Education from sexual pleasure workshops with self-defining women: a commentary

Rachael Eastham[a] and Ali Hanbury[b]

[a]*Division of Health Research, Lancaster University, UK;* [b]*The Proud Trust, Manchester, UK*

*Corresponding author Rachael Eastham. Email: r.eastham1@lancaster.ac.uk

Abstract

In this commentary, we reflect critically on the experience of delivering community based sexual pleasure workshops for self-defining women in order to share lessons from our practice with others working in sex and sexualities education in higher education or in practice settings. Our discussion about facilitating these workshops in informal learning spaces contributes to the literature about pleasure inclusive sex and sexualities education. Specifically, it highlights the demand for spaces within which women can think critically about sexuality and pleasure, and shares women's perspectives on these workshops. We begin by addressing the context in which we delivered the sexual pleasure workshops and describe what we did and why. Next, we share reflections on what we have learned from delivering these workshops; before concluding with suggestions about what this may mean for pleasure inclusive sex and sexualities education more broadly.

Keywords – sexual pleasure, informal education, risk, workshops, women

Introduction

An enthusiasm for scholarship and feminist activism pertaining to women, sex and pleasure has developed between ourselves as authors since meeting in a sexual health services environment in 2008 (Hanbury and Eastham 2016). Most recently, we have collaborated on the delivery of women's sexual pleasure workshops in England and Scotland. In this paper we reflect critically on our experience with this initiative and to share lessons that contribute to the literature about pleasure inclusive sex and sexualities education[1] for others working in the academic field or in a practice setting. We begin by describing the context within which we delivered our sexual pleasure workshops and explaining what we do and why; before sharing what we have learned from the experience. We conclude with our recommendations about what this might mean for pleasure inclusive sex and sexualities education more generally. Throughout the commentary we draw on existing scholarship and resources to strengthen our contribution, which also reflects the 'academic-activist' nature of our project.

Workshop context and format

Our workshops were developed to be informal collaborative learning spaces from a foundation of professional Relationships and Sex education (RSE)[2] for young people, devised by author, Ali Hanbury. In this 'syllabus', sexual pleasure was an important component congruent with the suggestion that its inclusion can provide a meaningful contribution to education, more likely to improve sexual health outcomes (Higgins and Hirsch 2007; Hirst 2012; Philpott et al. 2006; Ingham 2005; Ingham 2013). Following this, through our recognition of the demand for sex and sexualities education across a broader range of settings and ages, we have aimed to host workshops in community spaces that facilitate women's own exploration of sexual pleasure.

To date, the typical schools based and 'youth' focused orientation of RSE has been identified to unhelpfully infer that 'adults' do not need support with their sexual health and sexuality (Nodulman 2016) – we agree this is unhelpful. Indeed, the comparative paucity of resources and information about sexuality and pleasure directed at adults, i.e. those over the age of 25 in UK policy terms, suggests a transition from the sexual incompetence and risk taking of a young person, to safe (i.e. risk free) and proficient sex in adulthood. While young people generally and teenage pregnancy continue to be major preoccupations for public health, burgeoning statistics about the increase in abortion and STI rates amongst older adults i.e. the over 35s and over 50s respectively, undermine assumptions that 'grown-ups' are able to navigate their sexual health and sexuality any better (FPA 2010; Crown Copyright 2018).

Arguably, pleasure is acknowledged as a facet of comprehensive relationship and sex education in the UK, more than ever before (see, e.g., FPA 2018; Pound et al. 2017; SEF 2018). In the media, advertisements for Lovehoney, the online adult store, which describes itself as 'the pleasure people' are increasingly common on UK television despite being positioned as controversial (see, e.g., Young 2018) and critiqued as problematic for various reasons (see, e.g., Ashton, McDonald and Kirkman 2017; Downing 2013). The bestselling popularity of the books and films of the 50 Shades of Grey series with its associated merchandise (lubricants,

[1] Our preferred term is 'sex and sexualities education' by which we refer to informal education addressing different types of sex, for people of diverse sexual orientations and genders

[2] When we refer to Relationship and Sex Education (RSE), we mean a formal, schools-based approach delivered within the education system in the UK.

vibrators etc.) and the conversations inspired by its content - about period sex and female ejaculation - represents a level of mainstreaming women's sex and pleasure that, according to conversations with the participants in our workshops, has been valuable.

