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Making sex, moving difference

An ethnography of sexuality and diversity in Dutch schools

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Chapter 4

What else can sex education do?

Abstract

Comprehensive sex education (CSE) has been heralded as the right way to do sex education. It is informed by theory, and supported by evidence. To think sex education outside these intervention logics, this chapter asks: What else can sex education do? Three ethnographic cases from secondary schools in the Netherlands trouble the separations that CSE relies on, namely those between the present and the future, between learning and doing, and between the individual adolescent and the collective peer group. The analysis shows that sex education is a collective practice that does not (only) affect the future health of individuals, but brings about other effects, such as that of race, gender and popularity.

Introduction

In 2015, the 19th edition of the Dutch conference Sexuality*HIV*STD took place. It was a festive one: the school-based sex education program *Long Live Love* had existed for 25 years. In the closing plenary, researchers gave four-minute speeches to an audience of sex educators, public health professionals, researchers, and some pupils of a school that just won the 'Long Live Love Award'.³⁵ The academics shared one recommendation of their study for sex education practice. The first speaker focused on the importance of policymakers to structurally embed sex education on the municipal level, and the second speaker recommended schools support teachers in the implementation of sex education.

The speakers in the plenary session did not focus on the content of sex education, reflecting a general consensus in the Netherlands about what constitutes good sex education. After having established throughout more than 25 years of research what good sex education is, characterized by the terms 'comprehensive' and 'evidence-based', the next challenge seems to be guaranteeing that it reaches everyone and is delivered properly. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) has been described as 'one of the most important tools to ensure that young people have the information they need to make healthy and informed choices' (Parker, Wellings, & Lazarus, 2009, p. 227) and through CSE, young people 'can be enabled to make decisions by themselves' (Braeken & Cardinal, 2008, p. 57). CSE is understood to be a progressive, liberal version of sex education that realistically prepares youth for becoming sexually active in the future – in a healthy way.

In the plenary on sex education, I reluctantly accepted the invitation to become the third speaker, slightly uncomfortable taking on the role as academic expert. Nevertheless, I recommended careful attending to the social effects of sex education. Practitioners and pupils evaluated the three recommendations in a discussion on stage.³⁶ Although my call was

³⁵ Awarded to the school that, according to the jury of experts, provided the best sex education the previous year

³⁶ Assessing which of these academics was able to convince the audience of the importance of their findings

recognized as important, some regarded it as vague and hard to translate to practice. It was difficult to make clear what exactly a careful attending to the social effects of sexuality could entail – because of the time limitation but also because the logics of sex education and the appropriate terms for evaluation seem fixed. Words such as health outcome and behavioural determinant, theory, evidence and practice, figure in a widely accepted logic of sex education which did not fit my ethnographic observations.

These sex education intervention logics hold that adolescence is the main stage of sexual development. Herein, adolescents are negatively influenced by silence about sexuality (on the side of parents), by peers, the Internet and media more generally, and hormones (that cause changes in body and brain). To curb these influences, and to keep adolescents healthy and safe, sex education focuses on making rational individuals that can talk openly about sex, know its scientific facts and have the social skills to act upon this knowledge (Schaalma et al., 2004). Sexual activities – that they will engage in during a later stage of their lives and that will take place in the privacy of a bedroom – will, as a result of the intervention that is sex education, be safe and therefore pleasurable.

To reach this goal of healthy sexuality, youth are provided with sex education. A scientific, evidence-based approach is advocated, steering away from the explicitly moral messages of abstinence-only education (Lamb, 2013; Rasmussen, 2012). During its 25 years of existence, several studies have indicated the Dutch sex education program *Long Live Love* ‘works’; that is, it increases the intention among youth to have safe sex (Schaalma et al., 1996; Van Empelen, 2013). Therefore, it is listed as an intervention with a ‘strong indication of effectiveness’ in the database for effective youth interventions (Meijer, 2014).³⁷ Since establishing the effectiveness, the content of the program is no longer studied extensively, but the research focuses on implementation (Schutte et al., 2014), a shift that also occurred during the conference.

