show that there is much to resist. As we begin to understand that the internet is the site of abuse for many young women, we can also understand it simultaneously the site of their resistance to this abuse. Online harassment is both a mirror to the inequalities of the ‘real world’, and expressive of a forum where such inequalities adapt and thrive due to the inherent discourses of freedom of expression and anonymity running through cyberspace.

Fairleigh Gilmour and Laura Vitis outline many forms of resistance to gender inequality, including feminist hashtag rallying cries, filming and posting examples of street harassment and the publication of perpetrators’ names on social media (Gilmour & Vitis, in press). The authors centralise the example of Anna Gensler, who illustrates and shares unflattering nude sketches of men who harass her on Tinder and *OKCupid*. Gensler’s unique strategy of returning objectification has meant she subsequently receives further abuse that include threats to rape and/or kill her.

According to Gilmour and Vitis, Gensler has created community and ‘demonstrates that young women are capable of identifying and appropriating the cultural signs, symbols and language of the Internet, to navigate their own way through the challenges of harassment’ (p.12). The use of humour to combat harassment and as a technique of resistance is powerful in that it allows the problem to be illuminated and satirised, its insidiousness realised as its ridiculousness is emphasised. Many examples of humour highlighting sexual and gendered inequalities exist, from webcomics to hashtag witticisms, however these exist in amongst memes such as ‘rape sloth’ (pictures of sloths overlaid with language of rape) that simply add to the context which is being rebelled against. Despite the admirability of the actions of young women who use online forum to resist harassment and inequality, we must be critical of the neoliberal idea that resistance is an individual responsibility, rather than an issue belonging to society (Jane, 2016; Gilmour & Vitis, 2016). Emma Jane writes about feminist ‘digilantism’ and praises feminist activism in online spaces. Despite this, Jane sees digilantism as only a small part of the resistance necessary and redundant if it is in undertaken in isolation from other forms of activism. She states that such resistance must be in conjunction with ‘the sorts of hard advocacy, political organization and collectivist approaches used by second-wave feminists in their campaigns against rape, domestic violence and workplace sexual harassment’ (2016:p.291).

It is entirely possible to observe young people’s participation in the kinds of organisation that Jane is speaking of. In New Zealand, In the wake of the Roast Busters investigation, young feminists were integral in organising demonstrations and a petition sent to the Prime Minister’s office (Sills et al., 2016). Feminist societies in high schools are becoming more common, with growing membership lists and tangible activism taking place. The presence of societies like these in schools perhaps say something about what is missing from the classroom; these are spaces where students can question tightly held notions of gender and sexuality, and discuss the realities in which they find themselves which so often ring false or unfair. Emma Blackett’s 2016 piece ‘I’m allowed to be angry’: Students resist postfeminist education in Aotearoa/New Zealand’ discusses her time with ‘FeminEast’, a feminist group at Wellington East Girls’ College. The young women and supervising teachers who make up FeminEast meet weekly and use social media to react and respond to current issues of feminist interest in New Zealand, and generally to question and problematise hegemonic power structures. The structure is reminiscent of second wave feminists’ consciousness-raising efforts, often convened around dinner tables. This belies arguments that suggest high school feminist groups are popular only because feminism is ‘in’, and will soon surely go ‘out’ once again. There are measurable, tangible inequalities at play for these young people, and feminism provides a lens through which to view, critique and understand them. A lens perhaps unavailable to them in

other contexts. Blackett sees *FeminEast* as part of response to New Zealand's projected egalitarian image which does not invite critical discussion of injustice and inequality, she believes that this benign projection 'creates a tense and restless grief for the nation's failure to measure up to its ideal self – and this grief can actually provoke us to object to said injustice' (p.42).