Ultimately however, available sex and sexualities education, for whatever audience, is dominated by an emphasis on risk and individual behaviours, and depictions of women as sexual agents are limited. Any associated sexual pleasure, orgasm and masturbation continue to be perceived as outrageous and are responded to socially with discomfort (Tolman 2002). Media representations are also woefully heteronormative with prescriptive notions of penis/vagina penetration, unhelpful binaries and reductive orgasm imperatives continuing to define what constitutes 'sex' (Barker, Gill and Harvey 2018). These normative representations continue despite decades of critical scholarship, activism and much lived experience to the contrary. Women's pleasure is often portrayed as a state of transformative (orgasmic) rapture provided to a woman as a benevolent gift by a sexually proficient (assumed) male partner. It is within this context that we deliver sexual pleasure workshops using a constantly evolving model that has been shaped to date, as follows.

First, the workshops do not use a formal education or coaching approach. We explicitly position ourselves as knowledgeable facilitators and guide a collaborative exploration of women's sexual pleasure through critical conversation about lived experience and sex/pleasure 'in theory.' Rather than educators or (s)experts who will offer instruction. Our key 'lesson' is that pleasure can be whatever we want it to be, on our own terms, and that there is no 'right and wrong.' Next, the workshops are open to all self-defining women[3] over the age of 16 years - to foster a sense that the opportunity to learn is valuable at any age. We aim to support open discussion that is inclusive of the fluidity of gender diversity, gender expression, sexual orientation and sexuality whilst being accessible and avoiding ableist assumptions about sex and pleasure, or about bodies. For this reason, along with our efforts to avoid reinforcing any biological imperative and purely physiological conceptualisations of sex and pleasure – we try to avoid activities that focus exclusively on specific body parts and/or (female) genitalia.

We are also committed to being economically inclusive. The marketing of sex toys for women, access to related media (see, e.g., OMG YES at https://start.omgyes.com/) and participation in many other sexual pleasure events such as those delivered through adult shops (Nodulman 2016) or, in the USA, by the legendary 'godmother' of sexual pleasure workshops, Betty Dodson (see https://dodsonandross.com/), demands significant financial resources, exclusionary for many. As such, opportunities for women to explore sexual pleasure are mediated by their socioeconomic position. We situate ourselves as activists and not entrepreneurs with regards to delivering sexual pleasure workshops and therefore have mostly run sessions without requesting fees that participants can attend for free (having only claimed minimal expenses where possible from event organisers). Where event or conference organisers make a charge for participation there has been tiered ticketing and, if possible, bursary places; and any fee offered for our delivery has been equitable across the other event facilitators.

These 'values' have informed the delivery of all our sessions to date. In the workshops, often provided as part of a wider series of events such as feminist or sex(ualities) festivals and

[3] We use an inclusive definition of 'woman' and 'female' and welcome trans women, cis women, genderqueer women, and non-binary people who are significantly female/woman-identified.

arts events[4], we have worked with approaching 150 women, in intimate groups of up to 25. Ages have ranged from 14 years old (brought by her mother) to 65 years old. The workshops typically involve 2-3 hours of activities, facilitated by both the authors, which are designed to explore sexualities and pleasure by providing an opportunity for attendees to share their own experiences, learn from others and familiarise themselves with communicating about sex and experimenting with sexual vocabulary. See Table 1 for some examples of our workshop activities and their purpose.

Consistent with our efforts to be economically inclusive, we deliver activities related to DIY sex toys and pleasure enhancers. Drawing on the publication of a non-commerical homemade magazine (known as a 'zine') that depicts women's preferences for masturbating with everyday domestic items that are available at no/low cost (Crow nd), we encourage an exploration of the ways that objects may be (safely) appropriated for this reason. Some of our sex toys can be made from scratch – we have a particularly fine example of a flogger and a sex harness both made from the defunct inner tubes of a bicycle. This exercise allows us to talk about masturbation and to legitimate *any* way that people may wish to seek pleasure, especially when this does not resemble the commodified world of retail sex and pleasure products (Martin 2016; Wood 2017).

