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Sexing the Subject: The Politics of Sex Education in South Australian State Schools 1900-1990

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Abstract

This thesis examines the politics of sex education in South Australian state schools in the twentieth century. It provides a political history of the debates about making sex education a formal part of the school curriculum. In mapping these debates the thesis provides an explanation of why it was an issue. Central to this explanation is the view that the struggles over sex education involved more than arguments for and against its inclusion in the school curriculum. It is argued that underlying the debates was what is termed in this thesis 'sexing the subject'. That is, the shaping of sexed subjectivities to perpetuate a prevailing gendered social order -- a complex and sometimes contradictory social process to which schools contribute in various ways. Participants in debates over sex education took for granted certain supposed differences between the sexes, positing such differences as facts of nature. These differences were discursively constructed as bio-political 'facts', on the basis of which gendered social relations were constituted and upheld. Although particular arguments about sex education were prompted by diverse interests and objectives, examination of these discourses reveals an underlying common thread. This was the active promotion of gendered heterosexual norms as the most natural of social relations. The thesis demonstrates how such norms permeated the debates and thereby shaped the politics of sex education in twentieth century South Australia.

Declaration

This thesis does not contain any material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of diploma in any University and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan.

Jim Jose

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Notwithstanding the input from friends and colleagues, any mistakes or errors of judgement remain fully my responsibility.

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Introduction

In 1973 the South Australian Department of Education introduced the formal teaching of sex education into the curriculum of state schools.[1] Just over two decades later, despite the occasional controversies, the presence of sex education within the curriculum is itself no longer controversial. This thesis charts the political history of the various struggles to have sex education become part of the formal instruction within state schools in South Australia. The aim is to explain the process through which the transmission of sexual knowledge became part of the official educational ambit of schooling. In so doing the thesis will identify and explain what the various historical actors took to be the central defining issues including what they understood to be the links, real and imagined, between sex education, schooling, and the wider social order. However, the study is not solely concerned with telling the story of what the various participants thought or said that they were doing. This is certainly important. But it is not the whole story. For what also has to be shown are the conditions, both material and discursive, that made possible, on the one hand, the discussion of ideas about sex education, schooling and the wider society, and on the other, the links between all three.

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1 By this time similar moves were occurring in some other Australian states as well. In 1977 the Royal Commission on Human Relationships reported that by 1975 the 'estimated percentage of school population reaching statutory leaving age who have received sex education in schools' was 40-60% for New South Wales, 20% for Victoria, 40% for South Australia, 60% for Tasmania, under 10% for the Northern Territory, nil for Queensland. *Royal Commission on Human Relationships* (Chair, Justice Elizabeth Evatt), Volume 2 of five volumes, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1977) p. 33. No figures were given for Western Australia but according to *Girls, School and Society: Report by a Study Group to the Schools Commission*, (Canberra: Australian Schools Commission, 1975) five pilot programs had been initiated there in 1972.

It is relatively uncontroversial to suggest that schools, as social institutions, contribute in significant ways to the ongoing, complex and contradictory social process of shaping sexed subjectivities. Within the thesis this process is termed 'sexing the subject'. This term will be discussed in a little more detail below. It is argued in the following chapters that the struggles over sex education, the formal school-based teaching about and transmission of sexual knowledge from one generation to the next,[2] reveal important aspects of this process. This is because sex education involves making the differences between the sexes

> the focus of the knowledge to be imparted so that assumptions about gender, which elsewhere in the curriculum are submerged and implicit, are brought to the surface and made explicit.[3]

That is, the very subject matter of sex education makes it impossible for it to be taught without the prevailing assumptions about gender intruding. Sex education is the space in which sex and gender intersect. As such, the various struggles to include sex education in the curriculum involved more than arguments for and against its inclusion. These struggles are also about what is termed in the thesis 'sexing the subject'.

This idea (of 'sexing the subject') has a number of senses. In the first place 'sexing the subject' refers to the introduction (and endorsement) of the

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[2] It needs to be stressed from the outset that this thesis is not concerned with how children, of whatever age, gain their overall knowledge of sexual matters. Rather the focus is on explaining how a school-based source for sexual knowledge comes to be established.

[3] Stevi Jackson, 'How to Make Babies: Sexism in Sex Education', *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, Vol. 1, 1978, p. 341.

teaching of sexual knowledge as a curriculum subject in its own right. Secondly, and more importantly, it refers to the sexing of the subjectivities of school-aged individuals in terms of their identities, their sense of self as sexed beings. It needs to be remembered, of course, that this terminology is not intended to capture the whole social process of inculcation of sexed subjectivities. Thirdly, it refers to individuals, in this case children, as subjects of a particular political and social order. The distinction between the last two meanings might seem to be slight, the educational context notwithstanding. However, there is no necessary reason why the sexed identity of any individual should correspond with whatever is deemed appropriate within the prevailing political and social order. The point at issue is that individuals, whether children or adults, are not asexual entities. They are sexed subjects, constituted as such, within a particular identifiable gender order.

Here the notion of 'gender order' is understood to mean the socially organised system of relationships of and between women and men that provide the guidelines for engendering the sexes of human beings. This perspective is drawn from the work of Matthews who has argued that a given gender order

> establishes the definition or the meaning of 'women' and 'men' in any particular society by sanctioning the patterns of relations between women and men... ...[It is]...premised on a specific ideal of the relations between women and men, and that the component parts of that order attempt[.] to shape everybody's lives towards that ideal. ... ...and in so far as people regard[.] themselves as 'women' and 'men' (that is, having the gender identity of women and men), they [.] operat[e] within the framework of that order and [are] in some sense, in many senses, measuring themselves and others against

> their understanding of the ideal standard, of true or good women and men.[4]

Matthews also argued that while this idea of a 'gender order' expresses the fact of sexed difference it 'does not specify the nature of the distinction' because this is a process that is constantly being formed and reformed through the 'struggles and power strategies and contradictions and unintended consequences of a multitude of social groups and individuals and interests'.[5] It is a social process the specific content of which depends on how the prevailing social relations of the sexes are organised historically in terms of both ideas and material circumstances. In a patriarchically organised society, or at least one in which men's power, status and privileges exceed those available to women (or indeed are at the expense of women), the gender order will posit corresponding ideals and values of masculinity and femininity. And these, in turn, will embrace gendered ideas about sexual natures and behaviours.

It might be objected that the above characterisations of 'sexing the subject' and 'gender order' might be theoretically inadequate given the various critiques made by a number of feminist theorists of the sex/gender distinction.[6] Such an

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4 Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 23.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

6 For some critical analysis of the conceptual problems of the sex/gender distinction see Moira Gatens, 'A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction' in *Beyond Marxism? Interventions After Marx*, ed Judith Allen & Paul Patton, (Sydney: Intervention Publications, 1983, pp. 143-60. See also the symposium discussion in *Australian Feminist Studies*, No. 10, Summer 1989 by Anne Edwards, 'The Sex/Gender Distinction: Has It Outlived Its Usefulness?', pp. 1-12;

objection is certainly true to the extent that the use of the words 'sex' and 'gender' has not been abandoned. This does not mean, however, that their use renders the analysis theoretically inadequate or incoherent. It is not to be assumed here that on the one side there is 'sex', biologically given and pre-social, and on the other hand is 'gender', socially variable and independent of biological sex.[7] Rather the view to be developed in this thesis is that the idea of sexing the subject, in the senses defined above, is precisely the process of engendering it. This view takes its point of departure from MacKinnon's argument that '[g]ender emerges as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women', that fundamentally, 'gender is an inequality of power'.[8] Continuous with the sexing of the subject is the ongoing inscription of unequal social relations on one's subjectivity. The strength of MacKinnon's argument, as one of her critics conceded, was that it enabled sexed difference to be understood in terms of the 'ways in which dominance has rationalised and perpetuated inequalities'.[9] Although Lloyd disagreed quite markedly with MacKinnon's approach,[10] she still

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Genevieve Lloyd, 'Woman As The Other: Sex, Gender and Subjectivity',pp. 13-22; Denise Thompson, 'The 'Sex/Gender' Distinction: A Reconsideration', pp. 23-32; and Moira Gatens, 'Woman And Her Double(s): Sex, Gender and Ethics', pp. 33-47 respectively.

7 See Edwards (1989) for some exposition of this oft-cited way of theorising sex and gender.

8 Catherine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses On Law And Life*, (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 6 and p. 8.

9 Lloyd (1989), p. 17.

10 In summary, Lloyd made the following criticisms of MacKinnon's approach. She suggested that because the relationship between gender and 'the biological facts of sex difference' was posited by MacKinnon as an arbitrary one it amounted to a 'dislocation of the symbolic content of femaleness from female

acknowledged the salient point of MacKinnon's argument; namely that sexed difference, the supposedly biological given of bodily difference, was itself gendered.[11]

Thus for the purposes of this thesis, MacKinnon's insight that gender is 'the congealed form of sexualised inequality' provides a good place to start. It is also congruent with Jackson's view, noted earlier, that the focus of the knowledge addressed under the rubric of sex education presupposes 'the differences between the sexes'.[12] It is precisely these 'differences' which have to be kept to the forefront and understood 'as the congealed forms of sexualization of the

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bodies, of gender from sex' (*ibid.*, p. 19). Thus for MacKinnon, there was 'no true femaleness waiting to flow out of the biologically given... ...no natural flow-on from them into social differentiation of male and female' (p. 17). Rather MacKinnon reduced the question of gender, what it meant to be female, to a 'product of the operations of symbols of culture' (p. 17). The problem was that these 'operations of power' seemed to operate 'in a vacuum' involving 'neither bodies nor souls... [as] ...the proper subjects for the social construction of gender' (p. 17). Thus for Lloyd, there was no way for MacKinnon to relate gender (or rather its construction) to 'sexed bodies' in a coherent way because the latter disappears under the weight of an understanding of gender as 'the product of mind and its operations with symbols'. Thus the mind both creates and subordinates the sexed body to the point at which the sexed body is no longer a necessary part of the analysis. What is needed, suggests Lloyd, is for theorists to 'take seriously the possibility that we are as human beings not just contingently but essentially embodied' (p. 20). Her solution to this problem was not to valorise the body, as some feminist theorists have done, but rather to appeal to Spinoza's treatment of the mind-body distinction for a way of understanding gender as involving 'socialised, embodied, sexed human beings' (p. 21). This might be appropriate. But this move depends upon the conceptual adequacy of the notion of 'embodiment' which is by no means given. For some comment on the conceptual adequacy of such terms for feminist theory see Jim Jose, 'Ontological Commitment and the Concepts of 'Embodiment' and 'Embodied Person': Some Problems for Feminist Theory', *Women & Politics*, 15 (1), 1995.

11 Lloyd (1989).

12 Jackson (1978), p. 341.

inequality between men and women'.[13] That is, the presumption that the 'differences between the sexes' should be treated as self-evident must itself by continuously in question. Beginning from this position, this thesis develops an analysis of the agitation over and the implementation of sex education in terms of the view that the idea and process of sexing the subject was that of engendering it.

Numerous historians of education have demonstrated that schools have been and remain deeply implicated in the construction and maintenance of gender relations.[14] This is not all that surprising given the fact that the development of systems of mass schooling during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the western industrial nations was primarily to enable the passing on to the young whatever was deemed by the preceding generations to be appropriate and necessary knowledges. In so doing schools were (and remain) a primary arena through which children are subjectified in ways deemed necessary for their adult

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13 MacKinnon (1987), p. 6.

14 The literature on this is quite vast but for some representative examples see R.W.Connell, D.J. Ashenden, S. Kessler, & G.W. Dowsett, *Making the Difference: Schools, Family and Social Division*, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), Roger Dale *et al*, *Education and the State Volume II: Politics, Patriarchy and Practice*, of two vols., (London: The Falmer Press, 1981), Terry Evans, *A Gender Agenda: A Sociological Study of Teachers, Parents and Pupils in their Primary Schools*, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1988), Pam Gilbert & Sandra Taylor, *Fashioning the Feminine: Girls, Popular Culture and Schooling*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), Carol Jones & Pat Mahony, eds, *Learning Our Lines: Sexuality and Social Control in Education*, (London: The Women's Press, 1989), Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), Marjorie R. Theobald, & R.J.W. Selleck, eds, *Family, School and State in Australian History*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), Deborah Tyler & Denise Meredyth, ed, *Child and Citizen: Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity*, (Brisbane: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, 1994).

futures. However, this does not mean that schools, as social institutions, *automatically* reproduced the prevailing social relations, gendered or otherwise, of the particular societies in which they emerged. Such a claim would certainly overstate the case.[15] Social relations, especially gender relations, are mediated and contested in various ways even as they are at the same time transmitted within and between generations. All that is being acknowledged is the important, but not exclusive, contributions that systems of schooling make in terms of shaping young minds and bodies according to the prevailing values of the time.

When the various campaigns over sex education are seen in their historical context it becomes evident that gender issues were rarely far from the surface. However, they were rarely expressed directly as such. Nor were they framed directly as challenges to or defences of the prevailing gender order. Rather, particular social or health issues such as venereal disease, teenage pregnancies, sexual promiscuity or sexual morality usually provided the trigger for arguments about sex education. As a number of writers have suggested, these issues often erupted in times of social change or social stress.[16] Yet it is not just a matter of social change considered in some general abstracted sense. Part of

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[15] For some discussion of this see Michael Apple, *Education and Power*, (Boston (Mass.): Ark Paperbacks, 1985).

[16] See Rosemary Auchmuty, 'The Truth About Sex' in *Australian Popular Culture*, ed Peter Spearitt & David Walker, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1978) pp 169-89 and 'Out of the Gutter and Into the Classrooms', *Refractory Girl*, September 1977, pp. 19-23; G. Logan, 'Sex Education in Queensland: A History of the Debate 1900-1980', *Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Queensland Education*, No. 2, October 1980; Gordon Tait, 'Sex Education: Some Political Ambiguities' in *Child and Citizen: Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity*, ed Deborah Tyler & Denise Meredyth, (Brisbane: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, 1994), pp. 87-101.

the interpretation argued for in this thesis is that it was social change of a specific form that turned out to be of primary concern, namely the shifts in social relations of the sexes and the perception that this constituted a challenge to the prevailing gender order. When many women and girls moved (or were moved by circumstances) away from what had been accepted hitherto as their proper place the perception developed that this represented a challenge to the relations of the prevailing gender order. This is not to suggest that the debates should be understood in functionalist or conspiratorial terms. People promoted or contested sex education for a wide variety of reasons. They defended the status quo or agitated for change in terms of what they took to be 'natural' or 'normal'. And what could be more natural than gender (or more normal that gender relations)? Seen in this light many of the campaigns for school-based sex instruction involved the maintenance of dominant images of masculinity and femininity, of what it meant to be an adult man or woman. In this sense one can recognise various elements of social control being pursued.[17] After all, schools were about shaping young minds and bodies,[18] about controlling childrens' behaviour as well

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17 This is not to argue that any given measures simply translated directly into forms of social control. For some discussion of the issue of social control see the collection of essays in Stanley Cohen & Andrew Scull, ed, *Social Control and the State: Historical and Comparative Essays*, (Oxford: martin Robertson, 1983); Jack Barbalet, 'Power and Resistance', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol XXXVI, No. 4, 1985, pp. 531-48; F.M.L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, Sec. Series, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, may 1981, pp. 189-208.

18 In various ways this theme of shaping young minds and bodies has permeated most of the government enquiries into education this century. See for example, *SAPP* No. 75, 1913: *Royal Commission on Education: Final Report (together with Minutes of Proceedings, Evidence, and Appendices)*, (T.J. Ryan Chairman), (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1913); SAPP No. 69, 1931: *First*

as inculcating modes or habits of self-control. Sex education, as a site for the convergence of ideas about mind and body, sex and gender, also carried with it aspects of social control as far as sexing the subject was concerned.

The idea of sexing the subject, as developed in this thesis, owes a good deal to Foucault's treatment of what he calls the 'philosophy of the subject' in which he aimed 'to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects'.[19] A closer analysis of Foucault's theoretical approach, especially his genealogical and bio-political perspectives, is undertaken in Chapter 1. Here it just needs to be noted that the advantage of his approach is that it linked up ideas about discourse, knowledge, power and subjectivitity in a quite novel manner in an attempt to lay bare what he regarded as the conditions of possibility for the articulation of specific social ideas and practices. Despite at least one serious short-coming, namely his seemingly

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and Second Progress Reports of the Committee of Enquiry into Education, (J.W. Stanford, Chairman), April 1 and June 19, 1931, To the Chairman of the State Advisory Committee on Public Finance, (Adelaide: SA Government Printer, 1931); SAPP No. 15, 1949: *Education Enquiry Committee: Final Report*, (E.L. Bean Chairman), presented 11 August 1949, (Adelaide: SA Government Printer, August 1949); Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia 1969-1970, (Peter Karmel Chairman), *Education in South Australia*, (Adelaide: SA Govt Printer, February 1971).; and Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia, (J.P. Keeves Chairman), *Education and Change in South Australia*, (Adelaide: SA Government Printer, January 1982).

[19] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, No. 8, Summer 1982, p. 777. This essay was originally printed as an Afterword in 1980 in the first edition of Hubert Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed with an Afterword and an Interview with Michel Foucault, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983). In that context it was written as a series of answers to specific questions raised by Dreyfus and Rabinow in their conclusion.

gender blind analyses,[20] especially his habit of assuming that seemingly sex-indeterminate terms like 'individual', 'children', and 'subjectivity' automatically take the masculine pronouns,[21] his genealogical and bio-political perspective provides a useful way of orienting the material in this thesis. This is especially so in the area of the governance of populations and their formation as subjects, a process dubbed by Foucault as the problem of governmentality.[22]

In Chapter 2 a brief survey is undertaken of accounts purporting to offer a history of sex education. Some acknowledgment is also made of the wider literature on sex education. It is shown that very few histories of sex education

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20 For some diverse feminist assessments of Foucault's theoretical position see Somer Brodribb, *Nothing Mat[t]ers: A Feminist Critique of Postmodernism*, (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1992), Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, ed, *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, (Boston: Northeastern University, 1988), Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power,, Discourse and Gender in Social Theory*, (London: Polity Press, 1989), Nancy Harstock, 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?' in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed Linda J. Nicholson, (New York: Routledge, 1990) pp. 157-75, Susan Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism*, (London: Polity Press, 1990), Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and Self*, (London: Polity Press, 1992), Caroline Ramazanoglu, *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism*, (London: Routledge, 1993).

21 While it might be possible to excuse Foucault by suggesting that he intended the words 'man'/'men'/'his' and so on to function generically to include and refer to both women and men this would appear to be something of a dodge. In the first place, given his emphasis on language and discourse, especially their significance in constituting subjects and identities, it would seem disingenuous (if not intellectually dishonest) to write as if terms designating presumed 'masculine' referents automatically included women. Secondly, Foucault only dropped this allegedly generic terminology when reference to women or girls in their own right was unavoidable. Only then did he use terms clearly specifying the sex of subjects.

22 Foucault (1982) and also his 'Governmentality', *Ideology & Consciousness*, No. 6, Summer 1979, pp. 5-21.

in Australia have thus far been produced. This does not deny that some accounts have adopted a historical perspective to discuss particular aspects of sex education. Nonetheless, most of the accounts of sex education that lay claim to the status of history remain quite inadequate for two reasons. First, none really address the question of differences between the sexes as one of the givens of sex education in Jackson's sense (as already noted above).[23] Second, with the possible exception of Tait,[24] none of the histories really take up the issue of the conditions of possibility but rather remain content to tell the story just from within the perspectives, intentions and accounts of the various participants. This only tells part of the story, though admittedly it is an important and large part. However, it is not just a question of explaining the whys and wherefores of sex education as understood by those arguing for and against its implementation, but how those whys and wherefores were able to be articulated. What were the material and discursive conditions that made it possible for these questions to be seen as constituting an issue or problem in the first place? In short, what were the conditions of possibility that the debates over sex education presupposed. In order to answer this question adequately, it is also necessary to make explicit that there were (and are) a whole range of ideas about the respective natures and interrelationships of schooling, the educational process, educators, children/childhood, parents, sex, gender and the social order underlying the constitution of sex education as a problem.

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23 See p. 2 *supra*; Jackson (1978), p. 341.

24 Tait (1994).

Specifying these 'conditions of possibility' is the task of Chapter 3 in which is sketched the consolidation in the late nineteenth century of the educational state[25] in South Australia. An overview is offered of the development of the nature and formation of South Australian schooling and its gradual system-atisation. The disparate elements of previous pedagogies, to the extent that they existed, came to be redefined and redeployed into a new configuration capable of meeting the perceived needs of an emerging post-colonial, semi-industrial society. During this time a new social space was created for the emerging identities of the 'educator' (usually as a teacher but also as an administrator), the 'schoolchild', and the 'parent'. However, these identities were also shaped by and contributed to particular gendered sexual and moral ideas and values. Part of this involved the way in which the shift from childhood to adulthood came to be understood as a shift from asexuality to properly gendered sexuality. As such, these ideas were part of the foundational matrices of the educational state. Thus it is not simply a question of specifying the systemic construction of pedagogic relations defining educator, parent and child. In order to understand the 'sexing of the subject' it is also necessary to have some appreciation of the wider, but nonetheless constitutive, discursive context of sexuality and childhood as well as the way in which a particular gendered morality was implemented. These are what we might describe as 'conditions of possibility', as discursive conditions that made possible both the problem of sex

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[25] For some discussion of the notion of 'educational state' and the way in which social space is organised (indeed, invented) to accommodate it see Bruce Curtis, *Building the Education State: Canada West, 1836-1871*, (Ontario, Canada: The Falmer Press, 1988).

education and the sorts of questions and answers that arose.

With the above ideas in place the next three chapters of the thesis examine various attempts to persuade the Education Department to incorporate sex education into the school curriculum. A number of key questions are identified as being central to the debates on sex education. These questions were: what should be taught (ie what should count as proper sexual knowledge)?; who should define what is to be taught (ie educators, teachers, church figures, doctors or similar supposed experts)?, who of these should teach it ?; how and where should it be taught (ie in the classroom on a group or individual basis)?; what or whose moral values would inform and justify the answers to the above. Such questions were commonly raised whenever the need for school-based sex education was debated, not just in South Australia but elsewhere as well.[26] Much of the discussion by educators turned on the issue of who should teach it. This was because of the difficulties in establishing easily discerned (and agreed upon) boundaries between families and schooling.[27] This was a difficult enough

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[26] John K. Collins, 'Sex Education: By Whom, When and Where?', *Mental Health in Australia; The Journal of the NSW Association for Mental Health*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, Summer 1970, pp. 4-10; S.E. Fraser, ed, *Sex, Schools and Society*, (New York: Aurora Publishers, 1972); Ronald Goldman, & Juliette Goldman, *Children's Sexual Thinking: A Comparative Study of Children Aged 5 to 15 Years in Australia, North America, Britain and Sweden*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Jackson (1978), p. 342; Philip Meredith, *Sex Education: Political Issues in Britain and Europe*, (London: Routledge, 1989); Ruth Roemer & John M. Paxman, 'Sex Education Laws and Policies', *Studies in Family Planning*, 16 (4), July/August, 1985, pp. 219-30.

[27] Defining these boundaries has always been contested. See for some examples, Miriam E. David, *The State, Family and Education*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Pavla Miller & Ian Davey, 'Family Formation, Schooling and the Patriarchal State', in *Family, School and State in Australian History*, ed Marjorie R. Theobald & R.J.W. Selleck, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin,

task at the best of times. The issue of sex education complicated this even further.

This was because of the widely accepted understanding, by the late nineteenth century, of what constituted proper family relations. This was a view in which domesticity was idealised as an autonomous private sphere somehow or other outside of the reach of the state.[28] In this context, women, as wives and mothers, created a home for the nurturing of their husbands and children. Women were presumed to be the 'purveyors of civilization' because they were possessed of a 'maternal instinct' given by nature.[29] They were considered to be sexually passive (or largely disinterested) with their responsiveness related very much to their husband's initiatives. Men, on the other hand, as inhabitors of both the public and private spheres, were presumed to be sexually active, the initiators of sexual activity. And in some versions of this view men were dominated by 'natural' urges in ways that women were not.

1990), pp. 1-24; Jenny Shaw, 'In *Loco Parentis*: A Relationship Between Parent, State and Child' in *Education and the State Volume II: Politics, Patriarchy and Practice*, ed Roger Dale *et al*, (London: The Falmer Press, 1981), pp. 257-68; Malcolm Vick, 'Community, State and the Provision of Schools in Mid-Nineteenth Century South Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 98, April 1992, pp. 53-71; Malcolm Vick, "Their Paramount Duty': Parents and Schooling in the Mid-Nineteenth Century' in Theobald & Selleck, ed, (1990), pp. 177-95.

[28] For a general overview of the formation of this ideology of domesticity see Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Classes 1700-1850*, (London: Hutchinson, 1987). While this relates to English social conditions it is fair to suggest that these ideas had become the commonsense of those who left England for South Australia in the latter half of the nineteenth century. See for example Carol Bacchi, 'The 'Woman Question' In South Australia', in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, ed Eric Richards, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 405; and Ken Elford, 'Marriage and Divorce', in *ibid*, p. 312 and p. 316.

[29] Bacchi (1986), p. 405.

This is not to argue for a static view of men's and women's sexuality in terms of activeness and passiveness respectively. Indeed, at various times many women have challenged and attempted to change the dominant forms of sexuality and sexual practices.[30] Rather, it is to point to the fact that a certain form of gendered sexuality, a certain form of masculinity, is hegemonic in the sense, as is argued by Connell, that it 'is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women'.[31] For Connell, the dominant form of femininity is what he has termed 'emphasised femininity' ; a form 'defined around compliance with' the subordination of women to men 'and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men'.[32] Other forms of femininity involving 'strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance', or 'complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation'[33] also make their presence felt thereby ensuring that neither 'hegemonic masculinity' nor 'emphasised femininity' exercise an unchallenged dominance. Nevertheless, no form of femininity is able to achieve the same sway as 'hegemonic masculinity' because 'all forms of femininity are constructed in the

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30 For some discussion of this see Carol Bacchi, 'Feminism and the "Eroticization" of the Middle-Class Woman: The Intersection of Class and Gender Attitudes', *Women's Studies Int. Forum*, 11 (1), 1988, pp. 43-53.

31 R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987) , p. 183. See also his 'Masculinity, Violence and War' in *War/Masculinity*, ed Paul Patton & Ross Poole, (Sydney: Intervention Publications, 1985), pp. 4-10.

32 Connell (1987), p. 183.

33 *ibid.*, pp. 183-4.

context of the overall subordination of women to men'.[34] That is, the dynamics of gendered social relations provide the organising forces around which gendered sexualities, masculinities, and femininities receive their social forms.

Children, too, were presumed to be in a special category, namely childhood innocence. This theme is also pursued in some depth in Chapter 3 but what needs to be noted here is the idea of childhood innocence being equated with sexual ignorance.[35] Within this worldview, especially that of children as 'sexually innocent', the family or home was seen as the 'natural' or most appropriate site for the conscious instruction of the young about sexual matters. The gendered relations of the idealised bourgeois family together with the generally prevailing views about children meant that sexual knowledge came to be 'deemed inappropriate for them and possibly damaging to them, as needing to be imparted with caution when a child is considered 'ready' to receive it'.[36] In the privacy of their homes, parents, especially mothers as the guardians of morality, were the ones who decided when and if sexual matters would be made known explicitly to their children. This then could be said to describe the dominant view of the family: a privatised set of relations in which 'woman's role as homemaker and child-bearer became well established'[37] reflected the patriarchally

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34 *ibid.*, pp. 186-7.