A second strand of sex education research, which is less prominent in the Netherlands but important internationally, critiques these logics,

³⁷ The label ‘evidence-based’ is awarded after ‘two studies of good quality’ (preferably experimental design) deliver proof, and is rarely given out (Zwicker et al., 2015).

highlighting the individualistic approach to sexuality it relies on, which comes at the cost of a lack of attention to power differences, sexual agency and sexual pleasure (among others: Bay-Cheng, 2003; Holland et al., 2004). Pointing at the ways in which sexuality intersects with issues of gender, class/education, ethnicity and race, studies have uncovered values and norms that might implicitly be communicated in sexuality education. They deconstruct hegemonic gender structures (Sanjakdar et al., 2015) and racialised knowledges (Bredstrom, 2005) that shape sex education curricula, uncover 'hidden lessons' of the curriculum (Fields, 2008), or 'make visible' how heterosexual structures influence classroom interaction (Ryan, 2016). Studies doing so often rely on an analysis of sex education material or classroom interactions, and look into representations of sexuality and performances of gender. Sometimes the perspective of pupils is elucidated to find out how they evaluate sex education or how to improve it (Allen, 2005b).

There has not been much crossover between these two strands of sex education research: they operate in different realms of knowledge production. A notable exception is the issue of pleasure. Since Michelle Fine's seminal article on the missing discourse of desire (Fine, 1988), a large number of studies has focused on and argued for the inclusion of pleasure in sex education (see for example the edited volume *The Politics of Pleasure*, Allen et al., 2014). These calls resulted in a move away from a narrow 'risk' approach in some CSE programs, to include sex as pleasurable, though often as an individualized imperative (Lamb, Lustig, & Graling, 2013). The Long Live Love program, for example, answers the question of how to make sex pleasurable by stating: 'Sex is pleasurable when it is safe and with someone you love'. The notion of pleasure has become incorporated under the denominator 'comprehensive', and pleasure has been redefined as an objective of the program.

While it is undoubtedly important to attend to sexual health, and to critically engage with the ways in which sexuality is represented in and through sex education curricula, a lot of weight is given to the intervention that is called sex education. Each strand of studying sex education displays a different version of good sex education, understood in different terms and

operating in different scientific repertoires. Both know what to look for (e.g., determinants, bias) and how to judge it (e.g., in terms of health effects or heteronormativity). In this chapter, I would like to pause this evaluative mode of studying sex education, and explore other ways to think about/with sex education.

This move to think 'more' has also been proposed by recent studies in which sexuality is not considered to be an individual construction triggered by adolescence (Renold, 2005), nor as entirely discursively constructed (Ringrose, 2011), but as having 'everything to do with how bodies, things, ideas and social institutions assemble' (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p. 909). They draw attention to the physical spaces where youth interact and to the ways in which femininity and masculinity are always 'becoming' (Renold & Ringrose, 2011). These becomings are conceptualized not as residing inside the individual body, but as 'effects of bodily relations or linkages, comprised from a range of material or non-material domains' (Holford et al., 2013, p. 714). In analysing sex education, I take my inspiration from this recent body of literature and the questions it puts forth on the relationality of sexuality.

Here, I would like to look at sex education, not as a means to an end (health effects, the formation of sexual identities, gaining knowledge), but as a practice of relating. This means attending to the 'empirical mess' that ethnographic accounts produce. It also means resisting the application of explanatory frameworks that are put forth by sex education logics and those by critical constructivist studies. This is not to disregard these explanations and theories, but to understand how they might 'become effects rather than explanatory foundations' (Law, 2009). Attending to practices offers a way out of the evaluative modes described, as demonstrated by previous studies into care practices, another domain in which strong opinions prevail on what is 'good' (Mol, 2008). As will become clear, a focus on practices leads to foregrounding issues and processes that may otherwise be overlooked (see e.g., M'charek, 2013 on race).

The practices that I will present here come from ethnographic fieldwork in two secondary schools in the Netherlands. The first school, Florius College is situated in a large city in the Netherlands, in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city. I was in touch with a teacher

from this school who invited me to sit in on the sex education lessons that she offered in her higher general education class over a period of four months. The class that I followed consisted of 18 pupils between the ages of 14-17. At the second school, Rijnsbergcollege, a small school for vocational education that is situated in a more rural area, my presence was more substantial and intensive, as I took part in school days for fifteen months, during which I observed several sex education lessons. The class that I followed consisted of 24 pupils between the ages of 13-15 at the time of study.