Table 1 – Example sexual pleasure workshop activities

Activity	Aim	How to	Outcome
Society says (20 mins)	Introductory activity to gently start a critical conversation about how women's sex and pleasure is portrayed in the mainstream (media).	Display 4-6 media headlines and images from mainstream media outlets Invite participants to read, and each to select one of interest. Ask participants to introduce themselves, share their pronoun, and comment on their interest in the headline.	Participants develop a sexual lexicon and start to talk critically about sex, bodies, relationships and pleasure without having to speak from personal experience.
Match maker (20/30 mins)	To critically consider the sex toy/aid market whilst building confidence in using sexual words.	Shuffle and hand out the flash cards. Half include a description of a sex toy/aid and half are the corresponding images. Participants move around the room talking to others to find the 'perfect match.' Reconvene as a large group for a discussion about their perceptions, preferences and so on, inviting volunteers to read out each sex toy/aid description.	Participants think critically about the cost, exclusivity, branding and assumptions inherent in the examples (e.g. penis shapes) whilst interacting with each other and speaking using more explicit language (their own or that on the sex toy description).

[4] Some examples include: https://lgbt.foundation/womenswstakeover http://prev.wellcomecollection.org/sexologyseason and https://hopemilltheatre.co.uk/events/men-chase-women-choose/

DIY Sex Toys (30/40 mins)	To explore everyday items and how they could be used to enhance pleasure and sensuality in order to inspire participants to broaden their view on who owns, and what counts, as pleasure.	Inspired by WANK Zine (Crow nd) and the accounts of how different women masturbate. A practical, hands-on activity using household items such as: hair brush, underwear, remote controls, mobile phones, balls, string etc. Discuss and explore what the items are and how they could be used to contribute to sexual pleasure. Some sessions involve a 'lucky dip' of items from a bag where a volunteer selects one for the group to discuss and pass round; others have involved the group 'making' their own sex toys using objects/condoms etc.	Participants acquire a broader understanding of pleasure and get an opportunity to touch and discuss objects (both 'intended' sex toys/aids and otherwise) whilst rejecting normative ideas of what is 'acceptable' sexual pleasure.
Science Says, We Say	To 're-write' Masters and Johnson's (1966) Human Sexual Response Cycle to include thoughts, feelings, wider sensuality and to reject the assumptions inherent in the original including about orgasm.	A facilitator talks through the original model. Participants in 4 small groups are invited to 're-write' each of the four cycle stages in their own words (feelings, sensations, exclamations etc.). The groups pass the cycle stage on to the next until all have contributed to each. The four rewritten stages are then brought together to be discussed and celebrated by the group as a whole.	Participants assert their ownership of what pleasure is to them, over the biophysiological/scientific version through the opportunity to contribute their own descriptions of their sexually pleasurable experiences.

Critical reflections on the workshop experience

We consider our own workshop experience in relation to relevant published literature in order to provide a robust contribution to the field. However, despite the increasing tendency to mention pleasure in 'formal' RSE resources in the UK, existing academic literature about initiatives related to sexual pleasure or those that exist *outside* of the education sector are relatively limited. A recent publication (Wood et al. 2018) from Pleasure Project practitioners – a UK-based initiative aiming to raise the profile of pleasure in sex and sexualities education – has been helpful in writing this commentary. Through this empirical research, Wood et al. (2018) present a critical consideration of the 'pleasure imperative.' They report findings concerning the practical challenges of becoming a 'pleasure inclusive' sex and sexualities educator whilst avoiding the assumption or insistence that sex be pleasurable. In the USA,

research about sexual pleasure workshops delivered by an adult store, Good Vibrations (Nodulman 2016), has also offered a helpful point of comparison to our sexual pleasure workshops which we draw on throughout this commentary. Most pertinent to these findings, it is clear from the age range of our participants and the feedback we have received, that sex and sexualities education and programmes at any age, in the mainstream UK context, rarely exists without the aim of reducing negative health outcomes.