In Sum

'Concern' for young people is ever present. It would seem that with every subsequent generation it becomes a little more 'risky' to be an adolescent. Yet there is little evidence that supports this pervasive notion. I believe there is far more that proves that we are raising generations with access to infinite information and knowledge, who will be far better placed to gain early nuanced understandings of injustice and inequality. To support young people, our foremost concern should be to listen to them, respect their agency as subjects, and furthermore as sexual subjects. Infinite information means little without context and critique, and without lenses through which to interpret 'facts'. There are many who believe that formalised education can be the key to helping young people navigate a cyber/sexual minefield, and perhaps it can, but first we must ask in education: who speaks, what are they saying and why?

Adolescence and sexuality are socially constructed, deliberately so. 'Sexuality, and more specifically physiological sexual maturity, is culturally considered the rigid defining boundary between childhood and adulthood' (Robinson & Davies, 2008:p.225). Young people are seen as risky, and at risk – in need of protection from their unruly selves and deviant others. There are manifold interventions that are enacted to bring about this protection, and produce docile adolescent bodies, that privilege body above mind, and avoid becoming a burden to the state (Foucault, 1978). Pleasure discussions, abstinence promotion, school rules, consent construction, pornography literacy – when such ideologies are promoted in service of 'health' a right and a wrong is clearly delineated. The healthy student who makes the right choices has a shadow – the unhealthy student who gets it wrong.

Conclusion

It had been my intention to use my final chapter to provide some recommendations for future sexuality education practise and research based upon some insights from my research. As I neared my submission date I felt far less certain of this than I did when I started, fresh as I was from governance positions in organisations that revere the power of comprehensive sexuality education. It is an oxymoronic state I am sure many researchers are all too familiar with – the more I know the less I know. Nevertheless, this thesis has contributed to the understanding of a constantly evolving digital context and the young generation who engages with it. I have done this by drawing together many threads to paint a fuller picture of the contradictory world young people are expected to navigate. When our attention is captured by cases such as that of the Roast Busters, sexuality education's failures and its necessity are simultaneously called upon. Yet the links here, which do exist, are rarely interrogated further. This topic must continue to have up to date research contributed it, as its evolution is constant.

What I have learned is that writing about a topic in flux means you are never truly done. In the course of this research the Ministry of Education's Education Review Office announced that they were once again reviewing sexuality education. The first few cases were prosecuted (and appealed) under the Harmful Digital Communications Act. Perhaps most striking were two events that occurred in early March 2017, very near to my submission date. The stories unfolded in the media within one day of each other. In one case, two female teachers at a private boys' school in Upper Hutt were sexually harassed by four year 9 students. The boys filmed and photographed the teachers inappropriately, and posted the images to Instagram. The boys were suspended, and weeks later both teachers subsequently resigned. In the second case, two students from Wellington Boys' College posted on Facebook, one writing 'if you don't take advantage of a drunk girl, you're not a true WC boy', the other replying 'fuck women'. Again, we see a clash of rape culture, technology and young people, and again, the response highlights the way society understands these things. Wellington College Principal Roger Moses used the words 'appalled' and 'disgusted' in relation to the Facebook posts. He lamented the lack of control the school has over the digital realm, even when it tries to communicate the 'right messages' when they have a degree of influence over the boys' time and attention. Moses said that while online 'idiotic' boys can be overcome by 'bravado' (The Wireless, 2017). This carries an implication that either the boys did not mean what they said,

or that they lost control. Either way, it is a deflection of responsibility that neglects to delve further into why young men may lose control or say things they do not mean in cyberspace. I could not find any reflection upon whether the hyper-masculine cultures encouraged by single-sex boys' schools may have contributed to these events in any way. A local single-sex boys school in Dunedin bears the slogan across its gates: 'Building Men for Life'. The question is – what do they think a man is? Do they imagine that a school culture is impervious to broader culture? These two recent cases gave me pause to think about single sex schooling in New Zealand, its undisturbed segregation, and its enshrined place in our educational structures. School cultures contribute much to collective understandings of young people's sexualities, but the particularities of single sex school cultures and are rarely debated. They should be.