Three cases will be presented to grasp what sex education in practice can entail. Each case, to a different extent, allows us to reflect on the guiding question throughout this chapter: what (else) can sex education do? The first case alerts us to the ways in which spaces and times of learning about, and spaces and times of doing sexuality are intertwined. The second case, which describes a class in which pupils are invited to ask questions about sexuality, shows that these questions serve purposes other than health, and that learning about sexuality is not restricted to the sex education classroom. Third, the analysis of a game intended to teach pupils on the transmission of HIV, brings to the fore the ways in which sexuality is collectively enacted.

I. Cuddling in class

During a sex education class at Florius College, primed by the program *Long Live Love*, relationships were discussed. Teacher Anneloes took twelve (instead of the standard six) lessons to carry out the program, as she doubted whether ‘these pupils’ – referring to the ethnic minority background of almost all of them – got any sex education at home. She was also worried about false information received through peers or the Internet. In line with sex education logics, she constructed the sex education class as a ‘space of truth’ (Preston, 2016), a truth provided by the teacher that counters the assumed neglect of the topic by parents and the wrong kind of information found online and obtained through peers. The program materials were used as inspiration, but Anneloes highlighted topics she deemed important for her group, such as virginity and homosexuality. In addition, she filled a

drawer in her classroom with condoms that pupils could take for free and without having to ask her.

Sitting in a circle had become the common set up for the sex education class, and after everyone had found their seat, Anneloes asked the pupils to share their experiences of being in a relationship. Some pupils started to point at Imane and shout her name – indicating her as the one experienced with romantic and sexual relationships. Anneloes declared this pointing to be against the ‘rules of the class’ that were agreed upon, before she turned to Imane to ask if she wanted to react. Imane agreed to talk about having had a boyfriend, how they met (at school), flirted (via Whatsapp), dated (a walk in the park), and fell in love. But, she quickly added that that is over now.

Anneloes: ... how did you break up?

Imane (giggling): We broke up because of that disco-party that you organized.

Anneloes: Oh, really? What happened?

Imane: I did not want to go there and he [boyfriend] did.

And then at the party he went [kissed] with others.

Classmate: yes, a real Mocro! [resulting in laughter in the class]

Anneloes: Was it a Moroccan boy?

Imane: Yes

Classmate: Real Mocro, told you! [Laughter]

Anneloes (sarcastically): Yes because all Moroccans cheat, don't they? Really mature to say such things, that does not make any sense! Imane is telling us from her own experiences so we listen to her with respect. So he cheated on you?

How did you find out, how did it make you feel and what did you do?

Imane: Yes I heard it from others and it made me feel sad.

So I asked him about it and he was acting vague. I knew enough and so we broke up.

Anneloes: And now, are you in love now?

Fabius, who has been sitting next to Imane pulls her towards him in a hug. Imane buries her head in her arms, on Fabius' chest.

They have been sitting close to each other the entire class and

Imane has had one leg over his leg. Others point at them and make signs of hearts with their hands.

Still half-embraced by Fabius, Imane answers giggling:

No, I am not in love at the moment.

The set-up of the class – the circle – is unusual. This teacher’s other classes took place in a different configuration, namely rows of desks and two by two, a spatial division that clearly institutes the teacher as the centre of attention and as the only one in the classroom with private space (Nespor, 1997). The start of the sex education class involved changing this. It symbolized the teaching philosophy of Anneloes: this was going to be a conversation, a sharing of knowledge, and a process of learning from each other. At the same time, however, Anneloes ultimately decided what kind of knowledge was important for the pupils in class, though these decisions were sometimes disputed, for example when her elaborate discussion on the hymen was met with the dismissive remark, ‘All that time to answer just one question. Tssss...’. Or when she kept probing Imane to share more details, although the educational message of the relationship history was not entirely clear. What it did make clear, however, was that the separation in sex education logics between spaces of learning (school), and spaces of sexuality (bedroom, sleepovers, as pictured in the booklet), does not hold.

Characterizations of youth sexual experiences in terms of their sexual debut (De Graaf et al., 2010; Van de Bongardt, de Graaf, Reitz, & Deković, 2014; Wolfers et al., 2010), a sexual trajectory (Janssen, 2008; Nikken & De Graaf, 2012) and sexual career (Bakker et al., 2009; De Graaf et al., 2005), support a developmental, linear temporality.³⁸ These logics separate the here and now of gaining sexual knowledge in class from the then and there of sexual behaviour in private spaces. In practice, however, school itself was a space/time for sexuality: for cuddling in class, for ‘going with others’ during a school party. This resonates with ethnographies that describe the school as a space where sexuality is performed, played out, and made

³⁸ Another temporal linearity is at work here in which sex education functions as a marker of modernity. This is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see Rasmussen (2012).