The following discussion informed both by our observations during workshops and by feedback received after the sessions from anonymous written and face-to-face evaluation. Overwhelmingly, attendees have enjoyed and valued their participation with most calling for 'more' - more sessions, and more time during the sessions: 'could be an all-day workshop' (Workshop Evaluation 2019); and more sessions specific to different aspects of sex and pleasure such as masturbation, lubrication, period sex. The opportunity for women to share, celebrate and 'teach' each other face-to-face, has consistently been appreciated: 'It's so refreshing to be in the company of other women talking so openly and honestly about their sexual pleasure, I certainly want more!' (Workshop Evaluation 2018), and 'a fantastic resource for women no matter how open you think you are – thank you' (Workshop Evaluation 2019). Frequently, participants have suggested the sessions should also be run in schools and, in the current absence of that possibility one woman brought her teenage daughter and they participated together. Consistent with existing critique of the typical 'youth orientation' of much sex and sexualities education (Nodulman 2016), participants have also frequently expressed the need for adult sex and sexualities education, with many perceiving they have been disadvantaged by the experience of poor-quality RSE at school.

We are cognisant however, that attendees have mostly been a self-selecting group, with the majority of women identifying themselves as 'generally open about sex.'[5] On one occasion of note, a nervous attendee accompanying a more confident friend admitted to a lifelong embarrassment about discussing sex. She grew bolder throughout the workshop and at the end celebrated with the group how she had for the first time said the words 'penetration, masturbation and ejaculation' out loud. Although it was wonderful to see this woman so pleased with her development, this example is not typical and most participants are usually relatively confident from the outset. Furthermore, despite making efforts to be economically inclusive, 'accessibility' is about much more than money and participation in our sessions is mediated by many other factors. Although we do not monitor participants' demographic characteristics, the fact that to date the majority of workshops have been delivered through arts festivals, queer events, feminist festivals and so on, means that other than confidence with expression around sex, participants likely share similar (advantageous) class status, educational backgrounds, (white) ethnicity and so on. In the same way that wider experiences related to sex such as contraception use and unintended pregnancy are shaped by social inequality, the pursuit of sexual pleasure (and the space to host it), is a class-based experience contingent on relative power and social legitimacy to participate/host in the first instance.

These observations about 'confidence' and the (presumed) social class of the majority of participants resonate with theorisations about sexual consumption as discussed by Wood in a book about research with women on sex shopping (2017); whereby a desirable neoliberal subject position is achieved at least in part through dedicated work to acquire 'sexual consumer knowledge' (sexual proficiency, products and so on), albeit contingent on the "right

[5] Determined through the feedback evaluations completed at the end of each workshop session.

kind of taste and sophistication" (53). Laurie Penny also asserts that the 'self' may be understood as an 'entrepreneurial project' in which "the body is just human capital, a set of resources – whether the brain, the breasts or the biceps – which can be put to work generating an income stream. This affects everyone – but women most of all." (Penny 2014, 3)

Through this entrepreneurial work on the self, one is rewarded with both good (i.e. orgasmic) sex *and* intelligibility as a neoliberal subject. Such female sexual consumption has been argued to have depoliticised the second wave feminist goals of autonomy, shame resistance and rights (to pleasure), meaning that such aims have been 'emptied of their political status and [become] exclusively an issue of individual choice, particularly the right of individual, white, middle class women to choose how to enact their (hetero)sexuality through lifestyle and consumption (Henry 2004 cited in Wood 2017, 51).