35 Jackson (1972), p. 342; Jenny Kitzinger, 'Defending Innocence: Ideologies of Childhood', *Feminist Review*, No. 28, Spring 1988, pp. 77-87. For broader discussion see Judith Ennew, *The Sexual Exploitation of Children*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986).

36 Jackson (1978), p. 342.

37 Bacchi (1986), p. 406.

organised gender order in which it was embedded.

Dominant assumptions in the late nineteenth century about family relations left the issue of sexual knowledge largely a private matter. Any attempts to have schools teach sex education were presumed to involve redefinitions of where this responsibility should lie. Yet, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, in South Australia the articulation of this responsibility as a parental prerogative was largely due to the Education Department's own pronouncements. For most of the twentieth century, the policy of the Education Department was one in which the most that it could do was to assist parents by teaching them how best to teach their children about sex. The view that it was primarily the parent's duty to teach their children about sex was pursued on different occasions but its effect was to create the idea that such a duty was a 'right' that existed in fact (in the sense of predating the systematisation of formal schooling). How and why this happened is a theme that recurs in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. What needs to be emphasised here is the fact that the question of parents' rights about sex education were 'rights' discursively produced as a result of the Education Department's own musings on the matter.

Chapter 4 discusses the efforts of several individuals in the first two decades of the twentieth century to convince the Education Department to take up sex education. Various discourses, particularly those of social purity, eugenics and social hygiene were prominent and driven by concerns about venereal disease, responsible reproduction and, to a lesser extent, definitions of 'manhood'. A significant theme at this time was the imparting of sexual

information to boys in an effort to encourage them to grow up to adopt appropriate sexual behaviour. The emphasis was on stopping the occurrence and spreading of venereal disease. At the policy level there was a lack of consensus as to whether schools should be involved in this problem For the most part, the Education Department operated with an informal policy approach of assisting parents, more precisely mothers, to teach their children about sex.

Chapter 5 examines the debates that emerged when renewed pressure arose in the 1940s for the Education Department to become involved in some way with the formal teaching of sex education. At this time there was also a significant push for reform within education in Australia. In South Australia this led to an enquiry into education and, as part of that process, sex education was once again in contention. The social changes wrought by the war effort of 1939-45 with respect to the sexual division of labour and the consequent upheaval of the prevailing social relations between the sexes provided the underlying dynamic for concerns about the moral well-being of children. Among the educators and moral guardians there was a perception that the prevailing gender order might not be able to accommodate the changes demanded of it. In addition, there was the clear beginnings of a distinctive shift in the underlying mode of thought concerning the way in which schooling, sexuality and subjectivity were articulated.

Sex and subjectivities were being linked pedagogically, a development made possible by the growing hegemony of psychology based discourses within the wider discourses of education. Morals or moral values remained important

but they became incorporated into a new discursive constellation in which the linking of sex and character was also predicated on a particular view of the formation of an individual's subjectivity. What came to be articulated was an emphasis on inculcating the goals of 'self-control' or 'self-discipline' for which the development of the intellect alone would not be sufficient. It was to the education of the emotions that psychology looked. And as will be shown, in 1945 it was the influence of the psychologists that shaped the thinking on sex education in the mid-1940s. The growing emphasis on psychology within educational discourses helped shift the school from being an adjunct to parental mores to a more centrally acknowledged role in shaping subjectivities. As the then Director of Education, Mr Charles Fenner, put it in 1945, 'the school is the crucible of character training' and that 'one important element in the crucible is sex education'.[38] Therein lies the sexing of the subject.

Chapter 6 charts the cross-currents of the discussions and agitations over sex education during the late 1960s. The rapidly changing socioeconomic environment of the late 1960s and early 1970s was the legacy of the economic boom following the end of the 1939-45 war. These changes are sketched briefly to provide the context for an examination of the campaigns that led up to the point at which a decision was made to introduce curriculum based sex education. The participants in these discussions were motivated by a range of concerns associated with, if not generated by, rapid socio-economic change. Some were

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38 Charles Fenner, 'Sex Problems in Schools', *Education Gazette*, Vol. XLI, 15 February 1945, p. 60.

worried about perceived increases in youthful sexual activity (especially after the introduction of the oral contraceptive pill), teenage pregnancies, abortions, juvenile delinquency and so forth. Others were worried that traditional family life and values were under threat. And still others wanted to ensure that the presumed 'head-in-the-sand' practices of the past, of denying or hiding knowledge of sex matters from students, were no longer allowed to prevail. Whatever the particular aims or motivations of the individuals or organisations they were all agreed, tacitly if not overtly, that the issue of sexual knowledge was not one that could be left either to parents, or to chance, or to the young themselves.

In this chapter two shifts in thinking are also identified. First, there was a shift in emphasis from the management of populations, in terms of their reproductive fitness, to the management of knowledge about contraception. This was perhaps symptomatic of the times. The second shift in thought was that the pedagogic undercurrent identified in Chapter 5 had now become dominant. That is, the psychologisation of educational discourse had been achieved to the extent that the idea of sexuality as central to emotional well-being, indeed as a truth of one's being, was now positioned at the centre of the discursive construction of what sex education meant. It was the duty of those responsible, particularly educators, to 'get in first with the healthy truth'.[39] Just what actually constituted this truth, however, was not self-evident. The discussions in Chapters 4, 5 and

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[39] The idea that it was necessary 'to get in first with the healthy truth' was central to the editorial support given by the *Advertiser*. See 'Education About Life', *Advertiser*, 1 August 1967.

6 together go some way towards explaining how the construction of this 'truth' came about and how it contributed to the shaping of the sex education debates. Indeed, this 'truth' was very much a 'condition of possibility'.

Chapter 7 discusses the actual implementation of a new health curriculum offering dedicated curriculum space to sex education. By the early 1970s there was a growing perception developed that the prevailing gender order and the dominant social values were being transformed irrevocably. The discussion is prefaced by an analysis of several issues that were indicative, for many, that the old values were under great stress. The issues are not put forward as causes of the decision to place sex education into the curriculum. Rather, they exemplify the sorts of challenges that were being made to the hitherto generally unquestioned voices of social authority. The bulk of Chapter 7 is then concerned with how the Education Department went about developing, implementing and evaluating its decision. In the discussion of these developments two points need to be noted here. First, there was the explicit recognition that a key aspect of the success of the teaching of sex education was attributable to a particular sort of class-room pedagogy and methodology. That is, the nature of the pedagogic relation between teacher and student that was deemed appropriate for the teaching of sex education (and the health curriculum generally) was oriented to a pastoral approach. The second important aspect was that there was surprisingly little controversy generated either within the school system or in the wider community. Indeed, the fear of controversy was more the perception shared by educators than by the general public.

This point is elaborated further in Chapter 8 where public responses to the inclusion of sex education in the curriculum are evaluated. One particular area of controversy, namely homosexuality, is discussed in some depth. It is argued in this section of the chapter that the issue of homosexuality defined the boundaries of what the teaching of sex education could and should address. It was not so much a question of the topic of homosexuality itself but its perceived subversiveness in terms of the values of dominant gender order. The chapter also examines the expansion of the health curriculum to include education about Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). These particular issues illustrate one of the main themes of the thesis that what was (and remains) at issue in debates over sex education was the defence and maintenance of a (predominantly) patriarchally-defined gender order in which the norms of heterosexuality are enforced.

Thus to sum up, the thesis provides an historical analysis of the various attempts to persuade the Education Department to place sex education within a school-based curriculum. The thesis makes the following substantive points:

- debates over sex education were concerned about sexing the subject in the sense of maintaining the dominant gender order of patriarchally-defined masculinity and femininity (hegemonic masculinity, to borrow Connell's phrase).
- the organising or structuring discourses on sex education shifted during the twentieth century from a predominantly moral and social hygiene (ie. medico-moral) approach to a pedagogical

discourse constructed around various psychology knowledges (ie. psycho-moral approach).

- this psychologising of significant aspects of educational discourse eventually enabled a resolution to be achieved concerning the basic recurring questions (ie. who should teach what where and how) thrown up by the various sex education debates during the course of the twentieth century.
- parallelling the discursive shift from a medico-moral to a psycho-moral approach was a shift in emphasis from the management of the populations in terms of reproductive fitness to the management of contraceptive and basic sexual knowledge in the context of heterosexual relationships.
- the idea of a parental prerogative to teach their children about sex existing as a right predating the formation of mass schooling was largely a discursive product of the Education Department's own making.

Chapter 1

The Bio-Politics of the Subject: A Foucauldian Perspective

I

The idea of 'sexing the subject' as developed in this thesis is both suggested by and, in part, derived from the theoretical approach developed by Michel Foucault. His contributions to the development of histories of sex and sexuality have been substantial. However, despite the title of one of his major works, the three volumed *The History of Sexuality*,[1] his contributions have not really been concerned with the writing of history in the sense of providing detailed historical analysis of any given period. Consistent with his genealogical approach to history and discourse[2] the minutiae of historical analysis have not been Foucault's style or *forte*. Rather, his singular contribution has been in generating a theoretical approach which historians have found useful in writing their histories. In particular, his conceptualisation of ideas about discourse, power and sexuality has been especially influential. Since this thesis is concerned with those areas, in varying degrees, it is necessary to take some account of Foucualt's theoretical and methodological

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1 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976/84); *The History of Sexuality Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984/88); *The History of Sexuality Volume 3: The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984/90). The dates given in brackets for all of Foucault's books indicate the French and English publishing dates respectively. Thus, for example, *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduciton* was first published in French in 1976 and in English in 1984.

2 This approach is discussed more fully, *infra* pp. 34*ff.*

approach. Hence this chapter examines these key ideas which, collectively, can be regarded the core constitutents of his theory of bio-politics.

In his theory of bio-politics the management of populations as a whole as well as their constituent individual members formed part of a new art of governance. This involved the emergence of a new social space that Foucault and others following him have termed 'the social'. This was the terrain within or across which issues that had once been left to families came to be taken up as problems of and for governance. As Smart has suggested the 'social' was 'the domain in which positive, productive, local, and individualising forms of power have emerged and been exercised'.[3] This was the domain in which developed new social institutions such as mass schooling. The 'social' was, and remains, strictly speaking, neither a solely private nor a solely public sphere yet it seems to combine both. In terms of schooling and education it is the terrain where the boundaries of public and private are always in question. As will be demonstrated in various chapters of the thesis the problem of sex education, and the 'sexing of the subject' more generally, is precisely a *social* problem in the sense just adumbrated.

Of the three senses of the idea of 'sexing the subject' noted in the *Introduction* the two bearing on the formation of subjectivities[4] warrant some theoretical grounding. These were the idea of a subject as an individual

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[3] Barry Smart, *Foucault, Marxism and Critique*, (London: Routledge 1983), p. 108.

[4] The third sense referred to in the *Introduction* related to the creation and endorsement of the teaching of sexual knowledge as a curriculum subject in its own right.

identity (ie a self) and as an identity within a given social and political order. Foucault's theory of bio-politics addresses the formation of subjects in both these senses.[5] This will be discussed in more depth below. For now it will be useful to make some preliminary points about his overall approach to the issue of forming subjects for the question of how humans became subjects was perhaps his most enduring preoccupation. In his essay, 'The Subject and Power', Foucault looked back over his work as a whole and stressed the continuity of his preoccupation with creating 'a history of the different modes by which in our culture, human beings are made subjects'.[6] Foucault termed these 'modes of objectification' and he identified three which he thought were important in 'transform[ing] human beings into subjects'.[7]

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5 The following works provide a good cross-section of interpretations and engagements with Foucault's ideas: Jonathan Arac, ed, *After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges*, (New Brunswick (USA): Rutgers University Press, 1988); Stephen J. Ball, ed, *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge*, (London: Routledge, 1990); Mark Cousins & Athar Hussain, *Michel Foucault*, (London: Macmillan, 1984); Hubert Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed with an Afterword by and an Interview with Michel Foucault, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983); David Couzens Hoy, ed, *Foucault: A Critical Reader,* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and Self*, (London: Polity Press, 1992); Clare O'Farrell, *Foucault: Historian or Philosopher?*, (London: Macmillan, 1989); Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism and History: Mode of Production versus Mode of Information*, (London: Polity Press, 1984); Caroline Ramazanoglu, *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism*, (London: Routledge, 1993); Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1981); Smart (1983).

6 Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, No. 8, Summer 1982, p. 777.

7 *ibid*, p. 777.

The first mode of objectivization he described as 'the objectivizing of the speaking subject'.[8] This concerned various forms of knowledge that had claimed for themselves the label of 'science' (or 'human sciences') like philology, linguistics, economics, medicine and biology.[9] The second mode of objectivization identified what he called 'dividing practices' where the subject was 'divided inside himself [*sic*] or divided from others'. Examples given by Foucault of this second mode included 'the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, and the criminals and the "good boys"'.[10] Foucault produced four major studies[11] addressing 'dividing practices' but they did not necessarily share the same methodological assumptions.[12] Finally, there was the third mode which dealt with 'the way a human being turns himself [*sic*] into a

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8 *ibid.*, p. 777.

9 While this could easily embrace, to a greater or lesser extent, all of Foucault's major works from *Madness and Civilization* (1961/67) to his three volumed *History of Sexuality* (1976/84 to 1984/90), it is especially applicable to two works in particular -- *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/72) and *The Order of Things* (1966/70). These latter works were his two major forays into methodology in which he made explicit the approach that informed both *Madness and Civilisation* and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963/73). In particular, both *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things* provided significant critiques of some of the methodological and epistemological assumptions underpinning Enlightenment and modernist thought.

10 Foucault (1982), pp. 777-8.

11 These were *Madness and Civilisation* (1961/67) dealing with sanity and reason, *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963/73) dealing with medicine and health, *Discipline and Punish* (1975/79) dealing with prisons and criminality, and *The History of Sexuality* focussing on sex, sexuality and sexual identities.

12 For some discussion on the thematic (and perhaps methodological) continuities and shifts in Foucault's works see the discussion in Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983), *passim*. See also O'Farrell (1989) for a slightly different emphasis.

subject'.[13] That is, how people[14] come to see themselves as subjects of a particular regime of knowledge and social practice. Compared with the sort of objectivization of the first mode there was, in this third mode, much more emphasis attributed to human agency, at least in terms of the capacity of human beings to see or recognise themselves. This shift in emphasis does not mean that Foucault abandoned the objectivizing aspects of the first mode. The role of discourse, as part of the process of generating subjectivities and subject positions,[15] still remained important for Foucault.

Hence this chapter examines a number of Foucault's key ideas that relate to these modes of objectivization, of forming subjects. The aim is to delineate the particular conceptual moves made by Foucault that underpin his understanding of these three modes of the objectivising subject. These conceptual moves concern his analysis of discourse, power and sexuality.

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13 Foucault (1982), p. 778.

14 As was noted in the *Introduction* (pp. 10-11, Fnn 20 & 21) Foucault's writing was gender-blind in that his use of general terms and concepts assumed that the referent was a man.

15 Some caution needs to be exercised here with this notion of 'subject positions'. It seems to be a term which is much-used within most if not all postmodernist and poststructuralist discourses. Whenever Foucault used this term, it was, for the most part, to designate discursive locations as *outcomes* of particular discursive processes. Yet there is an increasing tendency to talk of 'subject positions' as if they existed independently of the particular discursive formation in which they come to be recognised. In effect, this presents the discursive construction as existing prior to the discourse which is supposed to be producing it. As such the notion of a 'subject position', contrary to Foucault's intention, would then signify nothing more than a variation on the theme of role theory. For some criticism of the concept of 'role', and role theory generally, see R.W. Connell, 'The Concept Of Role And What To Do With It' in his *Which Way Is Up? Essays on Class, Sex and Culture*, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 189-209.

Collectively these refer to the bio-politics of the subject, the key elements of what Marshall suggested was Foucault's 'philosophy of the subject'.[16]

As will be shown, this bio-political approach enabled Foucault to reconceptualise the art of governance. In Foucault's view the locus of sovereignty (ie the actuality of juridically based government) came to be de-centred (in Foucault's terms de-individualised) as the art of government came to embrace more and more domains previously subsumed under the governmental model of the family. This saw the emergence of the domain of the 'social' in which issues that had once been left to families now began to impinge on the multiple questions relating to the nature, practices and justifications previously attributed to government. The reference point for governance had shifted. In order to see this it is necessary now to look at the key concepts, discourse, power and sexuality, that underpin his theory of bio-power or bio-politics.

II

The first of these is discourse theory. This involved a recognition that, in relation to knowledge, there was a structural formation which conditioned what can be said, who can say it, and when it can be said. Moreover, what could be counted as knowledge, and indeed truth, was defined within specific discursive relations. Which is to say that whatever was to count as knowledge,

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16 James D. Marshall, 'Foucault and Educational Research' in Stephen J. Ball, ed, (1990), p. 14.

whether true or false, was produced by and within (and perhaps between) given discourses.

Foucault defined discourse as being more than just the systematic arrangement of words and signs. In addition to encompassing words (or signs or utterances) and what those words (signs or utterances) might signify, Foucault's definition of 'discourses' included the very acts of speaking, writing or articulating words (signs or utterances). As he put it,

> discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to language (*langue*) and to speech.[17]

For Foucault discourses were 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak'.[18] The objects of discourse emerged largely within a given discursive formation which is itself constructed according to what Foucault described as particular rules of formation. The term 'discursive formation' referred to a degree of regularity that can be discerned within and between its 'objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices'.[19] The rules (of discursive formation) made possible the inclusion, exclusion, modification and so forth of these constitutive aspects or 'elements'.

Foucault asserted that there were three rules governing discursive

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17 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1969/72) p. 49. Emphasis in original. Foucault went on to add that 'It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe'.

18 *ibid.*, p. 49.

19 *ibid.*, p. 38.

formation.[20] First there were the 'surfaces of emergence' which mapped out the terrain appropriate for a given discourse. That is, these 'surfaces' provide the positional location within the discursive formation. The second rule referred to that set of practices appropriate to the 'authorities of delimitation'. This referred to those within the given society who are granted the authority to delimit, define, label and discuss the objects of the discursive formation. And finally there were 'grids of specification' within which the particular relations (such as division, classification, contrasts, combinations, derivations and so forth) between and constitutive of the objects of discourse come to be established.

The discursive formation was thus made possible 'by a group of relations established between authorities of emergence, delimitation, and specification'.[21] Such authorities and relations might include, for example, doctors and medical knowledge, teachers and pedagogy, and so on. These relations were what Foucault described as 'discursive practices'; that

> body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social economic, geographical, or linguistic area'.[22]

Discursive practices then ensured that the very objects of discourse were not pregiven to be described or assigned meaning by the individual subject or interlocutor. Rather individual consciousnesses (ie subjects) come to be

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20 *ibid.*, pp. 41-2.

21 *ibid.*, p. 44.

22 *ibid.*, p. 117.

situated, even constituted, by the set of discursive practices of the given discursive formation. It was the discursive practices, shaped by the above rules of formation, that Foucault suggested held particular discourses together. These practices could not be discerned simply by looking at what appeared on the surface of the discourse, that is by looking only at its words, or statements, or terms of reference. Even less could they be discerned by looking at what individuals said or wrote about these words and themes. They could only be appropriated by digging below the surface.

This approach gave Foucault a particularly powerful method of analysis which enabled him, like the structuralists in general,[23] to eschew any active (or rather prior) contribution, in terms of creating meaning, by the individual consciousnesses of human subjects. It is in this sense that the 'objectivizing of the speaking subject'[24] is made possible. For it is not what the 'speaking subject', generically considered, has to say that is important. Particular controversies and debates engaged in by 'speaking subjects' were,

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[23] It is important to note that Foucault never regarded himself as a structuralist though he did concede that the results that his method produced were 'not entirely foreign to what is called structuralism', Foucault (1969/72) p. 15. Moreover, as Dreyfus & Rabinow (1983) p. 17 note, the original title of his work, *The Order of Things*, was *The Archaeology of Structuralism*. Nevertheless, Foucault, both in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (pp. 15 & 204) and the Foreword to the English edition of *The Order of Things* (p. xiv) stressed his distance from structuralism. Indeed, in the latter work, Foucault described those who persisted in labelling him as a structuralist as 'half-witted 'commentators". See also Michel Foucault, 'History, Discourse and Discontinuity' (trans. by Anthony M. Nazzaro) in *Psychological Man*, ed Robert Boyers, (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975) p. 218 n. 4 where he asked rhetorically 'Is it necessary to specify again that I am not what is called a "structuralist"?'

[24] Foucault, (1982), p. 777.

for Foucault, secondary matters. Indeed, he described these as '*reflexive* or *secondary relations*' which remained the province only of a particular discourse.[25] As such they were not reliable guides for explaining why particular debates, controversies and so forth occurred. For such an explanation one must look to the 'episteme',

> the general system of thought whose network, in its positivity, renders an interplay of simultaneous and apparently contradictory opinions possible. It is this network that defines the conditions that make a controversy or problem possible, and that bears the historicity of knowledge.[26]

A given 'episteme' made particular knowledges available for recuperation or recovery by the archaeological method of analysis. It was, in effect, the condition of possibility for the speaking subject to objectivise itself. And it was this to which an archaeological analysis of knowledge was directed. Through the 'episteme', the discursive relations enabled the 'speaking subject' (together with whatever that subject speaks or writes) to become discourse; an objective (or objectivised) piece of data to be analysed like any other historically produced artefact. If a discourse was an artefact then so too was the configuration of knowledges that it made possible.

While this approach to discourse did not change all that much during his life there did emerge a recognition that this approach to discourse was incomplete. Part of the problem for Foucault here, despite his claims to the contrary, was his use of the structuralist technique of explaining phenomena

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25 Foucault, (1969/72), p. 45. Emphasis in original.

26 Foucault, (1966/70), p. 75.

by declaring the ever-changing or variable aspects to be surface manifestations of a deeper or underlying structure. The 'episteme' or 'discursive relations' were the deep structures that made possible the variety of discursive fields of knowledges of the human sciences. In effect, the 'episteme', as Poster points out, 'functioned as the master key to all discourses'.[27] Finally, contrary to his own claim that the 'episteme' was not a 'grand underlying theory', his archaeological approach nevertheless ended up positing it as a general theory (in Foucault's words an 'enveloping theory')[28] that rendered the surface phenomena intelligible. By appealing to these deep structures or formation rules Foucault felt that the 'archaeologist of knowledge' was able to stand above or beyond or 'free of the influences of both the theories and practices he studies'.[29] Just like the very discourses that he sought to criticise, particularly those of the Enlightenment, Foucault was laying claim to his own Archimedean point.

An even more important problem however, was the fact that what was missing was an adequate understanding of the connections between discourse and power. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault made these connections more

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27 Poster, (1984), p. 88. The same point is made, though a little differently, by Dreyfus and Rabinow. In their view, Foucault's archaeological approach 'seeks to ground its autonomy by showing that the content of the descriptive positivity it discovers is determined exclusively by formation rules' (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983, p. 95). They also point out that, despite Foucault's conceptual emphasis on discourse as practice, he nevertheless ended up subordinating practice to theory or rather, placing theory in the privileged position (*ibid.*, p. 102-3).

28 Foucault, (1969/72), p. 207 cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow (1983), p. 98.

29 *ibid.*, p. 102.

explicit.

> Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. ... ...There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations: there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy.[30]

Discursive formations and discursive relations thus take place within and contribute to the shaping of specific, historical configurations of power. Thus knowledge and power were bound together. This coincidence of the power-knowledge nexus within any given discursive formation was, for Foucault, a matter of necessity. However, the specific outcomes or the particularities of that nexus were basically a matter of contingency or chance, akin to rolling the dice.[31] This followed from Foucault's reconceptualisation of power, a

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30 Foucault, (1976/84), pp. 101-2.

31 Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed with an Introduction by Donald F. Bouchard, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard & Sherry Simon, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 155. Foucault was here quoting Nietzsche's comments about 'the iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance'. But note that Foucault then immediately went on to comment that 'Chance is not simply a drawing of lots, but raising the stakes in every attempt to master chance through the will to power, and giving rise to the risk of an even greater chance'. This essay was first published in French in 1971 and as the editor noted (p. 139), it marked a major attempt by Foucault 'to explain his relationship to those sources which ...[were]... fundamental to his development'. Expressing a similar view Dreyfus & Rabinow (1983, 106) nonetheless also observed that Foucault's discussion of 'genealogy' in this essay did not 'encompass all of his methodological arsenal'. Nevertheless, the key point to be noted is that it marked a significant and decisive turning point in his thinking. Hereafter this essay will be cited as 1971/86.

reconceptualisation, however, that saw the archaeological method get displaced by a different methodological approach. Foucault distanced himself from the archaeological approach and advocated what he termed a 'genealogy of knowledge'. Even so, he did not abandon his conception of discourses as significant for the creation of human subjects. However, what he did do was to pay particular attention to the question of power and the entities on which (and through which) power operated, namely bodies. In his two major works of the 1970s, *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault developed his discussion of power in general and the notion of bio-power in particular. Of central importance for this was the Nietzschean idea of 'genealogy'.

III

Foucault did not explain what he meant by 'genealogy' so much as offer a functionalist definition of it. The role of genealogy, he suggested, was to record the history of the development of humanity. However, that history was not to be understood 'in terms of a linear development'.[32] The task of genealogical analysis was quite different from that form of historical analysis which sought to 'restore an unbroken continuity' through supposed demonstrations 'that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present'.[33] What was ignored in this approach to the

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32 Foucault (1971/86), p. 139.

33 *ibid.*, p. 146.

writing of history (that is, the approach generally characteristic of Enlightenment thought) was the arrogance and violence through which was created whatever was accepted as the historical record. In Foucault's view, there were no absolutes, no unities, no essences or universals, through which historical understanding or historical interpretation emerged.[34] The emergence of unities or continuities, of a sense of constancy and historical duration, of goals or ends of history, were imposed by those who created the historical analyses.[35] Historical interpretation was, for all intents and purposes, an arbitrary discursive process. To write history was thus more than just telling a story or stories about the past. It was to create a particular interpretation and, more often than not, impose it by displacing or over-riding another. Genealogy exposed this struggle of interpretations and revealed them as discourses in which knowledge and power intertwined.[36]

In elaborating his genealogical method Foucault was able to overcome a couple of the problems with his archaeological approach. In the first place, the problem of the 'episteme' as a 'deep structure', or at least as 'the master key to all discourses' could now be avoided. If the genealogical method of

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34 *ibid.*, pp. 150-3.

35 Dreyfus & Rabinow, (1983) p. 106; Poster, (1984) p. 75 and p. 89.

36 Foucault had earlier made a similar point in his *Inaugural Lecture at the College de France*, 2 December 1970 entitled 'The Order of Discourse', reprinted in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. & intro by Robert Young, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987). Hereafter cited as 1970/87. Note especially his view (p. 67) that 'We must conceive of discourse as a violence which we do to things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them'.

historical analysis meant that there could be no pregiven unities or universals, except as created within specific discursive formations, then the question of 'epistemes' as separate or extra-discursive organising principles also dissolved. Second, the problem of the conceptual status of 'epistemes' vis a vis 'discursive relations' is also avoided because both are the outcome of an arbitrary knowledge/power nexus. The importance of the term 'episteme' seemed to diminish in Foucault's subsequent major works since he was no longer concerned with the problem of epistemological foundations. With the genealogical method such foundations became chimerical.