(Pascoe, 2007; Ringrose, 2013).³⁹ In class, while attention was going to verbal articulations of relationships, the bodily relations that Imane and Fabius engaged in were not brought into speech. They signalled a form of intimacy taking place in school, and it was the sex education class that allowed for these bodily connections and communications. While sex education logics imply a linear developmental logic, a focus on practice shows that sex education changes class spaces and pedagogic styles, confirms and contests sexualized ethnicities, and engages future and current sexual and romantic relationships, feelings and actions.

II. Asking questions

When discussing the issue of sex education, Hans, the biology teacher at Rijnsbergcollege, relied on the regular biology textbook. In addition to textbook education he tried to let the questions that the pupils asked him guide the class. Worried about the large amount of incorrect information that pupils find online, he takes all questions of pupils seriously. Again, the classroom is constructed as a space of truth, this time comprising the biology textbook and the knowledge of Hans himself. In this case, sex education involves pupils asking questions and a teacher answering them. As opposed to the strategy of Anneloes, who explicitly said that pupils should learn from each other's experiences, Hans positioned himself as the one who was knowledgeable. He relied on his knowledge as a biology teacher and adult to answer their questions, explaining what they will come across later in their lives. Again, the teacher is seen as the one who embodies objective knowledge, as a neutral guide in the sexual development of youth. Hans considered it to be his role to provide 'the correct information'. Here he reiterates sex education intervention logics in which knowledge is one of the important determinants of behaviour change, leading to health(y choices). The objective biological knowledge that he communicates, however, are the

³⁹ This is not exclusive to the secondary school as sexuality does not suddenly appear during adolescence, but is articulated and shaped earlier (see for example Kuik, 2013; Renold, 2005; Ryan, 2016; Thorne, 1993).

result of scientific practices, practices of fact-making that have been erased (Roberts, 2016). As a result of that, gendered stereotypes that produce biological ‘fairy tales’ such as that of the passive egg and the active sperm (Martin, 1991) go unchallenged and were reiterated in the class film about reproduction.

We are sitting in the science classroom, but today the white lab coats stay on the coat rack. Pupils sit two by two, boys and girls paired up, separated by sinks and facing the teacher. The class discusses ways of preventing pregnancy, including coitus interruptus, when the principal walks in to ask Hans something. When she walks in, Ryvano comments: ‘Wow she looks tarted up’.

When she has left, Hans wants to continue the class and asks: ‘Where were we?’ Alyssa answers quickly: ‘We were busy with cumming!’

Pupils, teacher and ethnographer laugh in reaction to this well-timed joke. A bit later, Alyssa changes her tone to a more serious one: ‘Can you get pregnant by giving someone a blow job?’ When Hans answers elaborately, concluding in the negative, Alyssa turns to Zoe and says loud enough for the whole class to hear: ‘Ooh, so you can just continue giving blow jobs!’

Alyssa’s question about oral sex shows there is no such thing as innocent information transfer from teacher to pupil for future use. Instead, the answer was immediately related to the situation in which Zoe supposedly found herself, and marked her as sexual. Through her question, Alyssa made clear that one of her friends performed oral sex. Sex education was thus used to publicly ‘out’ someone as sexually active. But at the same time, it positions Alyssa as close to Zoe, as they know about each other’s sexual whereabouts. The sexual acts that they engage in are collectively prepared and evaluated, and this takes place in school spaces. In a similar vein, Ryvano’s comment about the head teacher’s appearance (‘She looks tarted up’), can be seen as a reaction to the ‘feminine’ topics of reproduction that were being discussed during this class especially, which featured a lengthy clip on the female

reproductive cycle. Through humour, the sex education class was used to enact desirable, popular masculinities and femininities (Allen, 2014).