Our workshops therefore are part of the neoliberal landscape of female sexual consumption by dint of the context in which we operate – the neoliberal UK. However contrary to being empty and apolitical, reinforcing individualistic cis-heterosexual sexual consumerism, we consider that both our approach (e.g. DIY sex toys) and the participants approach and demographics, have largely challenged these norms. The majority of the workshops have brought together women who are (already) critical, often activists and non-conforming in terms of their sexual identity, gender identity and expression, relationship practices and so on, who learn and explore collaboratively (ourselves included). When we refer to 'confidence' therefore, we refer not to success in postfeminist (sexual) neoliberal subject terms but to, for example, a power and self-assuredness that facilitates critical discussion about (marginalised) sexual and relationship practices among a group of strangers[6]; practices that typically are *not* the neoliberal 'right kind.' Many participants have mentioned their involvement in activism, sexual health or the education sector, or as part of a kink scene, as a way to explain their confidence articulating their desires and experiences with sex and pleasure. Arguably, their participation functions as a demonstration of resistance - a collective challenge to neoliberal values specifically the notion of 'what counts' as sex and pleasure- rather than a display of (consumer) conformity.

Notwithstanding the undeniable sexual literacy among the majority of the attendees, we have however observed the impact of the normative expectations they experience on their sexual lives. Thus, although very able to talk through their preferences in the safety of the workshop, there has been a recognition that negotiating desires in the 'everyday' can be more challenging, especially during partnered sex. Participants' accounts of the presumptions made about their sexual identity, their gender identity, their bodies and their practices have helped us to understand how there is still a long way to go to achieve a respectful and equal space for women where they can feel safely entitled to the experience of sex and pleasure that they desire. Indeed, our DIY sex toy activity and its emphasis on (solo or partnered) masturbation, has been appreciated for encouraging and celebrating an economically inclusive 'however you like it' version of sex and pleasure: 'I like the focus on making sex toys, and sex toys being more accessible. I like that I am leaving feeling it's okay to want and own the toys I have' (Workshop Evaluation, 2016).

The workshops have also stimulated reflections that align with wider theorisations about sexual health. Specifically, they have been notable for the critical questions they raise about the relationship with sex/ualities and 'risk.' As mentioned earlier, typical approaches

[6] For example pony play, electro-sex, consensual non-monogamy.

to sex and sexualities education and health are risk centred with an emphasis on individuals taking responsibility to manage these risks. The links between 'risk taking' and pleasure have been long established (Lupton and Tulloch 2002; Higgins, Hirsch and Trussell 2008), including how, for some, pleasure is facilitated during sex through minimisation of risks for example risk of pregnancy (Higgins and Hirsch 2008). In our conversations during the workshop it is often difficult to remain *pleasure* centred. Frequently the discussion digresses to risks both social – rejection, shame, fear; and physical – infections, pregnancy, violence, and so on.

Thinking through the cultural importance of risk whilst reflecting on the ways in which it becomes insinuated into our pleasure workshops, has allowed us to hone our understanding of the interrelationship between risk and pleasure. Where some scholars have addressed concerns about the reinforcement of a 'pleasure imperative' (e.g. Wood et al. 2018), and others including ourselves have addressed the 'pleasure deficit' (Hanbury and Eastham 2016; Higgins and Hirsch 2007) our practice in these workshops has provided insight into the reality of working with this risk/pleasure complexity. Specifically, it has signalled how a meaningful approach needs to avoid polarising risk and pleasure. This caution against polarisation has been highlighted elsewhere in related discussions for example regarding 'safe' or 'unsafe' sex (Naisteter and Sitron 2010), 'pleasure and danger' (Cameron -Lewis and Allen 2013), or 'sex positive and sex negative' approaches (Downing 2013) and we agree that a more 'sophisticated' approach to these aspects of sex, and others, are needed. Our practice and experience has re-affirmed the need to avoid this unhelpful dichotomisation, while illuminating how difficult this is to deliver 'appropriately' i.e. via a pleasure-centred workshop cognisant of risk. Of course, running a 'sexual *pleasure'* workshop signals the focus of our activity from the outset and on each occasion the specific needs and interests of the attendees vary. However, with hindsight using a starting point that conceptualises, and thus anticipates, the inclusion of risk as a facet of pleasure, not as distinct from it, may have better prepared us as facilitators. In summary, our own experience with risk in pleasure settings, supports further the inclusion of pleasure in sex and sexualities education. As risk and pleasure are so deeply enmeshed, they are impossible to separate.