Finally, a question that Foucault seemed to discount, namely that of the relation of the knowledge worker (ie. the speaking subject such as the intellectual or historian or the like) to the writing of particular discourses, could now be addressed more effectively. In Foucault's earlier works, despite his intention of wanting to show that the speaking subject was objectivised by its discourse, intellectuals were speaking subjects who seemed to stand outside the discourses as, in Dreyfus and Rabinow's words, 'the detached spectator[s] of mute-discourse monuments'.[37] From a genealogical perspective no-one could stand outside of their discursive practices and make an intelligible knowledge-claim, much less a truth-claim. Such claims could only be made through particular discursive formations to establish the 'ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and

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37 Dreyfus & Rabinow, (1983) p. 103.

specific effects of power attached to the true'.[38] These 'rules', the 'regimes of truth' as Foucault called them,[39] were internal or inside the particular discourses. Whatever it was that came to be labelled 'truth' was the outcome of the indissoluble intertwining of power and knowledge. It was the outcome of discursive truth regimes. The task for Foucault was thus to show how discursive practices of knowledge and power intertwined in such a way as to constitute each other thereby producing humans as both subjects and objects.[40]

Foucault did not assume that power could be conceptualised as having a pregiven essence that was somehow or other outside of time and history. Power did not exist in isolation waiting to be captured or appropriated by the stronger or most cunning operator. It was not 'something that one holds on to or allows to slip away'.[41] Power could only be said to exist to the extent that it was embodied within specific political and social relationships; or perhaps more precisely, to the extent that it emerged as 'an effect of the operation of social relationships'.[42] As Foucault expressed it, 'power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations'.[43]

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38 Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power' in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed by Colin Gordon, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986) p. 132. This interview was first published in 1977 and will henceforth be cited as 1977a/86.

39 *ibid.*, p. 131.

40 Dreyfus & Rabinow, (1983) p. 120.

41 Foucault (1976/84), p. 94.

42 Sheridan, (1981) p. 218.

43 Foucault (1976/84), p. 94.

Conceptually, Foucault shifted the focus of analysis from one of treating power as an abstract but possessable entity to one of treating 'power as *power relations*'.[44]

Foucault once described his understanding of power in the following terms.

> When I think of the mechanics of power, I think of its capillary form of existence, of the extent to which power seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies, permeates their gestures, their posture, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people.[45]

Put thus, power should not be understood just as a negative force attempting to limit what individuals might become or do. It also acts in a positive manner. As Foucault put it, 'power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth'.[46] What Foucault termed 'disciplines' (technologies of power)[47] produced forms of power that 'seep', 'permeate', and 'reach right into' the bodies of individuals to produce them as subjects, as (largely) docile but productive bodies. The question of what he meant by the notion 'discipline' will be addressed in a moment. What needs to be stressed

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[44] Michelle Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), p. 136. See also Smart (1983), pp. 96 *ff.* and p. 103.

[45] Foucault, 'Prison Talk' Interview from 1975 cited in Sheridan (1981) p. 217. Foucault makes an earlier reference to the 'capillary functioning of power' in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage Books, 1975/79), p. 198.

[46] Foucault (1975/79), p. 194.

[47] *ibid.*, p. 194 and for a definition of 'disciplines' see *ibid.*, p. 137.

here is the significant implication that no-one could thus be exempt from the operations of power. As he expressed it in an interview, 'power *is* "always already there", that one is never "outside" it' since power was 'co-extensive with the social body'.[48] In other words, there were no dimensions of social space devoid of relations of power. Social space, 'the social', was a multiplicity of networks of capillaries of power within, through and by which human beings, themselves networks of capillaries of power, come to be formed both as subjects and social objects. As such there were no free social spaces to which one could escape to enjoy some pure form of freedom. As Smart has pointed out, power relations are 'the very basis, the fibre or network of the social domain'.[49]

Foucault's choice of metaphor of a capillary[50] form to describe the

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48 Michel Foucault, 'Power and Strategies' in Colin Gordon (1986), pp. 141-2 (emphasis in original). The interview was originally published in 1977. Hereafter cited as 1977b/86. Barrett (1991, p. 136) has pointed out that this particular view of Foucault's has been interpreted by some commentators to mean either that he located power everywhere (and hence nowhere specific) or else reduced everything to some undefined notion of power. Foucault (1976/84, p. 93) did in fact state that 'power is everywhere'; but he also immediately qualified that statement by emphasising that this was not because power 'embrace[d] everything, but because it comes from everywhere'. As Barrett noted, to draw the above conclusion in criticism of Foucault's view of power would ignore his emphasis on the relational character of power. And as others have suggested, Foucault was only claiming that power was omnipresent not omnipotent; see for example, Stephen Best & Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, (New York: The Guildford Press, 1991), p. 55.

49 Smart (1983), p. 103.

50 David Couzens Hoy, 'Power Repression, Progress: Foucault, Lukes, and the Frankfurt School' in Hoy (1987), p. 142 also points to the metaphor of the 'network' or 'grid', as do Smart (1983) and Dreyfus & Rabinow (1983). Note also that the use of this metaphor in Foucault's conceptualisation of

nature of power also reveals another important aspect of his approach. This is that wherever and whenever power is exercised there is resistance; specifically that there can be no exercise of power without some corresponding form of resistance. Power was 'indissociable from contestation and struggle'.[51] Yet Foucault nowhere established an argument to sustain his claim. It remained an assertion[52] (or a basic assumption) underpinning his theoretical position.

Clearly power was inextricably linked to his ideas of knowledge, discourse and subjectivity.

> Power produces knowledge..., ...power and knowledge directly imply one another; ...there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These 'power-knowledge relations' are to be analysed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations.[53]

The four dimensions of power, knowledge, discourse, and subjectivity are

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power also refers back to his discussion of 'grids of specification'in *The Archeology of Knowledge*. It will be recalled that these were the grids within which particular discursive relations and objects come to be established and hence known.

[51] Best & Kellner (1991), p. 55.

[52] Poster (1984), p. 26. For Foucault's own statements see his (1976/84) p. 95 ff; and his (1977b/86), p. 142.

[53] Foucault (1975/79), pp. 27-8. An earlier formulation of this was summarised in Foucault (1970/87). See also Foucault (1976/84) especially p. 96.

clearly evident here as 'power-knowledge', 'the objects to be known' (including 'the subject who knows'), 'the modalities of knowledge', and 'the subject who knows' respectively. The most crucial dimension of Foucault's conceptualisation of power was that it also had to be understood as creative and productive. This view was at the centre of Foucault's conceptualisation of power. He was concerned with analysing the political and social forms taken by power relations in the modern era and through which the relationship between sovereignty and subjection came to be constituted, exercised, represented and understood. In short, his conception of power was concerned with the 'how' of power as well as the more conventional dimensions encompassed by the 'who', 'what' and 'why' of power.

It was Foucault's view that political theorists had hitherto focussed on the latter aspects of power and hence missed, or at least obscured, the 'how ' of power.[54] He maintained that from about the seventeenth century the nature of government was modernising in a way theretofore unknown. He was referring not just to the growing democratisation of sovereign power (or at least the beginnings of challenges to the absolutism of monarchial power) but to the fact that the subsequent Enlightenment promises of freedom and progress, which liberal and socialist supporters claimed that this growth represented, were over-stated. Since at least the Middle Ages, many political theorists within the discourses of the West have cast their analyses in terms of sovereignty, law and prohibition (the classic top-down approach). In so doing,

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54 Foucault, (1982), pp. 785-6. See also Barrett (1992), p. 136.

they missed the fundamental sign of modernity.[55] This was the growth of technologies (ie the how) of power for the management both of individual human beings and the wider populations to which they belonged. These technologies of power were described variously by Foucault as 'disciplines' or the 'microphysics of power'.[56] Central to their exercise was a two-fold process that Foucault designated 'the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations... [which marked] ...the beginning of an era of bio-power'.[57] He saw this as emerging in about the seventeenth century when forms of sovereignty and government were themselves starting to undergo radical challenges if not changes.[58] By analysing various discourses on the art of governance Foucault traced the contours of these changes.

The art of governance (or 'governmentality' as Foucault now termed it) could no longer be understood as being defined by the issue of territoriality. Up until the sixteenth century sovereignty remained juridically understood as focussed 'on a territory and consequently on the subjects who inhabit it' where

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55 Foucault (1976/84) p. 143 where he stated quite explicitly that 'what might be called a society's "threshold of modernity" has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies', namely the technologies of power. See also Timothy W. Luke, *Social Theory and Modernity: Critique, Dissent, and Revolution*, (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 242.

56 Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', *Ideology and Consciousness*, No. 6, Summer 1979, pp. 5-21 where he stressed the importance of population and its management as an integral aspect of the development of modern forms of government.

57 Foucault (1976/84), p. 140.

58 *ibid.*, pp. 142-4.

the key question for the sovereign power was on how to get and keep its territory. In the then prevailing definitions of government the inhabitants of a territory were simply secondary considerations whereas the territory assumed the foundational, defining status.[59]

With the advent of modernity the notion of what it meant to govern (and indeed be governed) began to be redefined. The definitional ascendancy of 'territory' began to be displaced. Increasingly, the 'art of government' came to be concerned with 'the right disposition of things'. However, the 'government of things' was not 'a question of opposing things to men [*sic*]' but rather governmentality involved the management of 'the complex unit constituted by men [*sic*] and things'.[60] Consequently, argued Foucault,

> the things which the government is to be concerned about are men [*sic*], but men [*sic*] in their relations, their links, their imbrications with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc; men [*sic*] in their relation to that other kind of things which are customs, habits, ways of doing and thinking, etc; lastly, men [*sic*] in their relation to that other kind of things again which are accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc.[61]

On this interpretation, 'territory' becomes merely one among many of the 'component elements' of governmentality.[62] The real locus for

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59 Foucault (1979), p. 11.

60 *ibid.*

61 *ibid.*

62 *ibid.*, p. 21.

governmentality thus becomes the (seemingly) ever-proliferating administrative apparatuses with their complex 'power-knowledge relations', the disciplines and their related disciplinary strategies, overseeing more and more domains of human activity. This was the sphere of bio-power.

Bio-power, suggested Foucault, focussed on life and its management in contrast to that of past eras in which the power to punish by death was the norm in a juridico-sovereign form of government. Foucault theorised 'bio-power' in the following manner. On the one hand there developed what he called 'an anatomo-politics of the human body' . This treated

> the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this ensured by the procedures of power that characterised the *disciplines*.[63]

On the other hand there was the development of the 'bio-politics of population'. This 'focussed on the species body... ...and its biological processes' such as 'propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary'.[64] While Foucault thought that the 'anatomo-political' dimension emerged first, it was quickly followed by that of the bio-political. The two were inter-related in that each informed the other in mutually reinforcing ways through the development and deployment of an ever-growing range of disciplinary techniques.

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63 Foucault (1976/84), p. 139.

64 *ibid.*, p. 139

In respect of developing an understanding of what he called the 'anatomo-politics of the body', Foucault's discussion of the birth of the modern prison system in *Discipline and Punish*[65] dealt at length with these disciplinary techniques. Even though the modern prison and its development was the main focus in this work it also exemplified the practices of other emerging modern disciplines such as the military, schools, hospitals and factories. It was not so much that these institutions had never existed before. What was new was the particular emphasis on techniques of surveillance and control. These Foucault described as constituting 'an art of the human body'.[66] This enabled new forms of institutional organisations (such as schools) to be mobilised by and around particular disciplinary practices which themselves were specific for those institutional settings. Foucault pointed out that these disciplines did not emerge as if by some grand design or as a result of some 'sudden discovery'. Rather they developed piece-meal 'in response to particular needs' and involved 'a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location' which, considered individually, were defined according 'to their domain of application'.[67] Only gradually, for the most part at least, did they accumulate to the point where they 'reached out to ever broader domains'

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65 It needs to be noted, however, that his concept of 'bio-power' was developed after he had published *Discipline and Punish*. The account offered above presupposes that Foucault's discussion of bio-power in *The History of Sexuality* re-organised his concept of 'discipline' to suit. See O'Farrell (1989), p. 106.

66 Foucault (1975/79), p. 137.

67 *ibid.*, p. 138.

and thus could be seen as embodying something like a 'blueprint of a general method'.[68]

It is important to note that Foucault was not suggesting that disciplinary techniques only came into being in the modern era. He recognised that there had been many other forms of disciplinary techniques in the past.[69] What marked the modernity of these new forms of disciplines was their focus on the body in terms of 'the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely'; in short, the anatomo-political pole of bio-power.

> Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in terms of economic utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection.[70]

Thus what Foucault described as the 'micro-physics of power' emerged to create and link the individualised (but disciplined) body, the subject who knows, to the wider body politic.[71] But the link was made in such a way as to try and minimise the political potential and efficacy of the resultant social

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68 *ibid.*, p. 138 and p. 139.

69 *ibid.*, pp. 136-7 contains some sketchy discussion on this. For Foucault's more detailed discussions on pre-modern disciplines see his (1984/88) and (1984/90).

70 Foucault (1975/79), p. 138.

71 *ibid.*, p. 139.

body.[72]

The disciplinary technologies, in effect, constituted the discursive fields within which discourses mapped out or rather posited, particular realities, 'domains of objects and rituals of truth'.[73] They operated by creating spatial and conceptual hierarchies within which particular ideas, activities, movements and positions, down to the minutest detail, were specified as normal. This helped to establish the norms against which the individual performances came to be judged. The technology of bio-power

> has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendour; it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies of the sovereign from his [*sic*] obedient subjects; it effects distributions around the norm. ... A normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centred on life.[74]

Foucault also stressed that the law and institutions of justice have continued to be important. However, they have become 'increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on)' organised around the operation of norms which fluctuate in response to changing circumstances or whatever such that each individual is continually caught up in monitoring and adjusting their own performances.[75] In this way, 'the

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72 *ibid.*, p. 221.

73 *ibid.*, p. 194.

74 Foucault (1976/84), p. 144.

75 *ibid.*, p. 193.

individual and the knowledge which may belong to him [*sic*]' are produced.[76] That is, subjectivity, the objectification of the speaking subject, is produced through the discursive fields both constitutive of and constituted by power-knowledge relations. The human body here becomes 'an object to be manipulated' via the discursive practices described above.[77] Bio-power individualises each body even as each is subjected to the same disciplinary regimes.

The other pole of bio-power concerned the bio-political management of the human body at the level of species or population. The power-knowledge relations of the emergent normalising society involve a conception of governance that went beyond equating the notion of 'government' with the unitary sovereignty of state power. In place of a model of power organised around the binary opposition between ruler and ruled, Foucault developed an approach in which the State was characterised as 'a composite reality'[78] precariously constructed from multiple centres of continually negotiated power-knowledge relations. Foucault did not deny that the State was a locus of sovereignty. What he denied was the conception of power, an hierarchical top down conception, that had underpinned, since the Middle Ages of western European history, the binary opposition between ruler and ruled, between sovereign and subject. Foucault argued that there was change in the political

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76 *ibid.*

77 Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983), p. 134.

78 Foucault (1979), p. 20.

and social visibility (with respect to power) of sovereignty and subjects respectively. Not only did the actuality of sovereignty and subjection change but so did the political and social landscape.

In Foucault's view, the crucial historical development was related to demographic issues. That is, 'the art of government' came to be addressed 'anew in relation to the emergence of the problem of population'.[79] Prior to about the sixteenth or seventeenth century the family provided the primary or dominant model for characterising the 'art of government' and the relations between sovereign and subject. Governmentality was seen as analogous to the art of managing a family and its resources. Moreover, populations were generally dispersed and the responsibility for the control of local groupings of population rested with local power centres which in turn were answerable, at least in principle, to the ruling sovereign. However, with the demographic changes characteristic of the various phases of industrialisation this model began to give way to one appropriate for the normalising and disciplinary society.[80] As Foucault put it, 'discipline was never more important or more valorised than at the moment when it became important to manage a population'.[81] The point for Foucault was that this change began to make itself felt when it was no longer possible to conceive of the management of populations in terms of family relations. On Foucault's account the historical

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79 *ibid.*, p. 16.

80 Foucault (1975/79), p. 221.

81 Foucault (1979), p. 19.

development led to families coming to be seen 'as an element internal to population, no longer ... as a model, but as a segment'.[82]

He also emphasised that the question of managing a population did not just mean overseeing or superintending the mass of individuals and their aggregate of effects. This was certainly part of the problem. In addition were the particularities and specificities of birth-rates, marriages, sexual behaviours, consumption patterns, health issues, migration patterns, education and so on. Increasingly, the locus of sovereignty (ie. the actuality of governmentality) came to be de-centred (in Foucault's terms 'de-individualised') as the 'art of government' came to embrace more and more domains previously subsumed under the governmental model of the family. That is, issues that had once been left to families to address now began to impinge on the multiple questions relating to the nature, practices and justifications imputed to governmentality. However, even though the family came to be displaced as a model of sovereignty it nevertheless remained in a somewhat privileged position.

> The family becomes an instrument rather than a model: the privileged instrument for the government of the population and not the chimerical model for good government: this shift from ... model to instrument is ... absolutely fundamental, and it is from the middle of the 18th century that the family appears in this dimension of instrumentality with respect to the population...[83]

The family thus came to be the means, or perhaps more correctly, the bridge

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82 *ibid.*, p. 17.

83 *ibid.*

linking individual subjects, whole populations and evergrowing dimensions of governmentality constituted by the power-knowledge relations of disciplinary techniques and practices.

The reference point for governmentality had clearly shifted. The management of populations and their constitutent individual members, the terrain for the government of things, became 'a field of intervention', a terrain that emerged with modern society and came to be constituted as the 'social'. For Foucault, this was a new development in that the terrain of the 'social' emerged to provide new impetus and problems for the governmentality of newly forming modern industrial societies. As has already been noted, 'the social' was the arena in which occurred the production and exercise of 'positive,... ...local, and individualising forms of power'.[84] The domain of 'the social' was a concomitant of and for the exercise of bio-political.

IV

One important aspect of bio-power that now needs to be addressed is that of sex and sexuality. For if population and its management moved to the centre of the problematic of governmentality then so did those dimensions upon which the actual existence of a population rests, namely marriages, birth rates, death rates, sexual behaviours, and so on. Foucault encapsulated what was at issue in the following manner.

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84 Smart (1983), p. 108. See p. 26 *supra*.

> I believe that the political significance of the problem of sex is due to the fact that sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of population.[85]

Thus linking the anatomo-politics of the body with the bio-politics of the population was the question of sex and sexuality.

In pursuing his analysis of the political significance of sex and its relation to the power-knowledge relations of the emerging disciplinary society, Foucault found that the prevailing approaches to the nexus of sex, knowledge and power largely emphasised the repression of sex. Foucault coined the phrase 'repressive hypothesis' to capture that particular way of approaching the issues. His notion of a 'repressive hypothesis' described a trajectory in European thought that treated the middle to late twentieth century as more sexually enlightened and liberated than past centuries, particularly the nineteenth century. On this hypothesis human beings have been repressed in terms of their sexual knowledges, identities, practices and so on by the dominant powers within society. Sex and sexuality have been repressed or hidden from view. The truth of sex and sexuality had been silenced. Central to this hypothesis was the assumption that 'truth is intrinsically opposed to power and therefore inevitably plays a liberating role'.[86] Consequently, if the truth about sex is revealed or made known a new realm of freedom can be

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85 Foucault (1977a/86), p. 125.

86 Dreyfus & Rabinow (1983), p. 127.

opened up.[87] The power of repression could be broken.

In contrast to this approach Foucault noted that rather than a dearth of discourses on sex during the past two hundred years there was a veritable proliferation of discourses. He attributed this to the fact that the management of populations in political economy terms required an ever-increasing focus on sex and sexual practices. Sex 'became a "police" matter' involving 'not the repression of disorder, but an ordered maximization of collective and individual forces'.[88] Thus,

> What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadowy existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as the secret.[89]

Not only was there an ever-expanding proliferation of discourses of sex but

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[87] For example, some well known exponents of this view include Wilhelm Reich, *Sex-Pol: Essays 1929-1934*, ed by Lee Baxandall, intro by Bertell Ollman, (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Enquiry into Freud*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); and the numerous essays by Sigmund Freud, particularly his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans and edited by James Strachey, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961) where he argued that civilisation cannot exist as such without the mechanism of repression. See also Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, trans. by James Strachey, ed by Angela Richards, (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1977). Of course, Freud was much more pessimistic about dispensing with repression than either Reich or Marcuse. Reich and Marcuse were marxist thinkers and do not necessarily encompass the wide diversity of radical thought. However, their writings typify the sort of taken for granted Enlightenment inspired ideas against which Foucault was positioning himself. It would also be fair to say that this liberationist view of sex, as the truth of one's being, characterises much of the discourses of twentieth century psychology. And as will be shown in the next chapter, it also characterises much of what passes for historical analyses of sex education.

[88] Foucault (1976/84), pp. 24-5.

[89] *ibid.*, p. 35.

these very same discourses constituted sex as 'the secret' of which they were the guardians.

A suppporter of the 'repressive hypothesis' might respond to this by suggesting that Foucault's observation does not disprove such an hypothesis. On the contrary, those who possessed greater power used that power to limit the free circulation of sexual knowledge while simultaneously imposing particular sexual laws and mores to regulate people's personal and social lives. Even when sex was supposedly openly discussed it appeared in very guarded and coded terms which were usually only understandable to those privileged few who were initiated into the secrets of the discourses. From this perspective sex was indeed repressed. Foucault addressed this objection by noting that it began from the assumption that 'sex is outside of discourse' as a secret that needs to be revealed.[90] It would thus be outside of power. Yet as has been shown above, on Foucault's conception of power there is no outside of power. What has to be explained, and what the 'repressive hypothesis' fails to explain, are the various ways, 'the very mechanics of these incitements', in which this secret was both sustained (ie. exploited 'as the secret') and revealed (by being spoken of *ad infinitum*).[91] The reason that sex had to be treated as secret derived from the propensity for the discourses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly those of a medical or quasi-medical dimension, to constitute themselves as the bearers of true knowledge. Within

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90 *ibid.*, p. 34.

91 *ibid.*, p. 35.

these (self-styled) scientific discourses, knowledge about sex and sexuality was portrayed as the result of the incessant struggle to peel back the layers of ignorance, prejudice and superstition to reveal the truth. The struggle was never-ending because there were always new layers to be peeled back, new revelations to be discovered.

These new 'scientific' discourses produced alternative sources of truth to that which had largely been provided by Christian traditions. Nevertheless, these new discourses maintained in various guises the technique of confession 'which in the Christian West was the first technique for producing the truth of sex'.[92] Foucault has suggested that there were five 'procedures' through which the religious technique of confession came 'to be constituted in scientific terms'. These were the 'clinical codification of the inducement to speak' (ie. the consultation with medical experts etc.); the 'postulate of general and diffuse causality' (ie. the view of sex as providing limitless causes of ailments); 'the principle of latency' (ie. the causal effects of sex remained hidden or buried within human psyches, it remained hidden from the person 'confessing'); 'the method of interpretation' (ie. the presumption that the person listening had the power to 'forgive, console, and direct'); and the 'medicalization of the effects of confession' (ie. the conversion of the presumed sexual causes into pathologies that might be treatable if not curable).[93] These five procedures amounted to the 'personalization,

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92 *ibid.*, p. 68.

93 *ibid.*, pp. 65-7.

medicalization, and signification of sex' which was characteristic of the new discursive formations emerging in the nineteenth century.[94]

One aspect of this idea of the confessional technique warrants some brief elaboration here in terms of the nature of the relationship between the one 'confessing' (ie the patient, student and so on) and the one listening (ie the doctor, psychiatrist, counsellor, teacher and so on). Presupposed here is a degree of empowerment for the one 'confessing'. That is, in order for this relationship to exist the speaking subject could not be simply passively constituted solely by the relationship itself but had to be presupposed as an entity in its own right. That is, some degree of agency on the part of the speaking subject, whether as schoolchild, patient or whatever, comes to be necessary. Granted, the empowerment of the subject to speak may not, and usually did not, match power of the one doing the listening. In the act of 'confessing' the patient speaks his or her subject-ivity only to have it reconstituted (or perhaps approved or validated or certified) by the more powerful listener in this discursive network. Nonetheless, this 'confessional' turn of discursive relations meant that the speaking-subject within the discourse of confession is not some automaton.[95] The subject is assumed to be

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94 Dreyfus & Rabinow (1983), p. 171.

95 Mary Lydon, 'Foucault and Feminism' in *Femininsm and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, ed by Irene Diamond & Lee Quinby, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988) p. 137 has noted that 'the French word '*aveu*', which recurs throughout *The Will to Knowledge*' carries wider connotations than those of its renderings in English as 'confession' or 'avowal'. She pointed out that it had the wider meaning of 'guaranteeing the speaker a place in the scheme of things' (p. 137). Thus the speaking subject, by the act of '*aveu*', could both assert and have affirmed, their subjectivity (ie their

a power-knowledge nexus in its own right; only some subjects are more favourably located in terms of the degree of power-knowledge they are able to mobilise in their favour.

The new discourses multiplied sexualities in a process that in turn became a generalised 'mode of specification of individuals'.[96] Sex, sexuality and truth became inextricably woven together as the core of human subjects.[97]

> Causality in the subject, the unconscious of the subject, the truth of the subject in the other who knows, the knowledge he [*sic*] holds unbeknown to him [*sic*], all this found an opportunity to deploy itself in the discourse of sex.[98]

Within the framework of the 'repressive hypothesis' both the sexed subject and its truth were hidden, protected, held in check by power. Yet what was actually going on, suggested Foucault, was the deployment of sexuality, as distinct from sex, within historically specific power-knowledge relations. What Foucault meant by 'deployment of sexuality' was the combination of the five techniques noted above to produce the 'personalization, medicalization, and signifcation of sex'. Contrary to the popular view promulgated by these 'scientific discourses', sexuality was not an innate drive given by nature but discursively constructed as

> a great surface network in which the stimulation of

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subject position).

96 Foucault (1976/84), p. 47.

97 *ibid.*, p. 69.

98 *ibid.*, p. 70.

> bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.[99]

In effect, sexuality was, or at least provided, the 'technology of sex'[100] through which unfolded the twofold processes of controlling (ie disciplining) bodies and creating specific categories of subjects. Its deployment was a function of specific discursive strategies.

Foucault gave as examples four 'strategies of knowledge and power' that were deployed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. These were (a) 'the hysterization of women's bodies', (b) 'a pedagogization of children's sex', (c) 'a socialization of procreative behaviour', and (d) 'a psychiatrization of perverse pleasure'.[101] Each of these discourses gave rise to their own characteristic discursive entities namely, 'the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult' respectively.[102] The key point is that these discursive entities were not the

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99 *ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

100 *ibid.*, p. 116.

101 *ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

102 *ibid.*, p. 105. Poster has criticised Foucault's characterisation of these four discursive strategies because of the particular discursive objects that Foucault attributed to them. According to Poster, Foucault's choices here 'must be regarded as somewhat arbitrary' because other discursive figures such as 'the syphillitic male' and 'the 'aggressive woman' might just as easily have served Foucault's purposes (Poster 1984, p. 134). True, they might have suited Foucault's purposes but it probable that Foucault could quite easily have located the two discursive figures suggested by Poster within one or more of the four strategies listed above. For criticisms similar to those of Poster see

deviation from some natural essence of sexuality for underpinning these particular discursive strategies were two central assumptions.