The media freely published stories discussing what occurred at the two Wellington schools, and there were many references to the cases as examples of 'rape culture'. At Wellington College, the two boys who made the Facebook comments were suspended, barred from sport and cultural competitions and had leadership responsibilities taken away from them. They were also tasked with writing personal apologies that were made public. One of the boys admitted he had 'learned a lot over the past week' (RNZ, 2017). The school took broader action too, and called in the Sex Abuse Prevention Network as well as Wellington Rape Crisis to speak to their students (The Wireless, 2017). While the boys' comments are an example of a rape culture that predates the internet, the entire sequence of events was possible only because of the internet. The boys posted on social media and the comments were seen by many. The media became aware and published the comments further. The school, having been implicated, was forced into 'damage control' mode. In the past, such matters may have been hushed up - or at the very least dealt with less visibly – but the internet has put eyes on individuals and institutions alike. This raises the question: how would this have been different if the media had not published the story? Would Wellington College governance take the matter quite so 'seriously' if it had not become a public one? How would this have been different if the boys had made their comments offhand in the hallway, and not sent them into cyberspace?

As with Hales and Parker in the case of the Roast Busters, there is an element of scapegoating here. Over 70 people 'liked' the comment 'if you don't take advantage of a drunk girl, you're not a true WC boy'. It is the approval of others that allows this behaviour, both in word and deed, and we as a society still search for the 'bad eggs' rather than reflect upon the permissiveness that creates rape culture. I understand this. While I completed this thesis I spent a year with a Rape Crisis collective and heard stories of women abused by men in ways that I could not have imagined. It affected me,

and it caused the Roast Busters section of Chapter Three to be very challenging to research and write. I was angry at the boys who faced no consequences, who said things that physically disgusted me on their online profiles. I felt nothing but compassion for the anonymous girls, footnotes in their own experiences, blamed and maligned. This is what I have to focus on, the blame that excuses us from conversations that are difficult. Misdirection covers up a justice system that doles out injustice to survivors of sexual abuse and rapes them a second time (McDonald, 2014). It is easy to be angry at those men in particular, and to view them as monsters, but it is not helpful. It is time to think about the 70 people who 'like' rape culture, rather than only the one who rapes.

What transpired at Wellington College inspired a protest march, organised by high school students from around Wellington. After the protest was moved from outside Wellington College due to threats of violence, hundreds of young people turned up to the steps of parliament, holding signs and yelling slogans – sharing their dissenting voices and pushing back against rape culture. Some held signs that asked for consent education to be compulsory in all schools (Dooney, 2017). This call was rejected by former Minister of Education Hekia Parata who stressed that such education belongs within the family (RNZ, 2017). In this example, we can see young people organising, sharing their voices, and demanding more from the gatekeepers who make decisions for them. They shouted about what they want, and wrote what they need and I am sure they have more to say. We should listen.

I use these examples to show that we are still having these conversations, and we will continue to have them because we must. I am sure there will be many cultural, technological and social shifts ahead, but to focus on change may mean we lose sight of what remains unchanged, including social inequalities around gender, class, and race. Feminism proliferates on the internet, but so too does neoliberalism. Digital footprints mean that what we say and do echoes for longer than it ever did, and this causes ideas of accountability to shift. Less and less can occur behind the closed doors that technology has opened. People will find communities that they could have never previously accessed – all kinds of people, from LGBT individuals, to those who have rare diseases, to Neo-Nazis. Technology, young people and sexuality will continue to combine and sometimes collide. Pornography will continue to exist, though it will adapt and change as it always has. We can fill in the gaps by disrupting monolithic anxieties about youth and sex, and build understandings that contextualise experience. Ideas of healthy, and normal separate and isolate people and have long histories of doing so which are rarely reflected upon. Let us always ask what is said, and who speaks.

Account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions

and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said (Foucault, 1978:p.11).

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