We acknowledge that labelling workshops as sexual pleasure arguably reinforce the pleasure imperative. Therefore, we make our sex critical position clear at the start of each workshop and stress that we do not approach sexual pleasure and associated experiences such as orgasm and masturbation as 'expected,' 'best' or 'desirable', and we resist any notions that these things denote sexual proficiency. The mode of exploring the topic is also important here in avoiding any pleasure imperative. Namely we seek to 'use pleasure critically' (Wood et al. 2018, 4) and do not consider orgasm as a shorthand for pleasure, or orientate the sessions in any way as a blueprint on how to achieve sexual pleasure/orgasm etc. Instead, we encourage participants to bring and explore their own conceptualisation of pleasure in a way that does not rely on personal disclosure. We do this by using activities and prompts that encourage participants to consider pleasure as not contingent on the genitals, instead to focus on the whole body, paying attention to the seven senses as well as their wider social environments in which they conduct intimate relationships. This approach means that sexual pleasure can be discussed in these workshops as theoretically as a participant may decide and indeed, as part of a wider social justice orientation. Whilst our starting point for sex and sexualities education is pleasure inclusive, we strive to challenge the idea that pleasure is a fixed, universal and necessary experience, and encourage others to do the same.

Finally, we introduce and comment on 'desexualisation,' a term we borrow from sexual/reproductive health-based literature which refers to the "shaming of sex for pleasure"

and/or "reinforcing of the norm that sex should be for procreation" (Burkstrand-Reid 2013, 223). We also acknowledge Nodulman's (2016) observation of efforts to "desexualise" (657) the Good Vibration's stores and their sexual pleasure workshops, even displaying signage to communicate expectations about the attendees' (de)sexual conduct expected within their spaces. Ultimately, we use 'desexualisation' here to mean the ways that the sexual pleasure is shamed or absent from an interaction or a space especially when that setting lends itself to the specific address of sex. Previously we have noted how desexualisation may be part of the explanation for why the impacts of contraception on sexual pleasure may be overlooked (Hanbury and Eastham 2016). In the contraceptive consultation sex, albeit the central prerequisite for using contraception, is rarely mentioned whilst clinical suitability, and drug/device guidelines dominate.

So, although the theme of our workshops may be sexual pleasure, the intention is not to arouse but to discuss and explore the topic in the abstract. The spaces for the workshops are neutral-community based venues for hire- gallery spaces etc.; and the activities are discursive not practical, physical or sensual although we do encourage a hands-on approach to the resources and artefacts. However, in an echo of an example from Good Vibrations workshops (Nodulman 2016), on occasion we have sometimes noticed participants become excited by the discussion of an activity in a way that appears unsuitable for the setting. In these situations, we have made gentle requests to reduce the 'sexual' behaviour and have steered the discussion/activity so as to reduce the (sexual) energy. Of course, this is understandable having created a space for all women, of all sexual orientations, to discuss ultimately, what they find sexually arousing. Indeed, we stress within the workshops that we do not approach sexual pleasure as a purely biological or physiological response (see, for example, the 'Science says, we say' example in Table 1) – characteristic of much existing sex and sexualities education (Cameron-Lewis and Allen 2013). Our efforts to create a safer space within groups who are largely strangers to each other, makes this an important balance to achieve sensitively.

However, this experience and the reflection on our expectations about conduct within the workshops has highlighted an uncomfortable paradox; one in which there exists through our own design, a space for exploration of sexual pleasure (the workshop) but where we expect there to be a suspension of lived sexuality and pleasure. Thus, we showcase a model of sexuality that is holistic 'in theory'; but creates or at the very least reinforces, a mind/body dualism when we ask participants to bring along their sexual 'mind' for the discussion, but leave their sexual body outside. As practitioners/scholars who typically seek to avoid perpetuating this disconnect and aim instead to work within a more embracing and comprehensive framework, this sits uncomfortably. On the other hand, this desexualisation also feels appropriate for our attempts to create the safest space within which to deliver workshops for all participants. This demonstrates another way in which the sexual pleasure workshops involve a tension that is inherent in pleasure inclusive sex and sexualities education.