Later the same day, during engineering class, Zoe, Alyssa, Jordan and Kyra called me to their table. They asked me to explain what an orgasm is. Alyssa looked up the word on her smartphone, keeping her actions out of the teacher's sight, who had reminded them before, when they were cuddling while they were supposed to sweep the floor, that the engineering class is not a place for intimacy (another word they asked me to explain). When Alyssa found an explanation about orgasm on *Wikipedia* she read it out, but could not pronounce the word clitoris – she seemed not to have heard it before. Jordan thought only boys could have an orgasm and was amazed to find out that girls can as well. She asked me twice to confirm that this information was correct, making sure I was not joking. This question on orgasms signals that the conversations in class sparked more questions on sexuality outside of the classroom, while the girls were relying on different sources of knowledge (*Wikipedia*, the ethnographer they already knew for a few months). Internet was not a risky source of knowledge, like it is presented in sex education logics, but one of the information resources they drew on and checked, as the biology book could not answer this question for them.

The mode of relying on pupils' questions took particular forms: of the principal's appearance, of preventing pregnancy, of making someone's sexual activities public. Later, in a different class, in a different group, and with different sources of information, answers to different questions would be sought. This case shows there is no one-way transfer of knowledge; instead, what we see is that knowledge making and challenging is started in the classroom, and continues outside the space/time of the official sex education class.

III. The AIDS-cup-game

Following sex education logics, the development of individuality is one of the important tasks of the life stage of adolescence (Lesko, 2001). Therefore, adolescents should learn to 'make their own choices', and to 'resist peer

pressure' (Froyum, 2010; Lesko, Brotman, Agarwal, & Quackenbush, 2010). Sex education is supposed to assist the individual adolescent in resisting pressure from peers to engage in risky behaviours. 'Giving in' to peer pressure is often regarded as an attempt to increase one's popularity. Attending to sex education in practice troubles these logics and shows that sex education does not (always) guard against, but participates in articulating and re-establishing popularity hierarchies. Instead of building individual strength against negative peer influence, the case directs our attention to the collective effects of sex education in practice.

One morning at Rijnsbergcollege, teacher Inge told me that class that day was to be devoted to sexuality, as 'the class is going through adolescence'. To address this, she decided to play the AIDS-cup-game, a game that was developed in the 1990s to educate pupils about the transmission of the HIV-virus.

Inge is filling cups with water and putting them on a tray when the pupils enter the room and find a seat. The classroom is organized into groups, about four or five pupils sit together in groups of their own choosing. Tessa, Alyssa, Kira and Jordan add a chair to their group of tables and order me to sit with them. They compare old pictures of themselves on their smartphones. Tessa scrolls through hers and says, to no one in particular: When I do not wear a bra and I am standing in front of the mirror they [her breasts] look less big. There is no verbal response, but eyes go around the table, chest height.

When Inge finishes her preparations she invites each pupil to take one cup, and to walk around the classroom. Pouring water into each other's cup symbolizes the exchange of bodily fluids when having sex. The water in one of the cups is 'infected' with sugar, symbolizing the HIV virus. The lesson of the game is that anyone can be infected, as, in theory, the water of all participants tastes sweet at the end of the game. But the pupils do not know this yet. After a few minutes of mingling, they sit down and take a sip of the water in their cup. Inge asks them to raise their hand in case

it tastes sweet, and reveals this means HIV-infection. All hands go up, except those of the girls at the front left group of tables. Jenna, Brianna, Mieke and Linda were the only ones in class who remained 'uninfected', and laughter resulted when their hands did not go up.

Sex education builds on pre-existing social networks in the classroom. As happened before during other classes, one group was collectively marked here as undesirable/nonsexual. Jayden verbalized this: 'Hahaha no one wanted to have sex with them!' The fact was, in a way, made evident by the chemical result of the game. Knowledge, here, was delegated to the taste buds, to the taste of sugar. Tasting sugar – or not – confirmed the division that existed in the class between those who were sexually active, and verbal about that, and those who were not, or hid this. After she concluded that the 'uninfected girls' did not play the game right, Inge moved to the next part of the class: teaching how to put a condom on correctly.⁴⁰

The sex education game worked to reproduce existing popularity hierarchies in class, as no one wanted to play the game with the unpopular group of girls. While some pupils were 'having sex' with others, they dared to ask for that, others were told 'I am not having sex with you!', did not want to, or did not dare to ask someone to exchange fluids. Instead of levelling, the game had a discriminating effect. The girls marked as undesirable only exchanged fluids ('had sex') with each other. This was out of the question for boys, who, when they would find themselves too close to another boy, shouted 'GAY!' and hurried to find the nearest girl to 'mix' with. As such, the game became a moment of producing heterosexual masculinity – using the gay epithet to distance themselves from unwanted forms of masculinity they perceived to be effeminate (Pascoe, 2007).