The first of these, as has already been noted above, was that truth and sex were linked such that the key to one was also the key to the other. The second was that sex came to be understood as the manifestation of a sexual instinct. Such an instinct was 'capable of presenting constitutive anomalies, acquired derivations, infirmities, or pathological processes';[103] in short, identifiable traits and characteristics which could be attached or detached, given or denied, to particular bodies. Thus sexual instinct was understood as the manifestation of 'sex in itself', a sort of self-evident given. However, Foucault denied that sex should be regarded as some sort of naturally given 'anchorage point that supports the manifestations of sexuality'.[104] It was a mistake to think of sex as

> an autonomous agency which secondarily produces manifold effects of sexuality over the entire length of its surface contact with power. On the contrary, sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures.[105]

Hence 'sex', no less than 'sexuality', was discursively constructed by the

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also Bryan S. Turner, 'The Practices of Rationality: Michael Foucault, Medical History and Sociological Reality' in *Power and Knowledge: Anthropolgical and Sociological Approaches*, ed Richard Fardon, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), pp. 193-213.

103 Foucault (1976/84), p. 117.

104 *ibid.*, p. 152.

105 *ibid.*, p. 155.

intersection of particular power-knowledge relations. It was within the matrices of these power-knowledge relations that human subjects came to be formed both in terms of their individualised identities and as parts of wider populations.

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It can thus be seen how Foucault's theory of bio-power relates to his ideas about the three modes of the objectivising subject. The exposition given above did not try to 'capture' the essential Foucault. Rather, it focused on those particular conceptual moves made by Foucault that might contribute most directly to the idea of sexing the subject. On that basis his bio-political approach provides a useful way of addressing, first of all, the questions of how and why sex education came to be recognised as a problem, and second, how and why the debates over sex education in schools took the forms that they did. As will be shown, much of the problem centred around who should teach it, when it should be taught, what should be taught, and so on.

To sum up, Foucault's theory of bio-politics involves four key elements: the discursive nature of the power-knowledge nexus, the productive nature of power, sex and sexuality, and the domain of 'the social'. As was shown, discourse theory, in relation to the production of knowledge, involves a structural formation that conditions what can be said, when it can be said and who is entitled to say it. In reconceptualising power as a productive rather than a solely negative force, Foucault argued that nothing stood outside

of power relations, not even knowledge. Hence it was necessary to acknowledge the coincidence of a power-knowledge nexus which is itself revealed through discourse. It is also this nexus that enables discourses to produce its objects, namely particular subjects and their knowledges. Discourses provide the means for encoding and specifying the disciplinary practices which divide, classify and distribute the objects of discourse. In the case of human beings, the relevant discourses generate the practices which produce human beings as subjects.

Having established that discourses, through their discursive relations of power-knowledge, also produce human subjects, the question of sex and sexuality is begged. For it is reasonably self-evident that such discursive relations do not produce neuter or sex-neutral bodies. In keeping with his anti-essentialist approach to power, Foucault's theorising of sex and sexuality disavowed that any essential nature could be attributed to them. 'Sex' and 'sexuality' were discursively produced within determinate, historically specific discourses. Bodies became sexed subjects according to the deployment of sexuality. And as has been shown, this deployment was itself a discursively produced technique or disciplinary practice which enabled bodies to be classified and divided, both inside themselves and from each other. Sexed subjects do not just appear as entities given by nature. They are the historical products (or objects) of particular discourses produced within specific matrices of power-knowledge relations.

Finally, there is the domain of the 'social'. This was the domain, first

articulated by Foucault and subsequently taken up by others, within which the seemingly never-ending story of disciplinary regimes of power-knowledge relations play themselves out. Again, it needs to be stressed that Foucault insisted that 'we can always modify ...[their]... grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy'.[106] However, the terrain is no longer the domain of the political shaped by the juridically conceived relations of sovereign power but that of the 'social'. For the domain of the 'social' was (and is) the terrain across which occurred the most effective deployment of disciplinary strategies. It is a domain which presents a significantly different deployment of power-knowledge relations and as such presents a radically different conceptualisation of politics. Furthermore, the 'social' seems to do more than stand as a nodal point at the intersection of the public and private spheres, a dichotomy articulated by all shades of modernist social theory. In many ways it undercuts that intersection and demands that the public/private dichotomy be reconsidered, or at least recast in quite different terms.

This then is the framework to be distilled from the vicissitudes of Foucault's writings. Foucault's approach is not without its weak spots and points of criticism. Some of these have been noted in passing. Nonetheless, Foucault's approach provides a promising point of departure for a frutiful analysis of issues involving sexuality, power, and knowledge. It provides a beginning framework for a critical understanding of the multiple ways in which human bodies both transform themselves and come to be transformed

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106 *ibid.*, p. 160.

into subjects within the manifold power-knowledge relations of modern societies. In particular, it provides the basis for this study of the politics of sex education in the South Australian state school system. Before pursuing that analysis it is neccessary to review what has been written thus far about the history of sex education Australia.

Chapter 2

Other Histories

Given the controversial nature of the intersection of politics, education and sexuality there has been surprisingly little historical analysis of sex education in Australian schools. There is no dearth of literature in which sex education is the focus. However, very little attention from an historical perspective has been given to explaining how and why sex education emerged as part of the school curriculum. Only a few works have been devoted to historical analysis of sex education in Australia. None have dealt specifically with South Australia. Historical perspectives have been provided by Auchmuty,[1] Wyndham,[2] Logan,[3] Hunter,[4] Tait,[5] and Szirom.[6] Though not strictly a work of historical analysis, Szirom provided a chapter on the development and provision of sex education in

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1 Rosemary Auchmuty, 'The Truth About Sex' in *Australian Popular Culture*, ed by Peter Spearritt & David Walker, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), pp. 169-89 and 'Out of the Gutter and into the Classrooms', *Refractory Girl*, September 1977, pp. 19-23.

2 Diane Wyndham, 'No News and Bad News: A Brief History of Sex Education for Children' in *Teaching About Sex: The Australian Experience*, ed by Wendy McCarthy, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 1-10.

3 G. Logan, 'Sex Education in Queensland: A History of the Debate 1900-1980', *Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Queensland Education*, No. 2, October 1980.

4 Ian Hunter,'Laughter and Warmth: Sex Education in Victorian Secondary Schools', *Local Consumption*, Series 5, (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1984), pp. 55-81.

5 Gordon Tait, 'Sex Education: Some Political Ambiguities' in *Child and Citizen: Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity*, ed by Denise Meredyth & Deborah Tyler, A Special Publication of the Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Griffith University, 1993. pp. 87-101.

6 Tricia Szirom, *Teaching Gender? Sex Education and Sex Stereotyping*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

schools. Even general histories of education in Australia provide little, if any, discussion of the various struggles over sex education. An important history of schooling in South Australia,[7] for example, has no index entry for sex education nor is there any discussion of sex education as an issue in its own right. An Education Department sponsored overview, written to commemorate 100 years of state education in South Australia, managed only the briefest of mentions of sex education.[8]

Other works such as Summers (on the history of women in post-1788 Australia),[9] Reiger (on the modernisation of the family and the home),[10] and Siedlecky and Wyndham (on the history of birth control and family planning)[11] mentioned sex education as part of their wider concerns. When these authors discussed sex education (or sexual matters in general), they were less concerned with it as part of formal education process, and more concerned with the broader attempts, extending beyond schools to the wider community, to provide children (and adults) with information about sex and sexuality.

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7 Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State and Schooling in South Australia*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986).

8 Colin Thiele, *Grains of Mustard Seed: A Narrative Outline of State Education in South Australia: 1875-1975*, (Adelaide: Department of Education, 1975), pp. 111, 129, 158, 202.

9 Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia*, (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1976).

10 Kerreen M. Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985).

11 Stefania Siedlecky & Diana Wyndham, *Populate and Perish: Australian Women's Fight for Birth Control*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

Discussions of sex education not intended as historical accounts largely fall into the nebulous category of proselytising works: marking out positions for or against sex education. Some Australian writers such as Partington,[12] O'Donnell,[13] Eagle,[14] Collins,[15] Szirom,[16] and McCarthy[17] are more overt (or at least obvious) in their polemical orientation. Their explicit aim has been to map out the terms of the debate, slanted in their favour. Not all these works were anti-sex education. Some authors accepted the need for sex education but remained sceptical about some of the implicit assumptions of advocates of sex education.[18]

Other works purport to be more objective; their partisanship emerges as a result of their research. While the research is often undertaken to shift opinion in one direction rather than another, such works claim the authority of science, or

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12 Geoffrey Partington, *The Treatment of Sex in South Australian Education*, (Malvern, (SA): Malvern Press, 1985).

13 Dan O'Donnell, 'Sex Education in Western Australia', *Aces Review: A Journal of Educational News and Comment*, 7 (2), April/May 1980, pp. 6-7.

14 Margery Eagle, 'Sex Education in Tasmanian Schools', *Aces Review: A Journal of Educational News and Comment*, 11 (2), April/May 1984.

15 John K. Collins, 'Sex Education: By Whom, When and Where', *Mental Health in Australia: The Journal of the NSW Association for Mental Health*, IV (1), Summer 1970, pp. 4-10.

16 Tricia Szirom, (1988).

17 Wendy McCarthy, (1984).

18 See for example, John Passmore, 'Sex Education' in *Liberty and Politics: Studies in Social Theory*, ed by Owen Harries, (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1976), pp. 48-60 who provided something of a philosophical examination concerning the point of sex education. From a feminist perspective see the critique by Stevi Jackson, 'How to Make Babies: Sexism in Sex Education', *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 1 (4), 1978, pp. 341-52.

at least scientific objectivity. They either provided overviews of developments within the field of sex education[19] or else offered research data addressing particular issues relevant to sex education.[20] In this latter category are the numerous works of those best described as sexologists, who research and document sexual behaviour and attitudes in all their variety and who sometimes make policy prescriptions on sexual matters.[21] For the most part, historical and

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19 Ilene Wolcott, 'Human Relations Education in Australian Schools: A Review of Policies and Practices', *Australian Institute of Family Studies Policy Background Paper*, No. 6, September 1987; Mary Mannison, 'Families and Sex Education: The Personal Development Program in Queensland', *Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage & Family*, 9 (1), February 1988, pp. 6-20; Roberto R. Sucgang, 'Sex Education, A Review of Current Practices and Trends', *Background Paper for Australian Council of Social Services*, September, 1974; Ronald & Juliette Goldman, *Children's Sexual Thinking: A Comparative Study of Children Aged 5 to 15 Years in Australia, North America, Britain and Sweden*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Ronald and Juliette Goldman, *Show Me Yours! Understanding Children's Sexuality*, (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1988).

20 John K. Collins, 'Adolescent Sex Education', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 7 (2), July 1972, pp. 124-31; G. A. Rickarby, 'Sex Education in the Family', *Mental Health in Australia: The Journal for the Australian National Association for Mental Health*, I (5), March 1976, pp. 180-3; Stefanie Siedlecky, 'Sex and Contraception Before Marriage: A Study of attitudes and Experience of the Never-married Youth in Melbourne Australia', *Australian Family Information Project Monograph*, No. 7, Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 1979; Stan Johnson, 'Adolescent Sex Myths and Mental Health', *Mental Health in Australia: the Journal of the Australian National Association for Mental Health*, 1 (11), December 1983, pp. 26-8; Marvin Eisen & Gail L. Zellman, 'The Role of Health Belief Attitudes, Sex Education, and Demographics in Predicting Adolescents' Sexuality Knowledge', *Health Education Quarterly*, 13 (1), Spring 1986, pp. 9-22.

21 See for example, for the first part of the twentieth century the work of Havelock Ellis, *The Psychology of Sex*, (New York: Random House, 1936); Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works,* Vol. 7, Pelican Freud Library, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977). For later in the twentieth century see Alfred Kinsey *et al*, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1953) and *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, (W. B. Saunders, 1948); W. Masters & V.

social determinants underlying the issues rarely emerge within these accounts. Yet even those studies which do claim to offer an historical perspective leave a good deal to be desired.

For example, the one offered by Wyndham is a very unsatisfactory account. In a few pages she gave an overview of the historical trajectory of sex education for children in the western world of the modern era. Her essay appeared in a book purporting to document the Australian experience yet she said very little about the development of sex education in Australia. She made a few sweeping statements about the development of 'sexuality and sex education of earlier periods' in Europe,[22] which was then assumed to be applicable to Australia. Granted, Wyndham set herself a limited brief, namely to focus on 'childhood sexuality, giving most attention to the themes in sex education books published for young adults from 1892-1980'.[23] She sketched an historical context in which Victorian mores were assumed to be puritanical and hence seen as a divide between earlier times (in which sexuality was more freely expressed) and later post-Victorian times (in which sexuality was no longer repressed). Thus she suggested that in earlier, pre-Victorian times there was no real 'need to teach children about sex because they saw evidence of it every day'.[24] But with the Victorian era came a repression and stifling of sexuality such that by the mid-

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Johnson, *Human Sexual Response*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966).

22 Wyndham (1984), p. 2

23 *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

24 *ibid.*, p. 5.

twentieth century there was a need to teach children about sexual matters. Wyndham has drawn a fairly long bow here. Certainly the dominant values of the Victorian era emphasised particular codes of behaviour for men and women which were both constitutive of and exemplars of a gender order being advocated by middle class reformers.[25] It was not that discussion of sex was repressed. Rather, as Wyndham acknowledged, various writers and essayists held forth about appropriate sexual conduct. The discourses around sexuality took a particular form. Yet she did not explain why the discourses took the shape they did; nor did she explain why they have changed.

Or consider Szirom's account which provided an overview of changes in emphasis within the sex education and advice literature. In her chapter entitled 'The Development and Provision of Sex Education', Szirom noted the changes but did not explain why they came about. She took the view that the nineteenth century was a time of denial of sexual matters (both in Australia and in Europe) which gradually gave way to a need to promote 'hygiene' to enable young people to pursue moral or virtuous lives.[26] The preoccupation was with social issues such as 'venereal diseases, insanity, sterility and illegitimacy', which were seen as threats to good social order. Sexuality had to be controlled in order for these social maladies to be held at bay.[27] It was not until the 1960s, suggested Szirom, that significant attitudinal change occurred, bringing positive developments in sex

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25 For some brief discussion of this see Ann Oakley, *Housewife*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 43-56.

26 Szirom (1988), pp. 71-2.

27 *ibid.*, p. 72.

education. She attributed this to the fact that the 1960s 'brought general social turbulence and uncertainty along with a new questioning of long accepted social standards and values'.[28] But there was no explanation of possible connections between this social turbulence and sex education. Why should such turbulence lead to school-based sex education? Szirom, along with Wyndham, accepted that the development of school based sex education was a good thing, a mark of progress. The trajectory of the debates over the twentieth century were accepted as moving from a condition of ignorance or repression to one of enlightenment.[29]

A slightly better account can be found in the two articles by Auchmuty. In her essay 'Out of the Gutter and into the Classroom' Auchmuty briefly traced the shift from an absence of formal instruction in sexual matters to the creation of school-based sex education, more or less integrated into the curriculum. She described how children at the turn of the century generally found out about some (if not most) aspects of sexual matters by default -- usually from within their peer networks. Input from parents and/or Church was minimal and, where it did occur, was usually in a proscriptive form.[30] There were attempts at providing some form of sexual instruction for the young outside of family and Church settings. In a subsequent article, Auchmuty surveyed the development of sexual advice

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28 *ibid.*, p. 73.

29 *ibid.*, pp. 71-5; Wyndham (1984), p. 10. However, note that Szirom, while endorsing the positive aspects of the development of sex education courses, pointed out that sexist assumptions were still prevalent 'both in the content of sex education programmes and the classroom processes used to present material' (Szirom 1988, pp. 74-5, p. 135).

30 Auchmuty (1977), pp. 19-20

literature and the various individuals and organisations responsible for it.[31] She noted that this provided some information, despite being sporadic and of variable quality and veracity. But, for the most part it reached only a limited audience.

The assumptions underpinning these various attempts to enlighten the young were remarkably similar in their moral standpoints. Self-restraint was stressed as the best means to combat the perceived social scourges of venereal disease, premarital pregnancies and, in the first decades of the twentieth century, masturbation.[32] Boys and girls, like adult men and women, were presumed to have different sexual natures respectively, but nonetheless both boys and girls alike were expected to control their sexual urges. The dominant themes of the advice literature surveyed by Auchmuty presupposed and endorsed specific gendered sexualities. These were not simply references to a particular gender order in which men were breadwinners and women dependent homemakers and mothers. They explicitly extolled and upheld specific ideas about the sexual natures of men and women: men were the 'stronger sex' with an instinctive urge or need for sex whereas women were the 'fairer' or 'weaker sex' who were by their nature 'endowed with greater self-control'.[33] As such women were supposed to exercise 'greater responsibility for maintaining standards in her relations with the

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31 *ibid*, p. 173.

32 *ibid.*, pp. 174 *ff.* The concerns over masturbation, particularly for young boys, were most pronounced at the turn of the century and were linked to wider concerns about manhood and virility in the context of national defence. For a discussion of this see David Walker, 'Continence for a Nation: Seminal Loss and National Vigour', *Labour History*, No. 48, May 1985, pp. 1-14.

33 Auchmuty (1978), p. 176.

opposite sex' because women, or rather womanhood was regarded 'as a symbol of the things that are lofty, noble, and pure'.[34] Sexual activity was to take place within the bounds of marriage where its legitimacy was acknowledged.[35]

By the early 1970s changes were beginning to take place within the various state education systems in Australia.[36] Sex education began to be talked of and treated as a legitimate (though special case) curriculum offering. Auchmuty attributed these developments to a perceived lack of sex education (both at home and elsewhere) on the one hand, and on the other to the fact that '[t]he rates of marital breakdown, unwanted pregnancy, rape and other violent crimes were not decreasing'.[37] Yet this does not explain why the gradual but widespread implementation of school-based sex education should have occurred in the 1970s rather than earlier or later. It might be conceded that the data concerning teenage pregnancies, abortions, sexual diseases, marital breakdowns and other issues prompted some emphasis on sexual issues, but this does not explain why such data was more alarming (if indeed it was) in the late sixties and early seventies than at other times. Assuming that there might be a connection between such social problems and calls for and adoption of school-based sex education schemes, the process of moving from demands to implementation still remained obscure in her account in the sense of explaining why the policy

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34 Harold Shyrock, *On Becoming a Woman*, (1963) cited in *ibid.*, pp. 176-7.

35 Auchmuty (1978), pp. 175-82.

36 See the references given in the *Introduction* of this thesis, p. 1, *Fn* 1, *supra*.

37 Auchmuty (1977), p. 20.

outcomes emerged as they did.

Auchmuty also noted that '[t]he radical approach to sex education ... [was] ... a product of the seventies', implying that this explained the current approaches to sex education.[38] She suggested that 'what marks radical sex educators off from all the others is their attitude to homosexuality', namely that homosexuality was 'simply a valid alternative lifestyle'.[39] Perhaps, but such a judgement unduly narrowed the semantic scope of the term 'radical' in relation to sex educators. It implied that unless sex educators of the past held similar views to those in the seventies concerning homosexuality then they cannot be called 'radical'. Yet there have been numerous advocates of self-styled 'sexual enlightenment' (for example, W. J. Chidley in the pre-1914 period[40] and Norman Haire in the 1930s and

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38 Auchmuty (1978), p. 186.

39 *ibid.*, p. 187.

40 W. J. Chidley was a 'free thinker' in New South Wales whose views on sex (among other ideas) and his public espousal of them in Sydney parks led to his persecution by the authorities. Prominent members of the Sydney medical profession together with some members of the clergy and judiciary, with the willing assistance of various police officers, combined in a campaign to silence Chidley. The treatment meted out to Chidley gives some indication of the lengths to which the 'guardians' of public morals have gone in the past to ensure that dissenting/subversive views on sex would remain marginalised. On the persecution of Chidley see Mark Finnane, 'Sexuality and Social Order' in *What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australian History*, ed by Sydney Labour History Group, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 192-219; and Finnane, 'The Popular Defence of Chidley', *Labour History*, No. 41, November 1981, pp. 57-73. For Chidley's own views see W. J. Chidley, *The Confessions of William James Chidley*, ed. by S. McInerney, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977); Bill Horndage, *Chidley's Answer to the Sex Problem*, (Dubbo: Review Publications, 1971).

1940s[41]) for whom the appellation 'radical approach' would be appropriate. Nevertheless, Auchmuty certainly isolated an important demarcation point. Earlier debates had little to say about homosexuality. Debates over sex education in the 1970s and particularly in the 1980s,[42] saw more attention being given to the issue of homosexuality. Hence it is possible to suggest that a new social concern with the question of homosexual behaviour emerged in the early 1970s. However, this was an issue within disputes about the content of sex education rather than constitutive of debates about the provision of sex education itself. The late sixties and early seventies were certainly turning points as far as school-based sex education was concerned. Yet just why they were turning points was not very clear from Auchmuty's account.

One of the themes that did emerge from both Auchmuty's articles was the view that the 'introduction of sex education into our schools is nevertheless a

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41 Norman Haire was an Australian doctor who published a number of works on sex and sex related matters. He also wrote an advice column for the Australian magazine *Woman* using the pseudonym of Dr Wykeham Terriss. This column brought forth an attack on Terriss and the magazine from some members of the House of Representatives in October 1950. The details for this can be found in the *Journal of Sex Education*, 3 (3), Dec. 1950-Jan. 1951, pp. 162-7. This journal was published by Haire (and others) in London from 1948 as a forum for discussing sexual matters of social concern. It maintained a liberal but generally moralistic approach with strong eugenicist overtones. In Australia it was sold by subscriptions and on news-stands. It had a wide readership in so far as it was not confined to just city readers (if the Correspondence columns are any guide). Australian contributors included Dr Lotte Fink (Sydney), Dr Thistle Harris (Lecturer in Biological Sciences, Sydney Teachers College), W. Glanville Cook (Secretary, Australian Rationalist Society), Dr Everett Atkinson (Commissioner of Public Health, Western Australia), and G. Stuart Watts. Haire died in 1952.

42 This issue is taken up in a little more depth in Ch. 8, *infra*.

great step forward in the progress of our society'.[43] That is, that by the early 1970s children were at last beginning to gain access to a form of knowledge that their parents and teachers (in the widest sense) had largely denied them. The 'truth of sex', as Auchmuty titled one of her essays, was finally allowed to emerge in a form directed specifically at the younger generation. No longer would children have to rely on the misinformation or distorted knowledge generated within their peer groups 'in the gutter'. Nor would they have to rely on approaches that stressed repressive or condemnatory judgements in the delivery of sexual knowledge. In her words,

> The introduction of sex education into our schools is nevertheless a *great step forward in the progress of our society*. ... ... Young people can only benefit from acquiring a knowledge of the facts of sex and sexuality disentangled from the old ethical and religious constraints, and learning to work out their own values on social and moral questions on the basis of informed consideration of the issues involved.[44]

As with Szirom and Wyndham, the history of sex education in the twentieth century was here clearly portrayed as a triumph of the light of progress.

A similar, though more detailed, discussion was provided by Logan.[45] He traced the vicissitudes of the debates over sex education in Queensland schools from 1900 to 1980. Logan argued that there was a link between social upheavals such as wars and depressions and calls for sex education. His discussion periodised the twentieth century according to time frames determined by various

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43 Auchmuty (1977), p. 23.

44 *ibid.*, p. 23. Emphasis added.

45 G. Logan (1980).

major social changes and upheavals (ie 1914-20 marked by World War I; the inter-war years of 1920-38 involving a brief post-war boom followed by the Great Depression, 1939-52 shaped by World War 2 and its aftermath, 1953-68 as a period of stability shaped by the long boom, and 1969-80 marked by an increasingly pluralist social formation). In each of these periods he mapped out broadly what he saw as key aspects of the socio-sexual environment detailing the various community responses including that of the educational authorities. As each particular period of social turbulence or change made its presence felt, especially where it impacted on old certitudes and values, debates over sex education also emerged. It was as if in times of uncertainty people sought some sort of reassurance through reaffirming what they considered most "natural", namely prevailing sexual mores.[46]

While Logan did not downplay the major debates in the first half of the century he, like Auchmuty, saw the important turning point occurring in the late 1960s. It was then that the debates changed character in a significant fashion. The broad ideological consensus shared by the participants in these debates began to break down. This ideological consensus formed around what Logan described as 'the traditional Christian socio-sexual values -- premarital chastity, marital fidelity, and the sanctity of the home and family'.[47] The main participants in these debates were drawn from what Logan termed 'the social elite',

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46 *ibid.*, pp. 1-2; and p. 51.

47 *ibid.*, p. 1. As has already been noted in relation to Auchmuty's (1978) discussion, these values also presupposed and endorsed the sexist assumptions about (appropriately) gendered sexualities.

presumably prominent citizens who joined or patronised Christian groups like the Australasian White Cross League, the Council of Public Morality, Women's Christian Temperance Union and so on as well as Church leaders.[48] Their strategy was largely twofold: firstly, to reassert the (already noted) traditional values within the public sphere and secondly, to reach parents and instruct them about their responsibilities for the sexual instruction of their children. Parents, as a social force in their own right, were not very active in these debates. This was underscored by the Minister for Public Instruction who decreed in 1917 that sex education would not be undertaken by Queensland schools nor would it be carried out within them by invited guests until such time as parents demanded it.[49] Despite some modifications along the way this remained the official policy in Queensland schools until the early 1970s. Debate about the specific content of what should be taught was minimal given that the various participants shared a common set of values. Their primary interest was in maintaining the then prevailing gender relations by ensuring that threats from an unruly or uncontrolled subversive sexuality were negated.

However, by the beginning of the 1970s the focus of the debates moved

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48 *ibid.*, p. 8. Logan also noted that these prominent organisations in the debates were dominated by Protestants. The Catholic Church opposed sex education in schools in whatever form for much of this period (*ibid.*, p. 12).

49 *ibid.*, p. 2. Logan also noted that at a public meeting in July 1917 the Minister for Public Instruction, Mr. Hardacre, informed the audience that a call for the introduction of sex education in schools 'had not the force of public opinion behind it' (*ibid.*, p. 20). The public opinion that could be said to be emerging was largely that of the constituencies of the various special interest groups. As for direct correspondence from parents, the Queensland Department of Public Instruction 'received very few letters from parents or other individuals expressing an opinion' (*ibid.*, p. 19).

beyond arguments about methodology (ie how and by whom sexual knowledge should be made available to the young) to the problems of values. Ideological issues, particularly where sexual values were concerned, came to the forefront of the sex education debates. This Logan attributed to the emergence of a plural society in which a range of values jostled for acceptance. The perceived consensus, or at least homogeneity of values, that had prevailed in the first half of the twentieth century no longer seemed to hold.[50] It is not exactly clear how and why this perceived consensus came to break down. Logan only discussed this in ideological terms. That is, he suggested that changes in the realm of social ideas led to the breakdown of this consensus.[51] Yet what remained largely unanswered in his account was how and why such changes in the realm of ideas and values occurred. In his conclusion, he noted that it was the 'conditions of change and disruption which encouraged the plurality of values'.[52] But this did not explain why such a plurality emerged. Nevertheless, Logan quite clearly linked the debates over sex education in Queensland to particular social issues which many of the protagonists saw as threatening the accepted fabric of Queensland society. In particular, he made it clear that much of the debate during that eighty year period was about defending and sustaining a specific set of socio-sexual values, of sustaining a specific gender order.

Common to all of the above accounts are a couple of assumptions about

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50 *ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

51 *ibid.*, p. 38-9.

52 *ibid.*, p. 51.

what was seen to be at stake. As has already been noted, the trajectory of the debates was generally portrayed as a progressive development. That is, they adopted (what Foucault termed) the 'repressive hypothesis'[53] as a self-evident given for their historical accounts. This meant that discussions in the twentieth century advocating sex education could be portrayed as improvements on past practices. A second, perhaps more fundamental assumption, concerns the historical status of the terms 'sex' and 'sexuality'. With the possible exception of Szirom,[54] the above writers assumed that whatever is denoted by these two terms was something of an historical constant. That is, even though the debates might have changed their focus and that the discourses in which such debates have been framed also might have changed, the terms 'sex' and 'sexuality' have remained largely unaffected. They still carry much the same sort of meanings in

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53 See Ch. 1, pp. 55-8.