Concluding remarks

Our experience running women's sexual pleasure workshops to date has been extremely rewarding. We have not positioned the sessions as a space for women to 'learn' and we do not evaluate participants' knowledge. However, attendees have overwhelmingly expressed their enjoyment and appreciation and highlighted the need for more community based,

informal spaces outside of the education sector within which women's sexual pleasure can be celebrated and legitimated. Here, we take the opportunity to make some practical suggestions for taking a pleasure centred approach in sex and sexualities education, whatever the setting:

- Ensure the inclusion of a clear introduction to manage expectations, e.g. no-one has to share, we are all experts in our own lives so how we experience our bodies, sexuality and our relationships is valid and will be included.
- Ask people to use the words/names they use to describe genitalia, body parts and sexual acts, broadening the use of language, often paraphrasing and repeating participants' input in affirmative ways using neutral (e.g. non-gendered) language.
- Use contemporary media stories as a way to identify norms, stereotypes and biases, critiquing the assumptions and re-writing narratives.
- Use prompts that allow people to 'borrow' sexual language and engage with sexual pleasure theoretically, whilst creating opportunities to share personal experiences for those who would like to.
- Respond in the affirmative with discussions, especially ones that are new or participants are hesitant about.
- Avoid 'taking sides' when participants disagree about a topic. Use appreciative enquiry to gain a deeper insight and to allow for broader opinions and values to be voiced.
- Create activities that explore risk, pleasure and 'normativity' on various axes to highlight and legitimate the complexity of the relationship between risk and pleasure.
- With regards to boundaries and de/sexualisation – aim to address boundaries in the introduction, acknowledge directly the possibilities for arousal and highlight the need for safety and comfort for all. Use humour and playful-ness to challenge 'impropriety' if/when necessary.

It is clear therefore that is a desire for these workshops. Despite not advertising or promoting them ourselves and having (to date) no social media presence, word of mouth and existing networks have led us to be invited regularly to offer workshops. We have highlighted how the women who attend tend to be a 'self-selecting group.' However, one recent event marked a shift from those who typically attend our 'stand-alone' workshops and provided us with a point of reflection on who attends and who we aim to serve best. With over twice as many participants as 'usual' eager to be accommodated at this particular drop-in session, we experienced a 'different' more 'mainstream' participant group with different priorities and a different 'starting point' for engagement. This experience helped us develop our thoughts about the nature of the demand for sex and sexualities education, and reminded us of the more normative assumptions and experience with sex and pleasure for women outside of the 'self-selecting group' that characterise our typical attendees.

Whilst we are keen to diversify, we are clear that as two white, cisgender, able-bodied women our experiences and identity will affect participants' decisions whether to attend, in the same way our own expression, marketing (or lack thereof) and approach has shaped who has participated to date. In striving to broaden our inclusivity and work best with different audiences we review our workshop descriptions, activities and biographies whilst maintaining transparency. Our research and practice is also constantly evolving, most significantly with, and because of, our participants.

We are most confident about the benefit of the lessons we have learned for ourselves from our workshops and participants - as individuals, as facilitators and as scholars; lessons we feel have given us a more sophisticated understanding of the risk/pleasure dynamic in practice and the tensions that may arise due to the possibility of reinforcing the mind/body dualism by being compelled to 'desexualise' our workshop spaces. These insights have made us more sensitive to the challenges for sex and sexuality educators especially those who work in formal practice settings (e.g. school-based education) with less freedom than we experience as activists not entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, focussing specifically on pleasure as we have done, in contrast to the tenacious risk-centred focus of typical education initiatives, has convinced us further of the need to be pleasure inclusive in sex and sexualities education. Until then, the job remains only half done.

Acknowledgments

We thank all the participants who have taken part in one of the workshops for their generosity of time and humour, and for sharing their thoughts, feelings and experiences. We also thank the attendees at a seminar series presentation in the School of Sociology at The Australian National University, Canberra in 2018 for their valuable insights into this topic. Finally, we thank the individuals and organisations who have approached and supported us to host these workshops over the last few years.

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