The AIDS-cup-game taught as much about the connection between heterosexual desirability and popularity as it did about HIV prevention.

40 At the vocational Rijnsbergcollege, Hans relied on questions, and Inge on games and condom practice, as they thought their pupils should do something practical instead of reading. Anneloes' class was a higher general education class (havo), and relied heavier on written text. In the pre-university level (vwo) school that I observed, sex education was not regarded as important. In this way, the issue of educational level matters in relation to sexuality.

Throughout the three cases, peers appear not as one large, risky influence, but as reflective, as asking questions for one another, as cuddling and comforting, as laughing at, ignoring, emphasizing or denying sexuality. As such, sexuality appears as collectively enacted, instead of individually embodied.

'Including diversity in sex education'

In recent years, the denominator 'comprehensive' has increasingly been accompanied by the imperative to 'include diversity' in Dutch sex education and research. There has been a strong lobby to make teaching about diversity legally mandatory in secondary schools. This lobby turned out to be successful in 2012, when a national requirement for secondary schools was passed stating, 'Pupils learn about similarities, differences and changes in culture and religion in the Netherlands, [...] and learn to respect sexuality and diversity within society, including sexual diversity' (Kamerbrief Kerndoelen, 2012, p.3).

To understand how this obligation to attend to diversity resonates with sex education practice, let us return to the first case in which Imane shared her relationship experiences in the class circle. When the ethnic signifier of 'Mocro' (Moroccan) was mobilized in relation to cheating, a widely circulating notion of threatening Moroccan/Arab masculinity was brought into the classroom (Bredstrom, 2005; Briggs, 2014; Hasinoff, 2014). Teacher Anneloes countered this generalization, and denounced making a connection between sexuality and ethnic groups as immature. At the same time, she regarded her pupils as being especially in need of sex education because of their ethnicity, which signalled to her a lack of open communication about sexuality in their families.

When she was teaching elaborately about the hymen, her motivations were contested by pupils (recall: 'All this time to answer just one question...tsss'). This was even more evident when discussing the issue of homosexuality, another 'coercive concern' for ethnic minority youth (Jaffe-Walter, 2016). When Anneloes asked in which countries

homosexuality is illegal, most pupils shared what they knew about their countries of origin, such as Ghana and Egypt. Anneloes continued to tell the class that homosexuality exists even in countries where it is illegal, something the pupils found hard to believe. Emphasizing that the *Long Live Love* booklet presents the scientific facts, she pointed out it indicates that 5-6% of all people are homosexual. Someone corrected her and said: 'But it says 5-6% of people *in the Netherlands!*' The forceful negative reactions to homosexuality seemed to confirm the notion that sexual diversity and cultural diversity make a 'difficult' couple. However, this might as well be an effect of the class environment: rejecting homosexuality became a joyful process given the laughter that arose in challenging the teacher. It shows that essentialized versions of ethnicity and sexuality and contestations against these essentialisms co-exist. However, who does the essentializing and who does the contesting (teacher, pupil, booklet) differs.

The assumption that homosexuality is denounced by the 'ethnic other' is widespread, and implies, incorrectly, that those who are 'autochthonous Dutch',⁴¹ accept homosexuality without problems.⁴² To be Dutch is to subscribe automatically to sexually liberal values (Mepschen et al., 2010; Van den Berg, 2013), whereas ethnic others are constructed as sexually risky (Krebbekx et al., 2017). Homosexuality is especially regarded to be 'a difficult topic for discussion in multicultural classrooms' (Bijster, 2016).⁴³ While playing the AIDS-cup-game, at the Rijnsbergcollege, which was described to me as a 'white school', the gay-epithet was used by boys who found themselves close to each other. However, this did not become part of the teaching process, which might indicate that for 'autochthonous Dutch' boys, homonegativity is not taken seriously or worthy of correction, whereas it is emphasized for those who are regarded as ethnic others. This

41 The most used term for all minorities in the Netherlands is 'allochtonen', whereas autochthonous is used for those of Netherlands birth and ancestry. In relation to sexuality, see Krebbekx et al. (2016).