54 Szirom (1988), p. 14 adopted a critical view of 'sexuality' as a socially constructed mode of being. Her approach was informed by the sex/gender distinction in which '[g]ender, unlike sex, is a social product'. She noted that,

> human sexuality is pliable in that both the object of desire and the modes of sexual expression... ...are the product of sociocultural formations rather than natural biologically fixed entities. ... ... individuals (and particularly women) learn behaviour which represses their natural drives; the sexuality that remains is channelled and limits are applied as part of the structural definition of reality.

Yet if 'sexuality' is socially constructed, (ie. 'pliable') then what does it mean to treat it as emerging from 'natural drives'? Surely such an approach carries with it a commitment to a view of sexuality in which the latter is somehow not entirely socially produced? This leaves Szirom's analysis caught between an ahistorical view of 'sex' and a (sometimes) historical view of 'sexuality'.

the present as they did in the past. Moreover, sex and sexuality often emerged within these discourses as basic constituents of the human personality to the extent that for some writers they defined a key attribute of human nature.

One writer who did not share this assumption was Ian Hunter who discussed the development of sex education in Victorian secondary schools in the 1970s.[55] Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Donzelot,[56] Hunter challenged what he described as the 'libertarian and humanist assumptions concerning sexuality'. He wanted to focus attention on the public deployment of the social organisation of sexuality rather than on the latter's presumed manifestation as an aspect of 'the deepest level of personal being'.[57] He noted that for most of this century debates about sex education centred on specific social issues like venereal disease, sexual immorality, and so on. These debates came to the fore in the aftermath of the two major world wars. However, no definitive outcome was actually reached as there was little agreement concerning the balance between 'facts' and 'values'. Striking this balance was only possible in the abstract since at the level of practical implementation such a balance proved almost impossible to achieve: whose facts and whose values?, those developed in concordance with the principles and practices within teaching discourses?, the medical discourses?, the religious discourses? The issue of teaching about sex and sexuality invoked and intersected with all of these discourses. The difficulty

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55 Hunter (1984).

56 Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, Foreword by Gilles Deleuze, trans. by Robert Hurley, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1979).

57 Hunter (1984), p. 56.

of reconciling these often conflicting discourses within the classroom characterised the sex education debates. Thus for all practical purposes, by the 1960s, sex education in Victoria remained limited, if indeed it found any curriculum space at all, to 'the teaching of human reproduction in the biology syllabus plus occasional after-hours visits by family life organisations, like the Father and Son and Mother and Daughter movements'.[58] Thus far, Hunter's discussion, though couched in quite different terms, is not too different from those discussed earlier.

By the end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s a major change emerged in Victoria. Sex education was reorganised and refurbished under the title of human relations education. It was no accident, suggested Hunter, that this occurred at the same time as 'the exploration of new forms of school discipline, the expansion of school counselling and guidance services, and moves to secure greater parental and community involvement in schools'.[59] The latter developments heralded new forms of governance, both at the level of individual pupils and schools themselves, in which norms focussing on individual autonomy (ie control of self) in relation to all aspects of knowledge, including the sexual, could be established. Underlying this development was the meshing of a 'foundationalist philosophy and a "child-centred" pedagogy... [that] ...sought to abandon the method of pedagogic drill in favour of "discovery

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58 *ibid.*, p. 63.

59 *ibid.*, p. 59.

learning"'.[60] The sorts of pedagogic norms and the methods to achieve them (eg. drill and the physical arrangements of bodies within the buildings), that in the past were seen as appropriate for ensuring discipline in the classroom and for inculcating knowledge, were being displaced by different forms of pedagogic strategies in which, he suggested, the sexualisation of learning was central.

The important point here is the political nature of the general pedagogic shift that Hunter has identified with the introduction of comprehensive sex education in Victorian schools. In Hunter's words,

> far from constituting a long delayed acknowledgment of the sexuality of school children, human relations sex education focusses [*sic*] a new strategic organisation of those forms of social discipline invested in the family and school.[61]

While the form of this 'strategic organisation' may be new, the cooperation between, or at least conjoining of, school and family forms of authority has been an important theme in education for most of this century. Nevertheless, he placed the emphasis on the sort of pedagogic strategies that could enable the teaching of sexual knowledge to become part of the wider curriculum. In doing so his focus emphasised not the triumph of the light of progress but the particular configurations of knowledge, power and identity within the schooling process. Thus in terms of the various accounts of the development of sex education considered above, Hunter provided a quite different sort of explanation.

For Hunter the key aspect was the transformation in pedagogic strategies.

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60 *ibid.*, p. 72.

61 *ibid.*, p. 77.

This transformation was made possible by the growth and proliferation of discourses which embrace what he termed, following Donzelot,[62] 'psy knowledges'. These new pedagogic strategies deployed a 'relational technology'[63] based on (and productive of) a new set of power relations linking teacher, child, and parent. Such 'relational technologies' made it possible for

> teachers and parents, the school and the family, [...to...] enter into a new set of relations around the sexuality of the student.
>
> The key to this technology is to be found in the psychological knowledges and techniques that inform human relations education.[64]

Such a configuration of power relations generated a 'new disciplinary mechanism' that emphasised self-government both at the individual and group level (and even including the school).[65] This was in contrast with the top-down, hierarchically structured exercise of disciplinary power of past school and classroom management. The new disciplinary mechanism emphasised 'the "consensual" group achieving regulation through the adjustment of self-images'.[66]

It needs to be noted that the 'self' referred to in these new configurations is not the unitary self posited by the Enlightenment discourses of the modern era. Rather, it posited a 'self' that is constructed in the process of the articulation and

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62 Donzelot (1979), esp. Ch. 5.

63 Hunter (1984), p. 66. The notion of a 'relational technology' would seem to be developed by Donzelot in his appropriation of Foucault's theoretical framework.

64 Hunter (1984), pp. 66-7.

65 *ibid.*, p. 72.

66 *ibid.*

deployment of this relational technology. Hence such a 'self' does not exist prior to a given discourse but emerges, is produced by, the various knowledges of *psy* discourses. Self-government in this sense, namely care of the self, becomes the management of images of the self -- both individually and on a group basis. In this way individuals are able to relocate themselves or reconfigure their identities or sense of self, within the particular group image within which they find themselves. At the same time this group sense of self also emerges from the interaction of the various selves that might be said to constitute it at any given time. It is a 'reality' arrived at through the 'orchestration of exchanges within the group'. In the case of sex education,

> [t]he role of psy knowledges in this transformation has been to construct the student's sexuality as a source of identificatory images of the self and to adapt techniques for their non-normative adjustment. In this way, the problem of teaching values and the delicacy of the student-teacher relations are both managed by building student sexuality into a new organisation of school discipline,...[67]

In this way Hunter accounted for the inclusion of sex education within the school curriculum; not as a triumph of enlightened thinking rising above censorious morality but as a consequence of the rise of particular discursive forms such as *psy* knowledges.

In a similar vein Tait developed an analysis of sex education that drew on the insights of Hunter and Foucault. In Tait's view most attempts to account for sex education debates took either a 'progressivist' or 'conservativist' approach.[68]

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67 *ibid.*, p. 70.

68 Tait (1994), pp. 87-8.

The first was based the ideas of 'the inevitability of childhood sexuality and the child's "natural curiosity" about sex' whereas the second, while accepting something like the 'inevitability of childhood sexuality', nonetheless stressed 'that only parents and doctors have the right and responsibility to regulate access to knowledge about sex'.[69] In Tait's view, attempts to explain sex education and the debates that it generated by appealing to the seemingly diametrically opposed 'progressivist' and 'conservative' poles was ultimately of limited value as many of the participants simply did not fit neatly into either category. What needed to be challenged, suggested Tait, were the terms of the various discourses that framed the sex education debates in this dichotomous manner. He noted that there were two key assumptions common to the arguments of both perspectives. In the first place was the idea that children should be understood in terms of' a 'self-expressive individuality and the development of the "whole" person' and second, that children had 'an unrefined sexuality which require[d] both liberation and (then) benevolent regulation'.[70] He thus posed two crucial questions: how did the child 'come to possess a self evident right to self-expression?' and '[h]ow did they come to be attributed with a "natural curiosity" about sexual matters?'[71] In effect, these questions went to the conditions of possibility (or 'conditions of emergence' as Tait termed it)[72] that made not just the debates possible but 'the

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69 *ibid*, p. 88.

70 *ibid*, p. 87.

71 *ibid.*, p. 89.

72 *ibid.*, p. 98.

idea of formal sex education... ...thinkable'.[73]

Underlying the discourses that were the sex education debates dwelt other, constitutive discourses, namely those dealing with the positing and forming of the 'child'. Further, concomitant with the development of modern forms of schooling, there also emerged new discursive categories separating the idea of the 'child' from that of the 'adult'. Thus, within predominantly psychological discourses emerged the idea of 'adolescence' to represent, among other things, suggested Tait, a mode of being driven by inexplicable but seemingly deepseated biological urges and feelings.[74] On the basis of appeals to seemingly self-evident biological 'facts', to 'nature' and whatever was deemed to be 'natur-al',[75] various social ideas and practices gained their leverage as norms of human behaviour. However, this was not a matter of unvarnished biological truths transparently offering themselves to aid the understanding of the social and individual being. It was a constellation of discursive constructions reconstituting ideas about the respective 'natures' of children, schooling, and subjectivity. In short, just as new ideas of the social were emerging, so too were new ideas of nature and the biological. Each conditioned the other to provide mutual conditions of possibility. Indeed, in so doing they also provided mutual (even reciprocal) conditions of validation, co-dependent discursive formations of self-confirming and self-serving truth regimes.

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73 *ibid.*, p. 93.

74 *ibid.*, pp. 93-4.

75 Some discussion of the idea of 'nature' and its discursive significance is given in Chapter 3, *infra*, pp. 113-6.

These then are the few published accounts that deal specifically with the history of sex education in Australia. Of course, this does not address those accounts of the history or development of sex education in schooling in other countries. Yet with the possible exception of Hunter's and Tait's analyses, the general themes and approaches are not all that different from the other accounts discussed above. In periods of social stress, if not crisis, debates over sex education emerge to gain a degree of policy prominence. For the first three-quarters of the twentieth century the dominant theme has been one of a trajectory from repression or ignorance to enlightenment.[76] During the 1980s the question of sex education re-emerged in the wake of both the continuing economic crises and the panic generated by the Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) issue. In both Britain and the USA, governments with avowedly conservative political objectives have narrowed the guidelines for sex education, deliberately and self-consciously, to provide for a particular moral agenda compatible with the their respective social visions. A number of feminist writers have seen these moves as, in part, attempts to roll back the hard won gains of past political

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[76] See for example, M. Breasted, *Oh! Sex Education*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970); Mary S. Caulderone, ed., *Sexuality and Human Values: The Personal Dimensions of Sexual Experience*, (New York: Association Press, 1974); Dorothy M. Dallas, *Sex Education in School and Society*, (London: National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1972); Stevi Jackson, *Sexuality and Childhood*, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1982); Carol Lee, *The Ostrich Position: Sex, Schooling and Mystification*, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986); Philip Meredith, *Sex Education: Political Issues in Britain and Europe*, (London: Routledge, 1989); R. Rogers, ed., *Sex Education: Rationale and Reaction*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

struggles.[77] Instead of an education 'designed to equip young people with the knowledge and skills with which to take control of their own lives' students will receive sex education 'within the context of retrogressive educational reforms' whereby 'schools will simply present a series of half truths about a mythical heterosexual family'.[78]

For example, Melia, David, Wolpe and Thomson all respectively interpreted the renewed government concerns in the 1980s as a concerted attempt to redefine sex education to uphold the particular moral order endorsed by the Thatcher and Reagan political regimes. All four authors recognised the potential for sex education to challenge sexist stereotypes. Indeed, nearly all those engaged in arguing for or against sex education recognise some sort of connection between sexual knowledge (both its construction and transmission) and a particular gender order. Moreover, it is not just the presumed nature of this connection that is contested but also whatever is deemed to be marked out by the terms 'sexual knowledge' and 'gender order'. Thus advocates and opponents alike

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77 See Miriam E. David, 'The New Right, Sex Education and Social Policy: Towards a New Moral Economy in Britain and the USA' in *Women's Welfare, Women's Rights*, ed by Jan Lewis, (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 193-218; Julia Melia, 'Sex Education in Schools: Keeping to the 'Norm'' in *Learning Our Lines: Sexuality and Social Control in Education*, ed by Carol Jones & Pat Mahony, (London: The Women's Press, 1989), pp. 216-31; AnnMarie Wolpe, 'Sex in Schools: Back to the Future', *Feminist Review*, no. 27, 1987, pp. 37-47; Lesley Holly, ed, *Girls and Sexuality: Teaching and Learning*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989); Rachel Thomson, ' Moral Rhetoric and Public Health Pragmatism: The Recent Politics of Sex Education', *Feminist Review*, No. 48, Autumn 1994, pp. 40-60. See also Madan Sarup, *Marxism/Structuralism/Education: Theoretical Developments in the Sociology of Education*, (London: The Falmer Press, 1984), p. 111.

78 Melia (1989), p. 230.

of sex education in schools see the framing and transmission of such knowledge as a means to sustain, subvert or reconfigure prevailing gender relations.[79] As Thomson put it, 'sex education is not only about the boundaries of state intervention, it is also a gendered debate'.[80]

It has been this aspect of the renewed debates which has most concerned feminists. For feminist writers the task generally was seen as one of defending the space in which sexuality, particularly female sexuality, could be spoken of in positive terms.[81] This has meant challenging the dominant formations of heterosexuality in which unequal relations of power are accepted as the norm.[82] However, there has been little recognition of the possible sexism within those sex education discourses that supposedly challenge the dominant (sexist) gender order. As Jackson[83] and Szirom[84] both argued, this remains an aspect that

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79 This is clearly evident in the wide cross-section of views discussed in *Royal Commission on Human Relations: Final Report*, Vol. 2 of five vols., Chaired by Justice Evatt, (Canberra: Australian Government Printer, 1977) especially pp. 36-56.

80 Thomson (1994), p. 40; Lesley Holly, 'Introduction: The Sexual Agenda of Schools' in Holly, ed, (1989) pp 1-9. See the pivotal essay by Stevi Jackson, (1978); and also Susan Shurberg Klein, 'Sex Education and Gender Equity', *Educational Leadership*, March 1988, pp. 69-75.

81 See for example the various essays in Holly, ed, (1989).

82 Holly, 'Introduction: the Sexual Agenda of Schools' in Holly, ed, (1989), p. 4. Recall also the view of Catharine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Law and Life*, (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1987) concerning gender as the 'congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women', p. 6.

83 Stevi Jackson, (1978), p. 341.

84 Szirom (1988), p. 135 where she noted that 'schools are constructing a male view of sexuality, both in the content of sex education programmes and the

feminist theorists should not ignore. There is no necessary reason why even the so-called enlightened discourses on sex education should be assumed to be challenging the deeper roots of gendered sexuality.

Even so, at a first approximation at least, challenging or defending the perceived interconnections between sex education and the prevailing gender order would seem to be an essential organisational characteristic of the politics of sex education. Before going on to see to what extent this claim can be said to hold for the debates and struggles over sex education in South Australian schools, it will be necessary to make explicit what these debates presuppose: namely, the late nineteenth century consolidation of the system of state schooling in South Australia together with the concomitant range of discourses about education, sexuality and childhood. That is the task of the next chapter.

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classroom processes to present material'. As will become evident in the discussion to be undertaken in subsequent chapters, it is not that a 'male view of sexuality' is being (or has been) constructed but that it is the 'male view' that has largely been responsible for doing the constructing.

Chapter 3

Foundations of the Educational State: Schooling, Childhood, and Bourgeois Morality

I

During the last half of the nineteenth century the South Australian educational state was created.[1] This was a new social space for the emerging identities of the 'educator' (usually as a teacher but also as an administrator), the 'schoolchild', and the 'parent'. However, these identities were also shaped by and contributed to particular gendered sexual and moral ideas and values. As such, these identities came to be part of the foundational matrices of the educational state. This chapter thus proceeds along three broad vectors. The first examines the systemic foundations of the educational state in South Australia. The second vector provides an overview of the discursive construction of children, their natures, and childhood. And the third provides an analysis of a particular health and hygiene textbook used in schools at the turn of the century, which gave effect to particular gendered social values concerning hygiene and morality. On the surface these three vectors seem quite disparate.

Yet in combination they go beyond merely specifying important aspects of the foundational matrices. They show how these matrices constituted, in effect, the conditions of possibility within which sex education

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1 For some discussion of the notion of 'educational state' and the way in which social space is organised (indeed, invented) to accommodate it see Bruce Curtis, *Building the Education State: Canada West, 1836-1871*, (Ontario, Canada: The Falmer Press, 1988).

'became thinkable'.[2] It is not simply a question of specifying the systemic construction of pedagogic relations situating educator, parent and child (ie the first vector). In order to understand the 'sexing of the subject' it is necessary to have an understanding of how these identities came to be constructed. In addition, an understanding is needed of the wider, but nonetheless constitutive, discursive context of the deployment of sexuality in the shaping both of children as knowing subjects and of childhood (the second vector). A look at the way in which a particular gendered morality was implemented via health and temperance advice illustrates one particular mode of sexing the subject. It provides a useful instance of how particular social values were woven into what was deemed to be appropriate educational knowledge.

Thus it will be argued that the convergence of these three vectors describes the nineteenth century foundational matrices that helped to shape the twentieth century educational state.

II

The systematisation of public schooling begins with the *Education Act, 1851*. This emphasised minimal involvement on the part of the State and maximum voluntarism on the part of those wanting schools.[3] While the demand for

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[2] Gordon Tait 'Sex Education: Some Political Ambiguities' in *Child and Citizen: Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity*, ed by Denise Meredyth & Deborah Tyler, A Special Publication of the Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Griffith University, 1993, p. 93.

[3] The account to be presented here draws heavily on the works of the following: Chris Beasley, *Educating Rita's Grandmother The Social Relations of the Sexes and South Australian Curriculum Reform: 1875-1915*, (M.Ed.

schools was not necessarily bound by class cleavages, the framers of the 1851 Act saw working-class children as the specific beneficiaries of their legislative endeavours.[4] Schooling, organised and administered by those with close ties to the emerging colonial elite, was seen as more than just 'a necessary part of the enlightened social structure'; it was a prime means of 'civilising the working class'.[5] The authority of the State was vested in the Central Board of

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Thesis, School of Education Flinders University of South Australia, 1984); Ian Davey, 'Growing Up In South Australia' in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, ed Eric Richards, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986); Denis Grundy, 'Free Schooling and the State in South Australia 1875-1898', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, ed Imelda Palmer, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1893); Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986); Malcolm Vick, 'Community, State and the Provision of Schools in Mid-Nineteenth Century South Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 98, April 1992; Malcolm Vick, 'Class Gender and Administration: the 1851 Education Act in South Australia', *History of Education Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1988; Malcolm Vick, *The Central Board of Education, South Australia, 1852-1875*, (M.Ed. Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1981). For slightly different interpretations of education in the nineteenth century see Rodney Gouttman, 'Voluntarism -- A Fallen Angel in the New Jerusalem: Government and Education in South Australia, 1836-1851', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, ed Stephen Murray-Smith, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982); J.R. Lawry, 'The Free, Compulsory and Secular Education Acts Reassessed', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, ed R.J.W. Selleck, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972); G.E. Saunders, 'J.A. Hartley and the Foundation of the Public School System in South Australia' in *Pioneers of Australian Education Volume II: Studies of the Development of Education in the Australian Colonies 1850-1900*, ed C. Turney, Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972; G.E. Saunders, 'Public Secondary Education in South Australia: The Nineteenth Century Background', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, ed R.J.W. Selleck, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1968-1969); G.E. Saunders, 'The State and Education in South Australia, 1836-1875', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, ed E.L. French, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966).

4 Miller (1986), p. 23.

5 *ibid.*, p. 23. See also Vick (1988), p. 27. A quite different explanation of the organisation of schooling in western industrial societies has

Education, through which some degree of oversight could be exercised. For all intents and purposes the Board was largely independent of the government of the day.

One of its main tasks was to oversee the provision of self-supporting secular but Christian oriented schools. The schools were to be 'efficient' in the sense that they 'were organised around regular attendance of children over several years'[6] into graded classes. The progress of the children could be monitored and the teacher's effectiveness determined. Thus could 'good' teachers be distinguished from 'bad' teachers. Parents, as prospective procurers of their services, as well as the Board of Education, could then ascertain which teachers were worthy of their financial support. In effect, 'the teachers were seen as independent contractors',[7] and as such they were responsible for what was to be taught, how it was to be taught, and the general administration of their own schoolhouse (including the setting of fees, and the

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been given by Ian Hunter, *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, Bureaucracy, Criticism*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994). Hunter emphasised the organisational nature of schooling deriving from Christian pastoral pedagogy. In his view, neither the aim of developing the all-round human individual nor the disciplining of the working class were sufficient to explain the common form of organisation that modern schooling took in various countries of quite different material and political circumstances. Hunter was probably right to stress the pastoral dimension. However, his account is quite compatible with recognising that many educators were quite explicit about upholding and propagating particular values of a class based nature, including disciplining the working class. Hunter's point was that the form that schooling took cannot be explained by simply reading off the particular aims of the educators but rather must be explained by looking to the specific pedagogic practices that were inherited from the past by the pioneers of the modern schooling.

6 Miller (1986), p . 27. See also Vick (1992), pp. 55-6.

7 Miller (1986), p. 25.

employment and training of any pupil teachers that might be needed).[8] Dependent on fee-paying pupils, as well as on the support of the local families in their community, the teachers were in large measure more accountable to their local communities than to the Central Board of Administration. Even so, as Vick has made clear, the Act of 1851 'transferred the supervision of the education of children from the family, to some extent at least, into the public domain'.[9] The beginnings of a social space for an educational state were being constructed.[10]

The Central Board of Education provided general oversight and intervened as little as possible. For example, it could not establish a school, on its own initiative, unless there was a request from the local community. It was through the disbursement of limited financial assistance and the licensing of teachers deemed to be efficient that the Board exercised most of its control.[11] In addition, while the Board was empowered to oversee curriculum matters, the local autonomy of teachers within the system was considerable. At the same time the Board's expressed views on what constituted 'efficient schools' were informed by the sorts of values it regarded as educationally appropriate. As such these formed the basis for its views on the sort of curriculum it expected to be followed by the teachers it endorsed. Apart from

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8 *ibid.*, p. 25. See also Vick (1988) and (1992).

9 Vick (1988), p. 27-8. See also Beasley (1984), p. 156.

10 Curtis (1988).

11 Vick (1988), pp. 31-3.

a general Christian foundation an emphasis on discipline, punctuality, conformity, and obedience was promoted through the recommended text books.[12] More importantly for the purposes of this study, these textbooks 'presented the patriarchal family and its sexual division of labour as the norm of social organisation, and portrayed clearly differentiated models of masculinity and femininity'.[13] Men's concerns were situated at the centre of the learning experience, elevated to the position of mediating the conceptualisation of what was or could be taught. This reached the extent that directives were issued to try and ensure that women teachers were actively discouraged from teaching boys over seven years of age, though they could teach girls of any age, on the grounds that 'it was inappropriate to subordinate older boys to female authority'.[14] Right from the beginning then, the education infrastructure in South Australia was organised according to a patriarchal sexual division of labour.

When the next reorganisation of schooling took place, in 1875, the circumstances were rapidly changing. The colony was expanding, its population was steadily growing and, for the early part of the 1870s, its economic outlook was generally buoyant to the extent that government revenues were able to expand without any changes to the overall rates of

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12 *ibid.*, p. 33.

13 *ibid.*, p. 33. *Cf.* the discussion to be pursued in Section III below.

14 *ibid.*, p. 34. As Vick also noted, not just members of the Board of Education but many men teachers also assumed that teachers, by definition, were men.

taxation.[15] The capacity of the State, in financial terms, to be more directly involved in delivering educational services was no longer an issue. A number of issues and social forces were beginning to intersect to force a new settlement over the provision of education. But perhaps most fundamental of all was the realisation that the approach of the 1851 Act and its underlying philosophy was no longer capable of addressing the needs of the colony. The demand[16] for schooling was far outstripping the capacity of the minimalist infrastructure to provide it. It was becoming abundantly clear, from the perspective of those charged with its administration, that the control over what was supplied needed to be more effectively grounded. The certification of teachers, their methodologies and their curriculum needed to be standardised to prevent the wrong sort of person from becoming a teacher. That is, it was possible for individuals of dubious values (moral and otherwise) to set

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15 J.B. Hirst, *Adelaide and the Country 1870-1917: Their Social and Political Relationship*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1973), p. 140; J.B. Hirst, 'Centralization Reconsidered: the South Australian Education Act of 1875', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 49, October 1967, pp. 49-50.

16 Here it must be emphasised that the establishment of schools was largely demand driven. Given that the Board could not establish schools under its own auspices this is not surprising. Yet, as Vick (1992) has argued, this seems to have escaped the observation of many historians who have preferred to represent the development of education as a consequence of the agency of the progressive liberal-democratic state. The agency of parents and children, particularly from working class families, is thus played down in favour of that of the providers of education. More importantly, suggests Vick, educational progress, especially whatever is deemed to constitute good education, comes to be defined in terms of 'the development of the form of schooling promoted by the state' (*ibid.*, p. 53). See also Helen Bannister, 'The Centralization Problematic', *Australian Journal of Education*, 24 (3), 1980 for a critical discussion of the assumptions which some historians, such as Hirst for example, make concerning the nature of both the agency and progressiveness of the liberal-democratic state.

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themselves up as teachers to provide forms of instruction differing from and cheaper than that found in State supported schools.[17]

In particular, there was growing concern that the urban poor were increasingly beyond the Board's jurisdiction.[18] As the political economy of the colony developed the increase in the numbers of wage-labourers (not to mention the jobless of the 1860s recession) within the city of Adelaide began to become visible. That is to say that their presence on the streets gave the lie to the claims of progress being touted by those who benefited most from their plight. The urban poor, whether employed or not, were seen as a threat to the established social order. A shift in the strategy of the Board of Education was needed to ensure that those who had 'tast[ed] the fatal liberty of the streets' were returned to an appropriate schooling experience.[19] In addition there was also a growing assertiveness on the part of working class political leaders for wider educational opportunities. As such, working class aspirations for access to educational resources had to be co-opted and transformed into educational outcomes consistent with the ascendant bourgeois values.[20]

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17 Vick (1992), pp. 65-6; 69-70.

18 Miller (1986), p. 36; D. Grundy (1983), pp. 169-71. See also Vick (1981).

19 Miller (1986), p. 33. (Quoted words were taken from Miller's citation of the remarks of a member of the Board of Education in 1869).