42 Studies show that favorable statistics towards, for example, gay marriage are reported in surveys in the Netherlands, but this positive attitude does not hold for displays of homosexuality in the public sphere such as two men or two women holding hands (Kuyper, 2015). For an analysis of anti-gay violence in the Netherlands, see Van der Meer (2003), and Buijs et al. (2011).

43 Shortly after news about mass sexual assault in Cologne broke this was translated into a call to improve sex education for Islamic boys [often conflated with Moroccan boys].

connection between ethnicity, religion and sexuality that has been termed secularism (Scott, 2009), was an effect of the class practices in different ways, as we have seen. It was established by pupils, for example when using the word 'Mocro'; by teachers, through attending to the hymen; and through educational materials, such as the *Long Live Love* booklet that portrayed a Muslim girl who referred to her religion when stating that she will remain a virgin until marriage. It could also result in an absence of sex education: a principal of a third school I studied told me sex education was not a key focus as their school was not attended by many allochthonous pupils.

Asking the question 'What else does sex education do?' alerts us to the risk that sex education produces some of the tensions between sexuality and ethnicity that it seeks to reduce. Talking about sex is practiced as a feature of Dutchness, and in the cases explored here this worked through emphasizing homonegativity for some, while ignoring it for others. Conflating Dutchness with acceptance of homosexuality, and more liberal sexual morals in general, influenced what topics were taught to which pupils, how much time was devoted to it, and in which schools sex education was deemed important to begin with.

Conclusion: Intervening in theory through practice

The three cases presented in this chapter troubled the separations that sex education puts forth: between individual and peer group, between the present and the future, and between learning and doing. It also asked for a reconsideration of the relation between sexuality and ethnicity. One last issue that following sex education in practice brings up, returns us to the panel in which academics were asked to present a recommendation to practitioners – how do we translate the results of the current analysis into one recommendation to improve sex education? Despite my call for 'attention to the social effects of sexuality', it is evident that such a clear distinction between the individual and the social cannot be made. Pupils collectively learn how to do sexuality, ranging from where and how to talk and laugh about it, to the visualization of growing up based on pictures

on their smartphone, to remarks on breast-size or (the absence of) sexual behaviour. In the logics of sex education, sexuality is individually embodied, set in motion by hormones that steer bodily changes. Studying sex education in practice foregrounds that sexuality is enacted through collective practices, and that this brings along social effects – of popularity, ethnicity, gender.

Comprehensive sex education is not a fixed theory that is applied in the same way in different schools but appeared as fragmented, recurring at different moments and places, with different sources of knowledge, on the initiative of different actors. In the cases explored, sex education led to pupils knowing which teachers to approach in case they needed confidential advice on issues related to sexuality, or when in need of condoms. It also led to conversations about female sexuality in the engineering classroom. How does this complicated 'intervention' relate to effect studies? Measuring effectiveness asks for making effects measurable. However, the inability to separate what does and does not belong to an intervention should function as a warning against a too strong belief in evidence from effect studies (see Kok et al., 2012) and subsequent calls for further standardization of sex education practice. Results can be wrongly ascribed to an intervention (element) if we do not recognize these other things sex education sets in motion, the things that 'come along' (Mol 2010, p. 256).

In this chapter, I attended to sex education and the effects it can have, the other things it can do – things other than a transfer of objective knowledge. I shared three cases that troubled the logics of sex education, in which adolescents are conceptualized as in need of knowledge to individually develop a healthy sexuality, which is threatened by the negative influence of peers. Rather than following these logics, or countering them through a mode of critique, I have studied sex education in practice. This chapter showed the school to be a space/time for sexuality, how sexual knowledge is produced and used in class, and how sex education plays into and depends on processes of (gendered) popularity. In addition, the analysis pointed to the ways in which comprehensive sex education either emphasizes or ignores issues such as homosexuality, virginity, and dialogue and thereby, as a sexual practice (Verkaaik & Spronk, 2011) (re)produces ethnic characterizations of sexuality. Finally, the analysis of sex education in practice complicated the

ways in which sex education is conceptualized and measured as a health intervention. Throughout this chapter, sex education appeared as a range of different practices that were held together by the label 'comprehensive sex education'. As schools, classrooms, pupils and sex education materials change from one place to another, so will sex education and its effects, but in each new constellation sex education will do 'more' and 'other things' than influence future individual health.