20 It needs to be pointed out that it was not simply a case of bourgeois values being imposed from above. Many within the working class also shared or aspired to such values. The perceived behaviour and moral rectitude of the 'urban unschooled' was also a concern for those workers attempting to be regarded as respectable. As one worker expressed it in a letter to the *Register* (8 October 1873) those of his generation may not have learnt to spell correctly

The Education Act 1875, though amended a number of times in the following decades, mapped the nature of the emerging educational state. It established the education settlement[21] for the next forty years, ushering in a number of fundamental changes to the nature and provision of schooling. The Central Board of Education was replaced by a Council of Education staffed by 'nominated volunteers' under the control of a fulltime paid President.[22] Although this Council was subsequently abolished in 1878 it served its administrative purpose of consolidating the centralising dynamic in forging the shape of the 'educational state' in South Australia. No longer were schools to be under the control of local municipal or community councils. As Hirst has so aptly expressed it: 'All schools were vested in the minister of education... ...In the cause of better education for all, localism had been swept away'.[23]

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but at least 'we were taught to behave ourselves -- to reverence and worship God, honour our parents, show respect to our superiors, and conduct ourselves decently and quietly,... [but] the boys of today ... have no more manners than Baalam's ass'; from *Learning and Other Things: Sources for a Social History of Education in South Australia*, ed Bernard Hyams *et al*, (Adelaide: S.A. Government Printer, 1988), p. 97-8. For some discussion of the discursive significance of the notion of 'respectability' in constructing further subdivisions within the working class see Lynette Finch, *The Classing Gaze: Sexuality, Class and Surveillance*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), esp. Ch. 2.

21 The idea of an 'education settlement', while not particularly new in the literature on the political economy of education, can be clearly seen in various political debates over education policy. For example, during discussions over establishing an enquiry into education in 1910, one politician commented that 'Here was an opportunity for settling the educational career of South Australia for years to come' (*SAPD* 26 October 1910, p. 819).

22 Miller (1986), p. 37.

23 Hirst (1973), p. 143.

Perhaps of greatest importance both for children and their families was the introduction of compulsory attendance for a set period (about 140 days out of a 220 day school year) for all children between seven and thirteen years of age.[24] This measure was important for two reasons. First, and perhaps most obviously, the provision of compulsory schooling amounted to a demand by the State that parents should send their children to school. In effect, it shifted the focus, not to mention the responsibility, for schooling children. Whereas the terms of the 1851 Act left parents free to make their own arrangements for their children's schooling, the new Act held parents responsible for ensuring that their children attended school. It was their duty as parents to see that this happened.[25] If there should arise a conflict between household (or family) needs and attendance at school then the latter was expected to be given priority. Like their children, parents had to learn to organise themselves 'around the need for orderly schooling'.[26] However, in order to placate the rural interests, the attendance requirements were set so as to enable the children of farmers to help their families at crucial times of the year without penalty. This compromise was a clear indication of the way in which education interests and the construction of an education state remained constrained by the wider issues of political economy. Reshaping parents' duties with respect to educating their children and creating an efficient

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24 Grundy (1983), p. 169.

25 Miller (1986), p. 36.

26 Grundy (1983), p. 179.

schooling system (ie efficient from the point of view of the educators) had not yet gained sufficient discursive leverage to displace already existing economic interests.

The second reason for the importance of this measure was that, in specifying an age range for school attendance, the legislators contributed to the ongoing redefinitions of the discursive boundaries constituting 'childhood'. The exclusion of children from the sphere of paid work, the public world of adults, until they had reached a certain age enabled the sphere of childhood to be defined as co-incident with the time spent at school. Implicitly, at least, the failure of parents to ensure that their children attended school was being defined to mean that they were failing as proper parents -- they were denying their children an important aspect of 'childhood'. Thus, in part at least, the creation of new legislative norms contributed to changes to the understandings of what it meant to be a 'parent' or 'child' (and by extension 'parenting' and 'childhood').

Fees were retained despite some quite spirited debate. It was the view of the Minister for Agriculture and Education that free education 'would weaken parental responsibility'.[27] In his view, the payment of fees would serve to enhance parents' sense of independence and self-respect, because 'compelling parents to pay fees' would ensure that education would be 'valued all the more'.[28] But if that should prove insufficient then the power to recover

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27 *SAPD*, 13 July, 1875. c. 386 and c. 387.

28 *ibid.*, c. 387.

defaulted fees would also remind parents of their proper duties. The government also recognised that some families would be unable to pay due to genuine financial hardship; in such cases of proven destitution 'free places' at school would be provided. There was the added bonus here that having to prove destitution would provide a negative incentive to pay the fees. As Grundy described this, 'the poor would have to make a virtue of their hardship'.[29]

However, it was not just working class parents and their children whose values and lives were to be reshaped according to the demands of 'efficient' education. Teachers were also to be subject to the new regime of educational reform. Their working conditions and general autonomy were reorganised such that within state schools they stood in much the same relation to their departmental superiors as their pupils did to them. The fees were seen as supplements for their wages which were themselves linked to student examination results. The power to examine students was placed in the hands of departmental inspectors who also scrutinised the teachers' administrative and pedagogic performances.[30] With teachers' wages partly determined by student results at examinations it was in teachers' best interests to ensure regular attendances of pupils. The structural outcome was a disciplinary apparatus in and through which teachers (and even inspectors), no less than

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29 Grundy (1983), p. 174.

30 B.K. Hyams, 'The Teacher in South Australia in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Australian Journal of Education*, 15 (3), October 1971, pp. 289-90.

students, could become appropriate subjects of schooling. As one teacher told an Enquiry in 1881, 'We are regulated in every way -- in things we are perfectly well able to regulate ourselves'.[31] All things great and small came within the purview of Departmental scrutiny. These ranged from administrative and organisational matters such as timekeeping, record keeping and even the 'colour of ink to be used' (and for what purpose) to teachers' personal habits such as neatness, attire, class-room and social behaviour, and even moral values.[32]

The control and organisation of the curriculum was also centralised. While there remained some scope for teachers to vary their specific approach this was nevertheless circumscribed by a standardised and increasingly uniform curriculum. In addition, the necessity to prepare students for examinations in set core subjects exerted its own pressures to uniformity. The disciplinary emphasis on examinations also transformed the nature of the knowledge being produced in the class-room.[33] It became a commodity which could be possessed. As such it also became a measure of intelligence -- the more knowledge a pupil accumulated the smarter the pupil. Examinations thus proved what had already been assumed, namely the idea of an 'hierarchy

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31 Cited in Miller (1986), p. 49.

32 Miller (1986), p. 51. See also Hyams (1971), pp. 285-8; Adrian Vicary, *The Doctrinal and Strategic Problems of the South Australian Institute of Teachers*, (MA Thesis, Politics Department University of Adelaide, 1982).

33 Miller (1986), p. 41.

of intellect'.[34] As Miller has argued, for most pupils this was actually the creation of the notion of stupidity; theirs, since only the few would reach the peak of the 'intellectually brilliant'.[35]

Reforming the content of the curriculum in terms of what was taught was certainly important but it took second place to that of reforming those who had 'tasted the fatal liberty of the streets'. The disciplinary regime of examinable knowledge was built upon the coercive reorienting of working class morals and behaviours. Working class habits and values had to be transformed to be compatible with the dominant bourgeois values.[36] This was clearly stated by the Minister for Agriculture and Education when introducing the Bill in 1875. He told parliament that it should create 'a mould in which not only our children, but our children's children may be fairly and beneficially formed'.[37] And what was good for the children of the well to do was by definition good for the other children. The aim was to instil the characteristics of honesty, self-denial, perseverance, obedience, and regularity -- supposed virtues assumed to be absent from the working class. Creating and sustaining these characteristics has been a hallmark of educational practice extending well beyond the nineteenth century.

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34 *ibid.*, p. 42. See also David McCallum, *The Social Production of Merit: Education, Psychology and Politics in Australia 1900-1950*, (London: Falmer Press, 1990).

35 *ibid.*, p. 42.

36 *ibid.*, p. 41.

37 *SAPD*, 13 July, 1875. c. 392.

The centralisation of curriculum and work practices also carried with it gender implications. While girls and boys were required to take the same annual examinations, girls had the additional examinable subject of needlework. Making needlework compulsory for girls confirmed within the school setting the prevailing sexual division of labour of the wider society. In addition, wherever possible girls were generally taught all their subjects by women teachers. Once again the social relations of an idealised gender order were woven into the relations of schooling. The Act of 1875 also facilitated a rapid feminisation of the teaching force since the expansion of the educational state was to proceed with minimal financial increases. For the rest of the nineteenth century the proportion of women in the most junior areas of teaching increased while their proportion in senior positions, particularly as heads of schools, decreased significantly. Consequently,

> [a]s teaching became one of the major employment opportunities for women, the gender relations inside the department came closer to those of the family: women teachers were relegated to subordinate positions under the guardianship of male headmasters and inspectors.[38]

This was partly because women were only paid two thirds the wage of men teachers, despite being required to have the same qualifications, and partly because the Education Department had long held that it was inappropriate for the older boys to be 'subordinate[d] to female authority'.[39] Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century the organisational culture of the Education

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38 Miller (1986), p. 53.

39 See p. 99, Fn 14, *supra*.

Department exhibited a gender regime which, in many significant respects, was a microcosm of that of the wider society.

With the 1875 Act and its amendments in subsequent years, a substantive educational settlement was forged. The possibility, if not yet the full reality, for universal primary education was established albeit at a price. For working class people this cost was not just to be measured in monetary terms since the emergent educational State still retained its focus on the 'civilising' of working class children according to the gendered values of the dominant bourgeois landholders. This is not to say, however, that parents within the working class necessarily opposed the development of an improved system of schooling. In large part, many of them supported the expansion of a system of schooling as a means to improve their children's's futures.

In summary, the educational relations between the State (as a locus for political authority), families and children came to be defined by the late nineteenth century. These were shaped in the context of a particular gender order which upheld an ideology of domesticity in which 'the terms 'woman' and 'mother' were considered practically synonymous'.[40] The stereotype of the ideal English woman -- a being possessing 'piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity' and, in the colonial context, a protector of (English) civilisation -- was well supported by succeeding waves of colonists in nineteenth century

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[40] Carol Bacchi, 'The 'Woman Question' in South Australia' in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, ed Eric Richards, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 409.

South Australia.[41] Though decidedly middle class in orientation it was an image of womanhood that gained considerable support across class boundaries. Women managed the household (ie. the private sphere) and men engaged in paid work (ie. the public sphere). A (man-defined) measure of working class respectability and success was the ability of the father to be able to support economically a wife and children. Ideas about appropriate gender relations, together with those structuring the principles of schooling in South Australia, especially in terms of shaping the characters of those who had 'tasted the liberty of the streets', were woven into the foundational matrices of the twentieth century educational state.

III

Closely related to the above conceptions of womanhood and family life there developed a parallel idealisation of children. By the end of the nineteenth century, both in Australia and elsewhere, there was a diverse proliferation of discourses dealing with children and their presumed needs. Within these discourses children came to be depicted as beings distinctively different, not just in size but in nature and temperament, from adults. Childhood was represented as a time of dependency, helplessness and, perhaps most importantly, innocence.

According to a diverse range of historians of children and childhood this was in contrast with the ideas and practices characteristic of preindustrial

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41 *ibid.*, pp. 405-6.

societies.[42] Drawing on one or more of these historians some commentators have concluded that childhood was thereby an invention of the modern era. But as Hughes has pointed out this sort of conclusion is misleading.[43] Doubly so because, in the first place, it obscures the fact that western philosophers reaching back at least as far as Plato have always had something to say about children and their socialisation into the world of adults.[44] In the second place it amounts to a reading of past ideas and practices in terms of present-day

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42 A summary overview is given in Stevi Jackson, *Childhood and Sexuality*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), pp. 28-37. Jackson appears to have drawn mostly on the work of Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986). A diverse range of approaches can be found in the following works: Lloyd de Mause, (ed), *History of Childhood*, (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974); Henry Ebel, 'The Evolution of Childhood Reconsidered', *Journal of Psychohistory*, 5 (1), 1977; Barbara Kaye Greenleaf, *Children Through the Ages: A History of Childhood*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979); David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History: The Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France*, (New York: Basic Books, 1970); Max Okenfuss, *The Discovery of Childhood in Russia: The Evidence of the Slavic Primer*, (Massachusetts: Oriental Research Partners, 1980); Ivy Pinchbeck & Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society Volume I: From Tudor Times to the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); Ivy Pinchbeck & Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society Volume II: From the Eighteenth Century to the Children's Act of 1948*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973); Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations From 1500 to 1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Routledge, 1990); Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family*, (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1977).

43 Judith Hughes, 'Thinking About Children' in *Children, Parents, and Politics*, ed, Geoffrey Scarre, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 41.

44 Judith Hughes, 'The Philosopher's Child' in *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*, ed, Morwenna Griffiths & Margaret Whitford, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 72-89

preoccupations and assumptions.[45] In effect, this erases rather than explains earlier conceptions of childhood and begs the question as to how issues of socialisation and dependency were in fact addressed in preindustrial societies.

For it is at least certain that in no society are children born biologically self-sufficient and already socialised. As Kociumbas stresses, it is not the fact of dependency and socialisation as such which is the issue but the social definition of such terms (ie 'dependency' and 'socialisation') and the means to deal with whatever they might denote; 'it is these concepts and methods which change over time and which are therefore open to historical investigation'.[46] Tyler has argued that Kociumbas's perspective is unhelpful because it supposedly remains committed to an 'assumption that "the child" exists as a stable base for "images" of childhood', and further, that it treats the category of 'the child' as 'a pseudo-biological category of person defined through dependence'.[47] It is certainly the case that Kociumbas accepted that new-born human beings are born dependent. However, she did not assume that the definitions of terms like 'dependency', 'socialisation', 'child' and so on were given in any once and for all sense. It was precisely those definitions, particularly the material and ideological forces shaping them, that Kociumbas

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45 Jan Kociumbas, 'Childhood History As Ideology', *Labour History*, No. 47, November 1984, p. 4; Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Children in History: Concepts of Nature and Society', in Scarre (1989), p. 10 (cited hereafter as Jordanova 1989a).

46 Kociumbas (1984), p. 13.

47 Deborah Tyler, 'Making Better Children' Meredyth & Tyler, ed, (1993), p. 40.

saw as (necessarily) 'open to historical investigation'. In addition, Kociumbas denied the acceptability of 'the assumption that childhood and family life have always been invested with the importance we assign to them today'.[48] In this sense Kociumbas, no less than Tyler, recognised that the notion of 'the child' was not given by 'nature', that it was not a 'timeless figure'.[49] It is the discursive construction, or perhaps one should say reconstruction within newly emerging discourses, of the idea of 'nature' that needs to be examined.

In premodern times, as in the industrial era, there was certainly a demarcation drawn differentiating childhood from adulthood.

> [C]hildhood definitely had a subordinate social status, ...[but]... it was not regarded as a psychological state. It is this change in emphasis from status to state which has marked the rise of the modern institution of childhood.[50]

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48 Kociumbas (1984), p. 1. Note also her view (p. 6) that,

> [t]he child-centred family must be taken out of the historical void where the psychohistorians and historical sociologists have placed it, and studied as a concept which changes in response to social and economic pressures from without.

This is clearly consistent with Tyler's general approach. However, their differences would appear to be centred around their respective views as to what constitutes appropriate historical questions.

49 Tyler (1993), p. 40. Tyler did not use this term specifically to criticise Kociumbas though it was clearly implied in her claim that Kociumbas assumed 'that "the child" exists as a stable base for "images" of childhood'. Tyler's use of the phrase 'timeless figure' occurred in the immediately following paragraph where she suggested that this was how the group of historians that she described as 'the "Adelaide School" of revisionists' saw the child. There would seem to be very little evidence from within those writings to support Tyler's claim in this regard.

50 Jackson (1982), p. 38.

That is, the difference in pre-modern times was understood in terms of social status whereas in the modern era it is in terms of an appeal to psychological knowledge concerning the respective 'natures' adults and children. There was a discursive shift from a sociological to a psychological orientation. What is important for understanding modern ideas about children and childhood is the influence of appeals to psychological explanations that posited ideas about inner natures or essences that enabled differences to be marked out.. In this sense, it can be agreed with Tyler, that a new type of being, 'the child', was in the process of being constructed,[51] a point with which Kociumbas would probably concur.

To grasp the full significance of this shift from a sociological to psychological conception of 'the child' it has to be situated firmly within the context of the rise of modern science and its discourses of natural philosophy. For it was there that the idea of 'nature' gets reconfigured. Despite the diversity of these discourses they exhibited some common ground in so far as

> Nature was taken to be that realm on which mankind acts, not just to intervene in or manipulate directly, but also to understand and render it intelligible. This perception of nature also includes people and the societies they construct. ...[Thus]... nature could be taken to be that part of the world which human beings have understood, mastered and made their own.[52]

Human activities in all their diversity (in other words society or civilisation)

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51 Tyler (1993), p. 39.

52 L.J. Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine Between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (Madison (Wisc.): University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 41.

could be understood as operating (or needing to operate) according to principles (or 'laws') which existed independently of (and indeed were the preconditions for) human life. Additionally, nature was also 'that which has not yet been penetrated (either literally or metaphorically)'[53] and hence was the paradigm of the unknown. Most of the time this came to be understood as designating the not yet explored, 'the wilderness and deserts, unmediated and dangerous'.[54] There was also a subterranean meaning feeding the discourse about 'the unknown'. The range of metaphors used to describe the various shifts from unknown to known drew on the Biblical sense of 'to know' as a carnal act of cognition. The act of knowing sexualised, metaphorically speaking, the objects of knowledge.[55] That is, both the gaining of knowledge and that which came to be known was implicitly sexualised through the act of knowing. Conversely, if the act of knowing sexualised its objects, namely that which came to be known, then prior to being known, the unknown must have been asexual. This latter aspect also contributed to an important strand of philosophical and other ideas which treated society, rather than nature, as the

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53 *ibid.*, p. 41.

54 *ibid.*, p. 41. See also Ornella Moscucci, *The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England, 1800-1929*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1990) for a parallel discussion.

55 For some discussion of the various ways in which the emerging discourses of the modern era, particularly those claiming the status of 'science', were infused with sexual meanings see Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); and Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women and the Origins of Modern Science*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

source of human corruption.[56] As Moscucci noted, the idea of 'nature', was often an ambiguous one 'which the *philosophes* opposed to a variety of other ideas -- to reason and the sciences, to law, society in general, the corrupt manners of the upper classes and civilisation'.[57] Nature, whether as wilderness or frontier or even countryside, came to be posited as a source of purity untainted by human influence.

This cluster of meanings for the emerging modern view of nature, though often ambiguous and contradictory, provided a major epistemological grounding for much of Enlightenment and subsequent thought in that nature itself 'was deemed to be a unique source of valid knowledge'.[58] Whether in the area of philosophy, medicine, science, political theory, jurisprudence, or literature much was made of appeals to the 'natural'.[59] The complex interplay of old and new discourses reconfigured the understanding, and eventually the actuality, of and the relations between nature and society.

This then was the discursive context in which modern ideas about childhood, especially what made children distinct from adults, were formed. However, the reconfiguration of discourses emphasising the processes of nature also prompted a rethink about what it was that made humans 'human'.

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56 For example, one of the thinkers who exercised enormous influence both during and after the Enlightenment was Jean-Jacques Rousseau who articulated this in a number of places, in particular his essay *The Social Contract*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975).

57 Moscucci (1990), p. 29.

58 Jordanova (1989a), p. 13; Moscucci (1990), pp. 28-30.

59 Jordanova (1989a), p. 14.

Human beings had always been understood as having some specific essence, quality or attribute which marked them as distinctly human, something more than just either physiological entities or animals. The terms of the wider discourses about nature being pursued by philosophers and scientists, especially the rise of theories of evolution and 'natural selection',[60] provided alternatives to the prevailing religious metaphysics about what defined humans as 'human'. Located in nature, in the sense of being subject to various 'laws' of nature, human beings came to be conceptualised as having a human nature. The essence of a human being was its nature.[61]

Equally significant here is the epistemological grounding of the idea of a sexual nature, signified by the term 'sexuality', which eventually took hold in the nineteenth century. Humans were deemed to have a sexual nature as part of their human nature. Building on the work of Foucault,[62] the

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60 Robert Young, 'The Historiographic and Ideological Contexts of the Nineteenth-Century Debate on Man's Place in Nature' in *Changing Perspectives in the History of Science,* ed by M. Teich & R. Young, (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 344-438. See also his *Darwin's Metaphor: Nature's Place in Victorian Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) for some discussion about the social significance of debates over evolution, especially the conflict between science and religion. Also included there is a version of the (1973) essay cited above.

61 Even those, like Karl Marx, who disavowed the ideas of essences to describe human nature nevertheless used some criteria to distinguish humans from other types of beings. See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol I of three volumes, intro. by Ernest Mandel, trans. by Ben Fowkes, (Harmondsworth: Penguin/New Left Review, 1986), p. 284. For Marx's disavowal of essences see his 'Theses on Feuerbach', especially Thesis VI, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed Robert C. Tucker, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1972), p. 109. But note also Marx's treatment of 'nature' and his juxtaposition of it with 'human' in 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844: Selections' in Tucker (1972), pp. 52-103.

epistemological point is pursued further by Davidson.

> Sexual identity was no longer exclusively linked to an anatomical structure of the internal and external genital organs. It is now a matter of impulses, tastes, aptitudes, satisfactions, and psychic traits. There is a whole new set of concepts that makes it possible to detach questions of sexual identity from facts about anatomy, a possibility that only came about with the emergence of a new style of reasoning.[63]

That is, a new idea of sexuality or sexual nature emerged with the 'psychiatric style of reasoning'.[64] And this latter development was part of the discursive repositioning of ideas about nature, especially the idea of human nature. Once the idea of human nature in the wider psychological sense had taken hold it was a relatively short step to use 'nature' as a means to distinguish between adults and children.[65]

Few writers disputed that the birth of a child was, at least in the first instance, the outcome of natural processes. As such, children, too had natures.

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62 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans from the French by Robert Hurley, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976/84).

63 Arnold I. Davidson, 'Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality', *Critical Inquiry*, 14 (Autumn), 1987, pp. 21-2.

64 *ibid.*, p. 23.

65 The idea of 'nature' in the senses noted above also served to distinguish women's natures from men's. As Moscucci (1990, p. 30) explained, 'nature' could also 'signify the internal processes of the body, especially the instincts and the emotions, but also the reproductive function'. Thus within these discourses women could be, on the one hand, wild, unmediated, and unpredictable, and on the other, a source of uncorrupted purity of being. And like nature, women were what was to be acted on, transformed, made knowable. Men, on the other hand, were the actors, the transformers, the knowers.

However, what this meant changed dramatically as the modern era unfolded. An earlier tradition, which remained influential until at least the nineteenth century, had interpreted such natural processes and children's natures to mean that children were born tainted in the sense that they were bound by 'the fetters of original sin'.[66] By definition, children were born corrupted -- 'uncivilized being[s] whose demoniac nature[s] had to be tamed'.[67] In that context educational discourses and childrearing advice focused on civilising children so that they would be fit for adult society. However, with the emergence of new discourses reconceptualising nature, and the growth of at least one tradition emphasising the essential corruptness of human society, the above view of children began to change. As products of natural forces, of nature, children entered the world as pure beings. They were not yet tainted by the corrupting influences of social forces.[68] As such, children came to be understood as beings who were 'innocent of the sin of the world and requir[ing] protection from, it'.[69] In particular, they were innocent of 'original sin', of that sort of knowledge that was associated with the corrupt world of adults. It is in this sense of 'innocence' that childhood was now being

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66 Saint Augustine, *Concerning The City Of God Against The Pagans*, A new translation by Henry Bettensen with an Introduction by David Knowles, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 991.

67 Jackson (1982), p. 42.

68 Again, the figure of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with his influential educational treatise *Emile*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975) exemplifies this development.

69 Jackson (1982), p. 42.

discursively constructed -- as a time of innocence.

By the late nineteenth century this idea of childhood innocence, together with an idealised view of childhood, was rapidly becoming part of the common sense of the age. The idea of childhood innocence as being marked by an absence of any sexual knowledge or experience came to be collapsed into the idea of childhood innocence as explicitly asexual. That is, 'childhood innocence' signified an absence of sexuality. Children were thus supposed to lack a sexual nature. In a wide variety of areas, from the expurgation of literature (to render it suitable for children) to the hysteria over masturbation, much effort was expended on ensuring that this asexuality was the reality of childhood experience.[70] Yet, as Ennew[71] and Foucault[72] have pointed out, such measures actually indicated the presence of childhood sexuality and as such were 'a necessary corollary of childhood innocence'. This suggests some ambiguity, in the discursive representation of childhood, as Jordanova has noted.

> Separating nature from society allowed the naturalness of children -- pure, innocent, asexual -- to be contrasted

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[70] Jackson (1982), pp. 45-9 gives some indication of the scope of activities involved. For more details see Aries (1986) pp. 105-14; David Walker, 'Continence for a Nation: Seminal Loss and National Vigour', *Labour History*, No. 48, May 1985, pp. 1-14; Priscilla Robertson, 'Home as Nest: Middle Class Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Europe' in de Mause, ed (1974), pp. 407-31; Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).

[71] Judith Ennew, *The Sexual Exploitation of Children*, (London: Polity Press, 1986), p. 15.

[72] Foucault (1976/84), pp. 46-8.

> with the uncleanness of the corrupt adult world. But an inclusive approach validated sexuality as part of nature, hence how could it be depraved?... ...It is hard to reconcile the belief that children are natural and asexual with the view that sexuality is integral to nature.[73]

This ambiguity or tension between the two approaches to conceptualising 'nature' meant that the lines between childhood and adulthood remained blurry.

Given this, how was the dividing line defined and drawn between the (alleged) asexuality of children and the sexuality of adults in late nineteenth century South Australia? Finch has suggested that the legislative debates in the late nineteenth century over changes to the age of consent[74] for sexual intercourse are instructive in this regard. Finch is quite right to stress the significance of these legislative debates for what they reveal about the shaping of perceptions about the nature of childhood, sexuality and the prevailing gender order. For here the discourses of social purity, nineteenth century feminism, and the increasingly dominant scientific views of 'nature', especially within medicine, intersected to produce a social redefinition of ideas about sexuality and childhood. Yet it is unclear from Finch's account just how these debates functioned to bring about, as distinct from exemplifying, the particular discursive changes that she asserts. Her account is confusing[75] and missed

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73 Jordanova (1989a), p. 18.

74 Here it needs to be noted that these debates were themselves gendered insofar as the emphasis was largely on raising the age of consent for girls as part of a wider campaign to regulate men's sexual conduct.

75 The confusion arises from two directions. First, it is often unclear when she ceases to be re-presenting the views of the historical actors. On two

what would seem to be a crucial point about the discursive construction of social categories as if they were in fact given, ready made, by an ever-present nature.

The occasion for a debate over the age of consent in South Australia arose as part of a wider campaign, centred on prostitution and intemperance, to stem what some saw as a clear decline in public morality. The focal point for the campaign was provided by the Social Purity Society[76] founded in August of 1882 by the efforts of the Reverend Joseph Coles Kirby, a Congregational Minister with a strong zeal for social reform.[77] Kirby's interest in launching his

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occasions (Finch 1993, p. 74 and p. 82) she talked about nature as the determinant of the age consent, yet it is not clear whether this was her view or the view of those engaged in the debates. Second, her account, especially of events in South Australia, is not entirely accurate. As will be shown in the discussion to follow, generalisation was often substituted for historical specificity and on several occasions some of her key claims were wrong.

[76] Little has been published about the founding and activities of Social Purity Society in South Australia. See E.S. Kiek, *An Apostle in Australia: The Life and Reminiscences of Joseph Coles Kirby, Christian Pioneer and Social Reformer*, (London: Independent Press, 1927), Ch. VI. For some discussion of the early impact of the Social Purity Society see Jim Jose, 'Legislating for Social Purity 1883-1885: Reverend Joseph Coles Kirby and the Social Purity Society', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, No. 18, 1990, pp. 119-34; and W.W. Phillips, *The Influence of Congregationalism in South Australia 1837-1915*, (B.A. Honours Thesis, History Department, University of Adelaide, 1957). A slightly more flawed account is given by Cheryl L. McCann, *'Guardians of Virtue', South Australia, 1836-1894*, (B.A. Honours Thesis, History Department, University of Adelaide, 1979).

[77] In addition to the references cited in the preceding footnote further references to Kirby's social campaigns can also be found in F.W. Cox & L. Robjohns, *Three Quarters of a Century: in Which is Incorporated the Jubilee Record of Congregationalism in South Australia* and *The Story of the Last Twenty-five Years*, (Adelaide: Vardon & sons, 1912); Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in South Australia*, (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985); and Maurice French, *Churches and Society*

campaign for social purity was prompted by renewed calls[78] in 1881 for government regulation of prostitution through the licensing of brothels (as had happened in England in the 1860s).

In July 1882, in the Wesleyan Church Hall in Pirie Street, Kirby delivered a series of three public lectures which were subsequently published

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in South Australia 1890-1900: An Exercise in Reassurance, (M.A. Thesis, School of Social Sciences, Flinders University, 1969). Apart from his various campaigns for legislative reforms he was also at the forefront of the struggles in the 1890s to enfranchise women. He also campaigned within the Congregational Church for women to be deaconesses and for them to take a greater role in Church business. Kirby's advocacy of women's rights on the one hand and his campaigns for social purity on the other were not really contradictory goals. Nor were they necessarily out of step with the prevailing patriarchal gender relations. Kirby presented his case against those who appealed to the Bible to deny women political rights in a pamphlet published under the title of 'Woman: A Queen Regnant', (London: The Moral Reform Union, 189?). The exact date of publication is uncertain but it is known that the text was taken from a sermon first given at the Pt. Adelaide Congregational Church on 14 December 1890. He argued that there was no warrant in the scriptures for the legal and political subordination of women. In his view 'the watchword of God's creation, ..., was equality of rank on the part of the man and the woman' such that men and women enjoyed 'co-equal and joint dominion and responsibility' over the Earth (pp. 2-3). At the same time Kirby also believed that 'the supreme glory of woman is motherhood ... she is moved thereto by a deep, divine instinct' (p. 7). Clearly, Kirby accepted the view that it was the fact of sexual difference that defined the respective natures of men and women. Equally clearly, however, he did not accept the view that such sexual differences entailed political inequality. For further discussion on the way in which women's presumed purity was significant in the debates over the enfranchisement of women see Bacchi (1986).

78 The catalyst for these calls was a house fire in October 1881. It was revealed that the house was tenanted by two young girls who engaged in prostitution. The incident was widely reported. The *Register* (25 October 1881) in particular took the high moral ground in an Editorial which demanded that something needed to be done to criminalise 'the offence of leading children into immoral courses'. The *Register* pointed to proposals underway in England with its Contagious Diseases Acts aimed at regulating prostitution and suggested that something similar might be warranted for South Australia.

in August 1882.[79] In the first two lectures Kirby presented the case against state regulation of prostitution. He argued that rather than reducing the incidence of vice and its associated sexual diseases state regulation actually increased it. Moreover, such regulation 'confiscates the legal rights of all women' in that it 'is directed not only against those who unquestionably belong to this class [ie. of prostitutes] but also against every woman who may be suspected of practising prostitution'.[80] He also pointed out that this sort of legislation punished the woman for the spread of sexual disease while 'the man who infected the woman goes scot-free'.[81]

If the problem was largely due to the fact that the sexual conduct of men was putting women, particularly young women, at risk then the solution was to legislate in such a way as to curb men's sexual licentiousness. Men must be subjected to the same sexual regime as was expected of women since, 'what is sauce for the goose must in law be sauce for the gander'.[82] This was the main theme of the third lecture. In that lecture Kirby outlined his views on sex and the 'social evil' and then specified a number of areas in which the law should be amended to encourage social purity. Among these was a call for the age of consent to be raised from 13 to 18. However, the bulk of what he called

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79 Rev. J.C. Kirby, *Three Lectures Concerning the Social Evil: Its Causes, Effects, and Remedies*, (Port Adelaide, August 1882), pp. 33-4. A second edition of the third lecture was published in 1883.

80 *ibid.*, p. 16.

81 *ibid.*, p. 18.

82 *ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

for was concerned with measures to punish men who would prey on young women for sexual and monetary gain.[83] In the wake of Kirby's lectures a Social Purity Society was formed to mobilise public opinion and thereby to bring pressure on the legislators. By the end of 1885 legislative measures largely in keeping with those advocated by the Social Purity Society had been put in place.[84]

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[83] *ibid.*, pp. 35-41. In the revised edition of this Third Lecture published in 1883 three further demands were added. Two of these called for the criminalisation of the soliciting of prostitutes by men and the harbouring of under-age girls for the purposes of prostitution.

[84] Here is one of the points where Finch's account is mistaken. She claimed (1993, p. 77) that 'a crucial factor' in the arguments to raise the age of consent was the influence of an article 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' by William Stead and published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 5 July 1885. In her view, 'Bills designed to ...[raise the age of consent]... were passed within days of the 'Maiden Tribute' reaching an eager public' (p. 77). This article certainly had some influence after its arrival on (14 August 1885) in South Australia. However, her account of the events in South Australia is simply wrong. According to her version of these events, the *Young Persons Protection (Criminal Law Consolidation) Bill* had been passed by the Lower House by the end of July. She then states that it was before the Upper House for its first reading when the article in question in the *Pall Mall Gazette* arrived in Adelaide. When the Bill was returned to the Lower House for its second reading the age of consent had been raised to sixteen years as a result of the Upper House being 'thus stirred by Stead's journalistic crusade' (p. 77). However, the sequence events was as follows. The particular Bill, actually entitled *Protection of Young Persons Bill*, originated in the Upper House (the Legislative Council) on 10 June 1885 and, amongst other things, proposed to raise the age of consent from thirteen to fifteen years (*SAPD*, 1885, p. 42). It was received by the Lower House (the House of Assembly) on 21 July 1885 (*ibid.*, p. 302). The Lower House debated the Bill from July to December. In October the clause raising the age of consent to sixteen years was accepted (*ibid.*, p. 1245). This was largely a result of the public pressure brought about by a meeting in the Adelaide Town Hall on 21 September 1885. One of the motions emerging from that meeting was to urge the parliament to raise the age of consent to sixteen years (*The Advertiser*, 22 September 1885, and *Register*, 22 September 1885). Petitions supporting that motion were presented to the parliament on 24 September, 29 September, 6 October, 7 October and 22 October. The Bill, now retitled *The Criminal Law*

However, before looking further at that, it will be useful to draw out Kirby's view of sex and sexuality. In so doing, it will be possible to demonstrate that Kirby's views exhibited the characteristic discursive shifts mentioned earlier.[85] According to Kirby,

> The sexual nature is the great foundation of earthly human society, and is the means of our closest, dearest, and holiest fellowships; moreover the working of the sexual nature deeply affects for weal or woe the coming generations.[86]

Acting on one's sexual urges, expressing one's sexuality, could be intrinsically good provided it occurred within the bonds of marriage. Without the blessing and protection of the marriage relations, however, sexuality came to be nothing less than a social evil -- 'the abuse of the sexual nature by the male, the female, or both in consort'.[87] For Kirby, prostitution, masturbation, promiscuity, venereal disease and so on were all abuses of 'the sexual nature'. Since 'the sexual power [was] a public trust',[88] abuses of 'the sexual nature' amounted to a betrayal of this 'public trust'. As such they required public measures to address them. It was therefore the duty of the state to ensure that this 'public trust' was

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Consolidation Amendment Act, 1885 (*SAPD*, 8 December 1885, p. 1808), was returned to the Legislative Council on 9 December and passed (*ibid.*, p. 1836-7). It received Royal Assent on 11 December (not 8 December as claimed by Finch (1993, p. 77)).

85 *Supra.*, pp. 110-15.

86 Kirby (1882), p. 32.

87 *ibid.*, p. 32.

88 *ibid.*, p. 42.

both protected and upheld.[89]

It was also important that the young themselves should be properly informed. This was primarily the responsibility of parents and guardians who

> should take means of a wise kind for instructing persons with respect to their sexual nature. ... ... If instruction on any matter is required, it is on this.[90]

Silence and denial were no substitute for 'plain speaking' because this would leave children open to undesirable influences. Adults had a responsibility to counter the 'social evil' so that the young could be kept on the paths of righteousness and purity since, for Kirby, prevention was 'ten thousand times better than cure'.[91] Kirby was here calling for adults to provide sex education as a form of moral hygiene for their children. If the moral well-being of society was to be maintained then children should not be kept ignorant of either their natures or their responsibilities.

A number of summary points can be made here about Kirby's views. First, the existence of a 'sexual nature', of an essential aspect of human nature, is clearly evident in Kirby's views. That is, the idea of sexuality as a psychological state of being was central for Kirby. Hence, second, this revealed his ideas to be not just a constitutive precursor to but a part of the

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89 Indeed, Kirby endorsed the view of the nineteenth century British Prime Minister William Gladstone, that 'our laws should be so framed as to make it hard to do wrong and easy to do right'. Cited by Kirby in his 'Chairman's Address', *Minutes of the Congregational Union (and Home Mission)*, 18 April 1886.

90 Kirby (1882), p. 44.

91 *ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

newly emerging discursive formations mentioned earlier.[92] Third, and perhaps most important of all, Kirby regarded children's sexuality, their sexual natures, as being untouched by the desires and characteristics of adult natures. They were blank slates innocent of the sexual knowledges of adults. It was in this sense that children were seen to be pure. Thus instruction 'of a wise kind' was needed to ensure that their natures developed the sort of sexuality approved of by Kirby. On the one hand, children's sexuality had to be protected and, on the other, channelled into the approved form to reach its appropriate expression within marriage. It thus had to be protected from being 'abused' either by the self (ie masturbation) or others (ie seduction or similar). Responsibility for this protection rested, in the first instance, with parents and guardians but if that was found wanting then the State should provide it.[93] In effect, this provided the rationale for the efforts of the Social Purity Society to seek

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[92] Perhaps it is also worth noting that Kirby appeared to be well acquainted with contemporary developments in science and social theory. See Kirby's 'Chairman's Address' (1886) which was described by E.S. Kiek, *Our First Hundred Years: the Centenary Record of the S.A. Congregational Union 1850-1950*, (Adelaide, 1950) p. 44, as including 'outspoken advocacy of what was then regarded as the dangerous and heretical doctrine of evolution'. Later Kirby developed quite strong eugenicist views. For example, see his pamphlet 'The State and the Sterilization of Defectives' (1912) where he quoted approvingly from Herbert Spencer and from articles in the *Journal of Mental Science*. Kirby made the point that '[s]ociety has no more right to punish a man for innate sex perversion, one of the forms and symptoms of madness, than it has to punish a man for typhoid. ...Sex mania is liable to become hereditary. Sterilization prevents the transmission of the awful curse'. It was thus necessary for 'the leaders of the people' to take 'some measures to bar the propagation of the unfit'.

[93] Kirby (1882), p. 44. See also *Minutes of the Congregational Union (and Home Mission)*, 24 October 1882 where the view is expressed that 'every child is born a child of the State as well as of the individual home'.

legislative reforms to regulate sexual conduct.

The campaign for these reforms can be divided into three broad phases of debate in the parliament. The first involved debating a petition calling for specific amendments to the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 39 and 40*. The petition was drafted by Kirby and presented to the parliament on 27 July 1883.[94] Among other aims it advocated the raising of the age of consent concerning carnal knowledge and indecent assault from thirteen to sixteen years. The second and third phases involved specific legislative measures, namely *The Protection of Young Females Bill* and *The Protection of Young Persons Bill* in 1884 and 1885 respectively. On all three occasions the question of the age of consent was debated though it needs to be noted that this was only one among several key issues. However, the aim of the exercise, in Kirby's view, was to amend the existing laws to enable them 'much more effectively to shield the purity of young females' and thereby contribute to 'the purity and health of the male, and eventually, to society as a whole'.[95]

The range of arguments in the debates over the age of consent did not

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[94] This was the first of thirty-nine petitions to be presented to the parliament (16 to the Legislative Council and 23 to the House of Assembly) during 1883 and 1884 and covered nearly 13000 signatories (See *SAPD* 1883-84, *passim*). While there may have been some doubling up of signatures the sheer persistence would have made it hard for the politicians to ignore the demands. Note also that two of the petitions presented to the House of Assembly were from the Glenelg City Council and the Port Adelaide City Council. In addition, Kirby and his supporters also used the letters columns of the newspapers to present their views. The newspapers, particularly the *Register*, provided fairly sympathetic coverage for the Social Purity Society. In respect of the number of signatories to the above petitions, Finch (1993, *Fn* 24, pp. 162-3) put the figure at 10, 000.

[95] Kirby (1882), p. 34.

differ all that much. The point at issue in distinguishing between childhood and adulthood by reassigning the age of consent was expressed most succinctly in the Editorial of the *Register* when it commented on the sentiments expressed at a public meeting in the Adelaide Town Hall in September of 1885.

> We are entirely at one with them so far as regards the raising to 16 of the age, under which the consent of the girl to her own undoing is held by the law to be immaterial, ... It is not the leading astray of a woman which is to be made the ground of punishment; it is the leading astray of a young girl who is not of an age to realize the consequences of her act.[96]

Clearly the distinction between being a girl (ie child or non-adult) and being a woman was central here. And equally clearly the focus was on the age of consent for girls rather than just for children. However, the distinction does not hinge on any appeal to nature but on the point at which social responsibility, that is to say, social autonomy, should be acknowledged. This was a view held by numerous participants in the debates. However, as will become clear in a moment, the key point here is that social responsibility was held to be a quality of the mind rather than just the body.

Nature understood to mean the 'natural forces' of puberty, was not being discounted or denied. Both body and mind were understood as being subject to 'natural forces'. However, they could and did develop at differential rates. This meant that puberty had the potential to disrupt the passage to the socially preferred mode of adult sexuality. Ironically, it was the issue of the

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96 'Social Purity', *Register*, 22 September 1885. See also the editorial in *The Advertiser*, 22 September 1885.

timing of puberty which was advanced by some who opposed raising the age of consent. In their view, the fact that girls tended physically to mature earlier in 'a hot climate like ours' meant that the age of consent should not be raised too high, if at all.[97] On the other hand, this was countered by those who supported raising the age of consent to sixteen by drawing a distinction between physical and mental maturity. They readily agreed that many girls reached puberty well before fifteen years of age but that it was also the case that

> [p]hysical maturity did not touch the state of the mind. It was the fact that the mind was innocent, was ignorant, that made these persons deserving of their consideration. In fact it was the advance towards physical maturity coupled with a particular ignorance and absence of strength of mind that rendered these people especially liable to fall into trouble.[98]

Views such as these clearly exhibited the broad discursive shift, from a social to psychological mode, that was noted earlier.[99] The emphasis was on the psychological dimension in so far as it was the state or strength of mind that was seen to be at issue. In effect, this was the essence of the notion of 'childhood innocence'. That this view enjoyed a fairly wide currency can be seen from the comments of the Reverend Dean Russell that '[g]irls might be well developed at 16 years of age, but they were still, in all modest homes, but

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97 See for example, *SAPD*, 17 October 1883, p. 1349, p. 1350; *SAPD*, 22 October 1885, p. 1245. Even an editorial in the *The Advertiser*, 22 September 1885, noted that in South Australia, 'the development of girls is more rapid than in a colder clime'.

98 *SAPD*, 11 August, 1885, p. 481.

99 See pp. 111-5 *supra*.

children in intellect'.[100] What had to be guarded against was 'prematureness in the knowledge of evil',[101] or as Kirby put it, 'abuse of the sexual nature'. Russell's views also neatly encapsulated the image of childhood that was coming to the fore in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In the process of legislating to raise the age of consent, the definition of 'childhood' was being expanded quite consciously, not just in terms of encompassing a wider age range but also its underlying social meaning. These debates therefore signified a displacement of the previous social markers, such as the move into the world of work, whereby childhood became adulthood subject to all the demands and perils of the latter. Nature, in the form of sexuality, now enabled the world of adults to be differentiated from that of children even if the latter engaged in full time work. Second, and somewhat paradoxically given the first point, it was the State which determined these boundaries. The parameters of childhood were socially defined and constructed on the basis of appeals to 'natural forces'. However, the parameters were now to be located in ideas about children's natures, the natural forces supposedly determining their growth and development, in which the emphasis was now on intellectual, or at least mental, development. Finally, a related aspect of Kirby's agenda was that the young should be subject to 'means of a

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100 'The Young Person's Protection Bill', *The Advertiser*, 22 September 1885, p. 6.

101 'Social Purity: Crowded Meeting In The Town Hall', *Register*, 22 September 1885.

wise kind for instructing ...[them]... with respect to their sexual natures'.[102] For the parliamentarians of the day this was properly the domain of parents. By and large the parliament saw its role as one of setting the moral tone according to which people would regulate their daily conduct. In legislating for social purity the parliamentarians were also attempting to effect a form of moral hygiene at the level of the wider society, to contribute to 'the purity and health... ...of society as a whole'.[103]

Returning briefly now to Finch's account, it was her view that these debates showed that many of the participants were aware that what 'was being fixed was clearly a *natural* age barrier of childhood'.[104] The debates evinced a concern with the 'key issue of just when did childhood, and therefore asexuality, end'.[105] There emerged, according to Finch's reading of these debates, agreement 'that there was an age -- whatever it might be -- at which sexuality began and childhood ended and this age was determined by natural forces'.[106] Yet it is unclear from her account just how these appeals to 'natural forces' worked to effect the discursive shifts in the way that she identified. For, as has been demonstrated above, what emerged from a reading of these debates in South Australia was not so much that they were animated by an

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102 Kirby (1882), p. 41.

103 *ibid.*, p. 34.

104 Finch (1993), p. 74 (her emphasis).

105 *ibid.*, p. 80.

106 *ibid.*, p. 82 (emphasis in original).

over-riding concern with establishing a definition of childhood for its own sake. Rather, the specific concern was with redefining the boundaries for the public regulation of sexual conduct with respect to young girls.

The point is that the debates did not begin with the aim of defining the nature of childhood. But in pursuing specific legislative aims (to regulate sexual conduct), one of which involved the raising of the age of consent, the idea of childhood innocence proved useful. With the debate unfolding around a notion of childhood innocence the idea of sexuality, as a 'nature' of the mind as well as the body, was mobilised to provide the presumed dividing line between childhood and adulthood. Children's sexuality, once it came to be defined as 'innocence', as outside the 'natures' applicable to adults, had to be protected so that it could develop into its appropriately gendered form.

However, the sort of ideological climate which permeated these debates also permeated the conduct of schooling and the sorts of values embedded there. As has already been noted much of the process of providing schooling in the nineteenth century concerned reshaping the conduct and values of the working class. Habits and values of the sort acceptable to the acolytes of social purity found their way into various aspects of the school curriculum. In the next Chapter, attempts to realise some of these values through the school curriculum will be discussed. For the moment the next section looks at one of the ways in which some of these values found expression within the teaching of health. An examination of a widely used health education textbook is quite revealing of the way in which the social purity ideas of an ascendant bourgeois

morality fed into the process of schooling. It also illustrates two further developments: first, social problems increasingly come to be seen as due to a lack of hygiene whether of the body or the mind and second, a growing emphasis linking concerns about health with those of education.

IV

The health textbook, *Talks on Health and Temperance*,[107] was widely used in South Australian schools at least after 1909.[108] In 1912 an order was placed for a further 10,000 copies to be supplied.[109] Before the expenditure was approved the government of the day sought some details as to the book's status and the rationale for its purchase. The Director of Education, Alfred Williams, replied that current lessons which dealt with some of the areas covered in the book were 'as a rule... ...not arranged on any system, and are usually of a desultory and ineffective character'.[110] The book would serve to enhance the teaching process. He also informed the Cabinet that he did not know whether the book could 'be described as a standard work' but he understood that it was 'used in

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107 *Talks on Health and Temperance*, (London: McDougall's Educational Company, n.d.).

108 No publication date is given in the text but since it quotes figures relating to expenditure on alcohol consumption in 1909 it is reasonable to assume that the book was published after that date and hence was probably not in South Australian schools until 1910.

109 The book was still very much in use in 1917. See *Education Gazette*, Vol. XXXIII, 13 May 1917, p. 7.

110 Alfred Williams to Secretary of Cabinet, 17 April 1912. *GRG* 18, Series 2, 1912, No. 806.

the Elementary Schools of London' and would 'suit our purpose very well'.[111]

The book contained some twenty-eight chapters arranged according to five broad sections with the following headings: Our Bodies -- Their needs and how these are supplied; Eating and Drinking; Alcohol and Alcoholic Drinks; Evil Results of Intemperance; and The Proper Care of the Body.[112] Written in very direct but simple prose it employed the rhetorical style of the first person plural, namely 'we'. This creates what has been described by authors writing in a quite different context as a 'syntax of hegemony'.[113] What this means is that through the use of 'we' the writer's voice recedes into the background thereby appearing to establish for the reader a sense of common ground with the writer. This rhetorical strategy gives the appearance of including, rather than excluding, the reader. In this way a hegemonic tutelage is established which both integrates and directs the reader willingly into the modes of thought and values advocated by the author.[114]

For example, the opening chapter exemplified this hegemony. It began innocuously enough with a question of the form 'Did you ever' directed straight at the reader.[115] The attention of the reader was presumably engaged by focussing attention on the reader's possible experiences and ideas. This

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111 *ibid.*

112 *Talks on Health and Temperance*, p. 7, p. 30, p. 66, and p. 79.

113 Michael Billig, 'Nationalism and Richard Rorty: The Text as a Flag for *Pax Americana*', *New Left Review*, No. 202, Nov-Dec, 1993, p. 77.

114 *ibid.*, p. 77.

115 *Talks on Health and Temperance*, p. 7.

positioned the reader as something like a participant in the text.[116] The rhetorical subject, grammatically speaking, then shifted from 'you' to 'we' and 'our'. While these latter words were sprinkled throughout the chapter their rhetorical force was brought to a crescendo in the final paragraph where every sentence begins with 'we'. Moreover, each sentence contained an implicit imperative like 'we should try', 'we must learn', 'we must know', 'we must see', culminating with the exhortation that '[w]e must also see that our minds are well trained' because this was seen as a precondition for making 'the best use of our bodies'.[117]

The content of the *Talks on Health and Temperance* was marked by a number of features. First, there was a continued emphasis on the purity of the ingredients of good health. Thus, in the terms favoured by the text, 'some of the things we all need'[118] are 'a proper supply of pure nourishing food',[119] 'pure water',[120] 'pure fresh air',[121] and plenty of sunlight.[122] In addition, attention

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116 The following analysis, especially in terms of the knowledge-power relationship to be addressed below, holds even if the students do not themselves actually get to read the text. That is, even if it was only the teacher who read the text the embedded rhetorical strategy remains effective. This is because, in the hands of the teacher, it was eminently compatible with the prevailing pedagogy in which children came to school to be taught by those who knew what had to be taught and how to impart it.

117 *Talks on Health and Temperance*, p. 9.

118 This phrase is used as the title of chapters 4 and 5 of the textbook.

119 *ibid.*, p. 20.

120 *ibid.*, p. 22.

121 *ibid.*, pp. 21-2.

must be paid to 'another necessity for health, cleanliness -- cleanliness of body, of our clothing' and 'of our homes'.[123] The themes of purity and cleanliness echoed some of the key ideas of the social purity movement of the late nineteenth century. However, as will be seen below, they were also heavily laden with specifically middle-class values and exhortations as to proper living which were certainly endorsed by the Education Department.[124]

The second feature to note about the content of the text is that there was no explicit reference at all to anything remotely sexual. The two chapters purportedly dealing with 'the chief parts of the body' made no mention of the sexual organs. The principal organs deemed worthy of diagrammatic representation were the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, stomach and the intestines. There were a few oblique references to matters that might be sexual such as the need to exercise self-control, to avoid being 'intemperate in eating or in speaking, or in our desires'.[125] The silence here seemed to reflect more the prevailing assumptions about children's asexuality than an unwillingness to speak on such matters -- though that too may well have been a relevant factor. Certainly, there was no shortage of middle-class, gendered moralising and this

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122 *ibid.*, p. 22.

123 *ibid.*, p. 28. See also p. 83 and p. 87.

124 See for example, 'Course of Instruction and Suggestions for Teachers', *Education Gazette*, Vol. XXV, 18 February 1909, pp. 42-58. There it is noted that the elementary school is useful for the articulation of appropriate values (p. 42). Teachers were informed that temperance lessons were to be held at least once a month and that '[a] temperance pledge book is supplied to all schools' (p. 51).

125 *ibid.*, p. 78.

was the third feature of the text.

In relation to food the children were reminded that '[a] good housewife takes great pains with the cooking of the food for her household'.[126] Clothing should be kept 'neat and tidy' and in 'good repair'. Being poor was not regarded as a sufficient excuse for not looking after one's clothing -- 'however poor we are we need not wear torn or ragged clothes'[127] -- since all that was needed was proper attention at the right time. Girls were specifically advised that they too should be 'keeping their own clothes and those of their brothers neat and tidy'.[128] An endorsement of the prevailing gender order is clearly in evidence here.

Cleanliness, emphasised as essential for health, was not just a matter of personal hygiene and clean clothes. As night followed day it was declared that '[i]t is also quite clear that people living in a dirty house cannot themselves be clean'.[129] This was not simply a linking of environmental and personal hygiene but rather a pronouncement on the nature of moral character. Personal hygiene, domestic hygiene and moral hygiene were all of a piece.

To the superficial observer it might seem that poverty was the cause of poor domestic and personal hygiene and even that those who were poor 'fell to

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126 *ibid.*, p. 20.

127 *ibid.*, p. 26.

128 *ibid.*

129 *ibid.*, p. 87.

poverty through no fault of their own'.[130] However, the reader (who was already positioned as part of the rhetorical 'we') was quickly disabused of such notions. It was emphasised that 'those who come most in contact with the poor are at one in declaring that the main cause of poverty is intemperance'.[131] Apart from affecting the physical health of the drinker the intemperate use of alcohol affects the brain and thus the 'higher powers of the mind'. The ability to be autonomous, to be someone capable of exercising self-control, was thereby lost.

This reduced a person's capacity to work productively, to be attentive and to think effectively such that 'he [*sic*] becomes unfit for any position of responsibility and trust'.[132] Thus would be destroyed 'the moral qualities of those who so indulge'.[133] From there 'it is but a short step' to 'crime and beggary' and other social evils.[134] And even when 'absolute poverty' was avoided the consequences were held to be equally distressing. Children would have their education cut short and hence miss the opportunity to become skilled and fit for work. Decent family life would become difficult to achieve as alcohol destroys the 'happiness of home life'.[135] Ultimately, intemperance

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130 *ibid.*, p. 73.

131 *ibid.*, p. 71 and p. 73.

132 *ibid.*, p. 68.

133 *ibid.*, p. 69.

134 *ibid.*, p. 73.

135 *ibid.*, p. 70.

threatens the very prosperity of the nation as 'the nation becomes less able to compete with more sober nations'.[136] Thus for the good of the nation, for the good of the family, and for the good of the self, temperance in all things was advocated. Clearly, this text on health was thoroughly infused with values oriented to the ascendant middle class worldview.[137]

Finally, it needs to be noted that the rhetorical strategy disguised the way in which the knowledge-power relationship between the author (or teacher) and student (as learner) is presented. Indeed, as has already been suggested, it acted to construct a particular form of pedagogy. While the 'we' of the text appeared to be inclusive the student or reader was assumed to be a receiver of knowledge. Not only was this 'knowledge' presumed to be lacking in the reader it was also defined as something which was determined and provided by others. By accepting the hegemonic tutelage the reader could gain access to that which she or he lacked. Concomitantly, whatever values were upheld by those exercising this hegemonic tutelage were also infused into the process as unquestioned 'facts' to be absorbed.

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136 *ibid.*, p. 73. After the quoted comments a whole chapter was devoted to impressing the reader with the 'facts' of 'the nation's drink bill', pp. 74-6.

137 The values expressed in *Talks on Health and Temperance* were congruent with the sorts of views being promoted within the Education Department. See for example, W. Ramsay Smith, 'Habits and Health', *Education Gazette*, Vol. XXIII, 12 June 1907, pp. 117-123. Ramsay Smith covered such topics as the nature and psychology of habits, food, drink, clothing, air, exercise, and so forth. He also specified what he called 'general rules' such as 'every excess is an enemy to nature' and 'whatever tends to impair our strength should be carefully avoided' (p. 123). Clearly, this was a variation on the theme of temperance in all things.

V

By the first decade of the twentieth century the pattern of the educational state had been largely set. Fundamentally, the prerogative for educating the young shifted from the broader family context to the social space occupied by schools. Schools, and the eventual systematisation that went with them, created a social space within which children became subjects of, and subject to, particular disciplinary knowledge regimes. But it was not just schoolchildren who occupied this new social space. Sharing it, and indeed concomitant with it, were educators and parents. They too became subjects within and of various knowledge-power regimes. The social identities of 'educator', 'parent' and 'schoolchild' emerged in distinctly interdependent ways to constitute the social relations of schooling. All three emerged with responsibilities and duties for which various means of incentive and coercion were developed to ensure compliance. And as the system of state funded schooling grew the relations between parents, schools and children were continually contested and renegotiated.

Moreover, these newly emerging social relations of schooling presupposed the prevailing idealised social relations between the sexes in which men were assumed to occupy the public domain of paid work and women the private domain of the home. While the reality of people's lives often contradicted the ideals of masculinity and femininity implicit in this gender order, nonetheless most people, most of the time, acted as if these ideals were appropriate and natural. Certainly, the Education Department, as

was shown above,[138] was quite explicit in its efforts to map out and uphold the parameters of such a gender order. In this sense it could be said that the social space marked out by the growing sytematisation of schooling was also a sexed space. Not only were boys and girls to learn the habits of honesty, perseverance, obedience, regularity, self-denial and so forth, they were also to learn how to become men and women respectively.

While the sexing of adults, whether as educators or parents, was itself a complex process, the question of children as sexed beings posed its own set of problems. Paralleling developments in other parts of Australia and the western world generally, the idea of 'the child', and similarly of 'childhood', became a matter for concern as people sought to define its nature and duration. Indeed, the idea of childhood would seem to be a necessary corollary of systematised schooling in the specific sense that children were the objects of schooling. The ideas about childhood were sharply class-inflected in so far as working class children were seen as in especial need of order and discipline to render them fit to take their place in adult society. Even so, the dominant idea was that children of all classes were potential adults for whom schooling, of one sort or another, would provide the necessary guidance to enable them to become responsible adult social beings.

The systematisation of schooling provided one of the means for defining the demarcation between the world of children and the world of adults, of separating 'childhood' from 'adulthood'. As important for drawing

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138 See pp. 108-10 *supra*.

these boundaries was the use of the idea of sexuality. As was argued above, the development and deployment of the emerging idea of 'sexuality', discursively constructed around the various sciences and their redefinitions of 'nature', was crucial in this process. Whereas adults had a sexual 'nature' capable of social expression children's sexual natures were supposedly asexual. The social expression of one's sexual 'nature' was a key marker of adulthood Childhood was a time supposedly free from adult sexual knowledge -- a time of innocence -- the purity of which had to be protected. As the brief discussion above of the social purity movement revealed, the various apparatuses of State were mobilised to construct and protect this presumed time of innocence.

Yet while this involved the upholding of a particular regime of morality as well as the overt policing of sexual conduct, the explicit responsibility for educating the young about sex remained that of parents. Given the gendered social order, this responsibility was largely regarded as the province of mothers (as will be shown in the next chapter). Suffice it to say here that the sexing of children as subjects was recognised by some, primarily the advocates of social purity, as constituting a problem. Sex education of some sort based on social purity principles was urged. However, until the second decade of the twentieth century, such calls did not amount to very much in terms of pushing the Education Department into treating sex education as a legitimate part of the school curriculum. For the most part, it seemed that only the advocates of social purity recognised a problem that sex education was thought to solve. In fact, the problem had to be recast in terms that would enable it to be recognised

by a wider constituency than that of social purity.

The point that needs to be stressed here is that the Education Department, in organising schooling and its contents and directions, was not concerned to any great extent about infringing the presumed rights of parents to educate their children. As schooling came to be systematised the organisational needs of the system took priority with the parents' being responsible for sending their children to school rather than schooling them. This was reflected, as was just noted above, in the reshaping of teachers, pupils and parents alike to conform to the various organisational exigencies. It was also reflected in the content of the health textbook, *Talks on Health and Temperance*. Values relating to hygiene and cleanliness were not restricted to health issues but were inextricably linked to moral character. The class-inflected values linking health, social hygiene and moral character were presented as the norm against which the school children could measure themselves (and their families). Respecting parents' values, whatever they might have been, was not really an issue. Such sensibilities on the part of the Education Department were to emerge later; and then somewhat selectively.

Nonetheless, the beginnings, the conditions of possibility for sex education, had begun to emerge by the end of the nineteenth century when the foundational matrices of the educational state were laid. Sex education had become thinkable though its claim on a place in the school curriculum had yet to be articulated. The first of such claims is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

'A Delicate One To Deal With': Social Purity and Sex Physiology

I

Concerted attempts to have sex education incorporated into the state school curriculum occurred during the period from 1911 to 1916. This chapter examines each of these episodes in turn. The first attempt arose during the course of a Royal Commission on Education (hereafter referred to as the Ryan Commission after its Chairman, T.J. Ryan) which was held between 1911 and 1913.[1] The commissioners were urged to endorse a suggestion that the schools should take on the task of teaching 'sex physiology'. In the words of one of the commissioners, this meant 'the teaching of sex relationships'.[2] A substantial part of this chapter looks at the way in which the Commission handled this suggestion. The second call for sex education, in 1914, came from a concerned citizen, Mrs Agnes Scott Broad. She offered her services to the Education Department to provide classes for girls on sex education. Her offer was declined. Then, in 1916, Mr R.W. Bligh of the White Cross League (a social purity organisation based in Sydney) began a series of regular visits to schools that lasted till 1929. Despite some initial concern raised in the

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1 *SAPP*, No. 75, 1913: *Royal Commission on Education: Final Report (together with Minutes of Proceedings, Evidence and Appendices)*, (T.J. Ryan Chairman), (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1913). Interim reports were published in 1911 (*SAPP* Nos 27 and 106) and 1912 (*SAPP* No 27). Individual reports will be referred to by their *SAPP* numbers and the Royal Commission as a whole will be referred to as the Ryan Commission.

2 *SAPP* No 27, 1912, p. 123.

parliament, the White Cross League gained a degree of support from the Education Department. These two initiatives were dealt with directly by the Education Department though each fared differently. The reasons for this will be addressed in due course.[3]

All three episodes exhibited a degree of common ground in that their impetus derived from the ideals and aims of social purity. Each pursued a discourse in which moral values were central. However, it will be shown that during this period the beginnings of a discursive shift were becoming apparent. Social purity discourse about sexual knowledge for the young began to be subsumed within and overshadowed by other discourses in education, most notably those organised around medical (and scientific) knowledge. This shift saw the emergence of what Mort has termed 'medico-moral discourse'.[4] While Mort's analysis was concerned with similar discursive shifts in early twentieth century England, it has relevance for the South Australian context, as will be evident when the views and findings of the Ryan Commission are discussed.

While the rise of a 'medico-moral discourse' saw the displacement of the emphasis on social purity values by those of medical science there remained two common threads that need to be noted here. First, there was the common ground of appeals to nature, both in the sense of men's and women's

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3 See for Broad pp. 191-6 and for Bligh pp. 196-206 *infra*.

4 Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-moral Politics in England Since 1830*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987); especially Part IV where the shift in emphasis from social purity to social hygiene in early twentieth century England is discussed.

natures and to the world of nature in general, remained a central feature of the new discursive formation. The rise of a psychology based approach to knowledge, as was discussed in the previous chapter, was gaining momentum. Second, the late nineteenth century assumptions about sexed subjectivities within the prevailing gender order also remained dominant. In fact these two threads reinforced each other. Men's natures were assumed to constitute them as the sexually knowing beings who sought out sexual encounters whereas women's natures rendered them sexually responsible or reticent if not passive. As such, women were supposedly suited to the private sphere of home and hearth whereas men were naturally fitted to activities in the public sphere, including that of breadwinner. As will be shown below, these two threads intertwined in various ways within the debates over sex education.

Thus the overall theme in this chapter is that the various attempts at pursuing sex education were self-consciously concerned with sexing the subject. The inculcation of gender appropriate natures was part of schooling in general and arguments about sex education in particular. But before looking at these in any depth it is necessary to sketch some aspects of the broader cross-currents over the provision of education. Many of the Ryan Commission's recommendations found expression in the eventual implementation of the *Education Act, 1915*. The trends identified in the previous chapter with respect to the construction of the educational state became institutionalised in a settlement that has remained remarkably durable throughout the rest of this century. This was the background within which

took place the deliberations of the Ryan Commission about sex education in schools.

II

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, it became increasingly obvious that the settlement of 1875 needed some renovation. Despite the emphasis on efficient schooling, efficiency proved very elusive and difficult to achieve. There were contradictory tendencies and tensions between the social liberal and social efficiency approaches within the ideological debates over education.[5] At the same time there were tensions and contradictions born of the material conditions confronting educators.

At the material level, resources were never as plentiful as needed. Demand for schooling, or at least some level of education, remained high.[6] Teachers and administrators alike were overworked.[7] Somewhat galling for

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5 Ian Davey, 'Growing Up In South Australia' in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, ed Eric Richards, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 397.

6 Malcolm Vick, 'Community, State and the Provision of Schools in Mid-Nineteenth Century South Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 98, April, 1992, pp. 53-71 has argued persuasively that the development of schooling in late nineteenth century South Australia was characterised by 'a vigorous popular interest in education' (p. 54). This would seem to indicate that there was significant demand by local communities for schooling.

7 Accounts of the onerous loads borne by leading administrators, for example John Hartley and Alfred Williams, both of whom died on the job, are given by Hedley Beare, *The Influence of Alfred Williams and the Price Ministries on Public Education in South Australia*, (M. Ed. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1964) and G.E. Saunders, 'J.A. Hartley and the Foundation of the Public School System in South Australia' in *Pioneers of Australian Education Volume II: Studies of the Development of Education in the*

those who oversaw educational developments, far too many families placed domestic economic needs above those of efficient schooling. On the other hand, some working class families were presuming that an education beyond the bare minimum, the sort of education enjoyed by children from wealthier backgrounds, should also be available for their children. This was partly a recognition that education held the key to upward mobility and partly a result of demands from an increasingly politically mobilised labour movement for an education system which would train working class boys for jobs once they left school.

On the ideological dimension, a social liberal perspective held that the 'competitive academic curriculum' and the cultural values that it presupposed (and generated) should be available to as many children as possible.[8] That is, every pupil should have equality of opportunity to advance themselves. On the other hand, the social efficiency approach emphasised a utilitarian rationale for the use of limited resources. That is, supporters of this approach generally 'advocated that scarce resources be better used by an early segregation of pupils into specific, vocationally-oriented courses'.[9] It also meant that human beings were themselves resources whose utilisation should contribute to the greater efficiency of the society as a whole. As will become

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Australian Colonies 1850-1900, ed C. Turney, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972). On the question of teacher strain see the comments of the head of the teachers' union in 1912, V.J. Pavia in *SAPP* 1912, No 27.

8 Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 133.

9 *ibid.*

evident below, this meant that a socially efficient education would also need to be gender-differentiated.

The social liberal approach was clearly favoured by Ryan, the prime mover behind the establishment of the enquiry and the Chairperson of the Royal Commission, as can be seen from his various parliamentary speeches.[10] Ryan's view was thus that social class should not be the criterion upon which educational opportunities were determined. Poverty should not be a barrier to educational opportunity or advancement. This principle was widely accepted when applied to education at the primary school level. But at the post-primary level it was another matter. At the turn of the century, few educationalists, and even fewer politicians, were very strong advocates of equal educational opportunity beyond the primary school. The provision of 'universal secondary schooling' was not seen by governments as 'either a necessity or their particular responsibility'.[11] The vulnerable part of Ryan's view that every

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10 For example, in 1909, when speaking to a motion which advocated widening the opportunity for 'deserving students to continue their studies at the University of Adelaide', Ryan stressed that he 'believed that any young man or woman who needed University to-day should have an equal chance in every stage, regardless as to the financial or social position of his parents' (*SAPD* 13 October 1909, p. 521 and 524). The next year when arguing for the creation of a select committee to enquire into the provision of University education, he stated that the University should be 'open not to a few of fortune's favourites, ... but rather so governed that from within there should be found the means to bridge the gulf between those who had and those who desired' (*SAPD* 27 July 1910, p. 189). When the select committee became a royal commission under Ryan's stewardship, it declared its task to be to enquire 'into the best means of extending the advantages of the University to the greatest number' (*SAPP* No. 27, 1911, p. ix).

11 B.K. Hyams & B. Bessant, *Schools for the People? An Introduction to the History of State Education in Australia*, (Camberwell, Vic.: Longman Australia, 1972), p. 71.

student should have equality of opportunity in gaining access to the 'competitive academic curriculum' was that his emphasis on universality was misleading. His rhetoric of equal opportunity was always qualified by the proviso of the 'deserving student'. Within the discourse of equal opportunity the 'deserving student', then, as now, was someone of high intellectual ability. Seemingly fair and straightforward, this assumption was riven with class inflected views of hierarchies of knowledges and abilities. Moreover, it also presupposed that intellectual ability was an innate characteristic such that there was presumed to be a hierarchical distribution of intellectual ability which appeared to match the hierarchy of social classes.

The importance of the assumption of the innateness of intellectual ability is that it could easily be made compatible with the more utilitarian view of socially efficient schools. Indeed, notions of innate intelligence underpinned many of the pedagogic measures adopted within schools.[12] Examinations, grading, the organisation of knowledge and so on, indeed the 'competitive academic curriculum' itself, could all find their justifications in ideas about innate intelligence. Not only could children be sorted into their 'innately' given capacities, this very sorting process explained why some would succeed and many would not.[13] Thus could social efficiency be

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12 See the excellent discussion of the creation of intelligence measures in Australian schooling in Miller (1986), Ch. 9. From a slightly different perspective see also David McCallum, *The Social Production of Merit: Education, Psychology and Politics in Australia 1900-1950*, (London: The Falmer Press, 1990).

13 Miller (1986), pp. 176-7.

achieved. However, it must also be noted that even those who might be described as advocates of social efficiency did not necessarily eschew all aspects of social liberalism. The architects of the draft Bill drawn up in 1910 to replace the existing Act, namely the Minister for Education Coneybeer and Director of Education Williams, both shared much of Ryan's social liberal approach. In the debate over setting up the select committee, Coneybeer agreed that it was 'the duty of the state to develop the brains of the child, irrespective of class'.[14] Hyams and Bessant have pointed out that Williams believed that equality of opportunity was 'one of the key reasons for the introduction of state secondary education' -- but then they immediately added that Williams stressed the need for post-primary education to be developed to enable South Australia 'to keep pace with the industrial competition of other states and nations'.[15] For Williams this pace could be best sustained by providing vocationally relevant, but gender differentiated education. Particular forms of education would be provided for different categories of student depending upon their aptitude, abilities, and sex. It was the task of the education system to assist children to identify their intellectual limits and therefore their place in life. In this way the State's 'grave and serious trust' could be discharged most efficiently and productively.

As in the education debates of the late nineteenth century, the theme of

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14 *SAPD*, 14 September 1910, p. 504. Coneybeer repeated much the same view when he introduced the second reading of the 1910 Education Bill: 'Upon the State rested the responsibility of educating its children -- a grave and serious trust', *SAPD*, 10 November 1910, p. 979.

15 Hyams & Bessant (1972), p. 104.

schooling the unruly remained significant especially in the first decade of the twentieth century. This was often emphasised by Alfred Williams, the Director of Education appointed in 1905. Thus he informed his staff that the politicians had yet to recognise the necessity for 'the rescuing of children from the neglect of parents'.[16] A year later he noted that there were 'still too many children to be seen in the streets and at the market who should be at school'.[17] But this time he also pointed out that the 'State has a real and vital interest in seeing that all children receive proper training and discipline'.[18] Just what he meant by proper training was spelt out by his Chief Inspector (M.M. Maughan) who also lamented the negative influence of 'the home and the streets' which the school should try to counteract. Such training involved the inculcation of values like 'goodliness, thought for others, mutual help and forbearance, recognition of age and authority, and mutual respect' which 'no thinking mind w[ould] for a moment believe' were 'incompatible with the most sterling manliness and self-respect'.[19] Here it can be seen that Maughan was at pains to reconcile what could be seen to be two diverging sets of values: those associated more with women's roles such as thinking of and doing for others and those associated with men's roles of robust self-sufficiency. Even so, the image of an ideal educated subject was predicated on a form of

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16 Alfred Williams, *Education Gazette*, Vol. XXI, 1905, p. 131.

17 Subsequently reported in *Education Gazette*, Vol. XXIII, 1907, p. 183.

18 *ibid.*

19 M.M. Maughan, in *ibid.*, p. 204.

masculinity evoked by the words, 'sterling manliness'. For this was the standard, as Maughan's words make clear, with which any other values had to be reconciled. Thus the values for schooling the unruly were themselves measured according to the standards of a gender order in which masculinity was understood to be the dominant, defining norm.

Increasingly, however, the unruly were not just those who had 'tasted the fatal liberty of the streets' but the families themselves whose daily practices had to be remade to complement those advocated by leading educators.[20] That is, the educational state itself had to be constructed to step into the breach left by this presumed parental inadequacy or incompetence. If this transformation of children and their families was to occur[21] then the education system itself had to undergo further change. To enable efficient schooling to be made a reality, schools and teachers had to be reorganised. Attendance had to be made compulsory and proper attendance records kept. Teachers needed to be appropriately certificated so that only 'qualified people' could open and teach in schools. Inefficient schools (whether state or privately operated) had to be closed or regulated much more closely to ensure the elimination of any 'flaw in the educational machinery of the State'.[22]

These themes and others such as expanding the provision for post-

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20 Vick (1992), p. 54.

21 For some discussion of this trend in a wider context see Kerreen M. Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985).

22 Williams, *Education Gazette*, Vol. XXIII, 1907, p. 183.

primary education, particularly in the area of technical education, were pursued vigorously by Alfred Williams during his first five years as Director.[23] He envisaged an education system that would provide vocationally relevant but gender-differentiated schooling to fit children for their likely future work -- boys for a profession, trade or unskilled work, and girls for motherhood and household duties.[24] Many of these ideas came to be embodied in the proposed draft Education Bill of 1910 which he and the Minister for Education (Labor MP, Mr Coneybeer) drew up to put before the parliament.[25] Although this particular Bill lapsed in 1910 with the establishment of the education enquiry, much of what was aimed for resurfaced within the recommendations of that enquiry.

The rhetoric of social liberalism and equal opportunity was certainly accepted by most of the key participants in the education debate. Yet for the vast majority of students the limits of equal opportunity were quickly reached. All were equally entitled to primary schooling, but not all were entitled to education beyond that. It was largely this which underlay Ryan's attempts to guide the ensuing education debate. This was reflected in the *Final Report* which ultimately recommended a unified but vocationally and gender specific system of education which was very close to that which Williams had been

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23 See Williams' various Annual Reports, *SAPP* No 44 for the years between 1907 and 1910 and also his report of his overseas study tour in 1907, *SAPP* No 65, 1908.

24 Miller (1986), p. 149.

25 Beare (1964), pp. 162-6.

urging in 1910.[26] After three years of deliberation, the social efficiency dimension prevailed over the social liberal approach.[27] Despite Ryan's efforts,[28] the commission paved the way for a consolidation of the key trends in education and management practices begun some forty years earlier with the 1875 *Education Act*.

With the proclamation of the *1915 Education Act* the position and power of educators was consolidated. The principle of a centralised education system, as it had evolved under J.F. Hartley, one of Williams' predecessors, was largely unchanged. Head office still retained the dominant role in managing schools. More importantly, under the *Education Act* the Director

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26 *SAPP* 1913, No. 75, p. xxxiii.

27 Miller (1986), p. 148.

28 Ryan was a prime mover in establishing the enquiry into education. For the debate over the setting up of the education enquiry see *SAPD*, 27 July 1910 pp. 187-91; 3 August 1910 pp. 238-41; 14 September 1910 pp. 502-9; 26 October 1910 pp. 816-20; 12 July 1911 pp. 89-90; 17 August 1911 pp. 395-6. As a result of the establishment of the education enquiry legislative reform would be postponed until after the enquiry had delivered its findings. Hence the draft Bill of 1910 was shelved. Ryan's responsibility for this outcome has been assessed rather negatively by at least two scholars: Beare (1964), p. 166; p. 170; pp. 202-5, and Colin Thiele, *Grains of Mustard Seed (A Narrative Outline of State Education in South Australia: 1875-1975)*, (Adelaide: Education Department South Australia, 1975), p. 95. Both Beare and Thiele interpreted Ryan's intervention from the perspective of how this impacted on the proposals and reforms being pursued by Williams. Yet this assessment seems rather harsh -- especially if Ryan's actions are interpreted from a perspective that does not take the presumed needs of the education system as the guiding thread. More importantly, such criticism misses the point in so far as it does not explain why Ryan intervened. In large part, Ryan's actions signalled an attempt to assert parliamentary ascendancy in establishing the contours of education policies. His intervention was about who should control the nature, formulation and organisation of what was to count as educational knowledge. This was what the eventual education settlement of 1915, as embodied in the *Education Act*, was about.

became solely responsible for 'the courses of instruction for each branch of education in the public schools'.[29] In short, curriculum responsibilities in terms of determining and approving what was to count as educational knowledge were placed in the hands of professional educators. A buffer, in the form of the Director of Education, now stood between parliament and the execution of education policy. Responsibility for translating the latter into particular curriculum practices rested with the Director.

In terms of structuring the relations between the state, parents and children, the *1915 Education Act* marked a significant watershed.[30] Parental responsibility for the education of their children, though not totally denied, was to be made subordinate to the imperatives of the socially efficient educational state. Compulsory attendance became the norm, with children between the ages of six and fourteen years being required to attend the nearest school on every day that it was open.[31] Parental authority concerning children's education was redefined and increasingly subordinated to that of the professional educators. The education of children was perceived to be too important to be left solely to the good intentions of parents, or to the chance of the 'unruly streets'.

While some students would continue to need the academic curriculum provided by high schools, the majority would be catered for by various forms

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29 S. 28 (1), *Education Act 1915*.

30 Davey (1986), p. 396.

31 S.48 - S.51, *Education Act 1915*.

of technical and practical instruction. This would equip students with the necessary skills, attributes and habits of mind deemed appropriate for their presumed station in life. The core of this vision has been succinctly summarised by Miller. Williams' scheme

> was based on a central though unstated assumption: young people's future would have to be decided by the end of their primary schooling; thereafter, different 'classes of children' would be provided with entirely different forms of education (as would boys and girls). Children would be divided into three basic groups on the basis of their anticipated length of school attendance -- and this was all but given by the social class of their parents.[32]

Thus high schools would prepare students for university and a professional career. Those deemed unsuited for academic pursuits would receive a technical education to yield the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers of the future.[33] Girls, or the vast majority of them, would be actively encouraged into domestically based futures. They would be instructed in the most advanced scientific forms of domestic and household management; that is, in all the necessary attributes appropriate for the prevailing gender order. Williams made this most explicit in his report to the Minister in 1912.

> No woman is properly trained for life unless she is properly trained to do, to know, to think, and to feel those things which are part and parcel of right motherhood, right mothering of children, and right carrying out of the domestic side of life.[34]

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32 Miller (1986), p. 146.

33 Davey (1986), p. 396; Miller (1986), p. 149.

34 *SAPP* 1912, No 44, p. 21

It was Williams' considered view that 'the great end and aim of a woman's life is to be the honoured mistress of her own home'.[35] It was the school's task to facilitate this. This clearly demonstrates the way in which schooling was to sustain a gender differentiated social order. Children were to be sexed according to this gendered approach in preparation for their future places as sexed subjects in the adult world. It was the task of the education system to ensure that children were efficiently taught and properly prepared for their class and gender differentiated futures. Deciding what constituted proper preparation and the means to achieve it was to be the prerogative of professionally trained educators.

Davey has suggested that despite the reforming zeal of the royal commissioners their

> intentions were to rationalize the reproduction of the social order, not to reconstruct it, and the institutional matrix they developed reflected existing social divisions at the same time as it attempted to standardize childhood experience.[36]

Davey has succinctly encapsulated the essence of the reformers' agenda. Yet it is also necessary to be wary of turns of phrase like 'reproduction of the social order' and 'reflect[ing] existing social divisions'. There is an implied passivity here that does not seem to square with the historical record. If it was merely a case of reproducing or reflecting the existing social and gender order, then why did so much effort have to be put in to achieve this? Despite

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35 *ibid.*, p. 21.

36 Davey (1986), p. 397.

the actions of the reformers and senior educators, despite the ascendancy of social efficiency principles, parents and their children, and even teachers did not seem convinced by it all. Rather, parents and their children opted, wherever possible, for what they perceived to be the benefits of the competitive curriculum of a liberal education. As Miller has argued, even those parents 'who endorsed the ideology of separate spheres and wanted specialised instruction for girls' did not necessarily accept that school based teaching of household chores was appropriate.[37]

It is clear that the various reports of the enquiry of 1911-13 upheld a particular set of gendered social relations in which the ideology of separate spheres for each sex was prominent. These ideas on gender were central to the consolidation in 1915 of the education state in South Australia. Responsibility for defining and developing school knowledge, for its organisation and dissemination, was placed firmly in the hands of the Director. Whatever knowledges students brought with them, be they ideas or

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[37] Miller (1986), p. 158-60. It is necessary, however, to be a little cautious about characterising the nature of relationship between schooling and everyday life at this time: 'it is important not to overestimate the significance of schooling ...[since]... the link between school and work had not been forged with any precision' (*ibid.*, p. 93). The relevance of schooling in terms of preparing children for a particular job had yet to be established as the new common sense -- though this would certainly appear to have been the goal of Williams and Coneybeer. It is perhaps fair to say that the relevance of schooling in this respect was acknowledged and advocated more by its promoters than by those for whom it was being designed. Schooling remained primarily concerned with the 'civilising' mission of acculturating working class children to bourgeois values. For many children from within the working and middle classes the fact that they were at school was incidental to the fact that they were often required to work for and within the family.

practices handed down within the family, could thus be discounted against what was produced in and by the education system. The duty of parents was to present their young to the education system to be schooled. Not the nurture of the home but the learning of the school was to be the dominant shaper of subjects.[38] This was the education settlement reached in 1915 -- a settlement which has not been altered very much in subsequent years.

III

It was within this context that the issue of teaching sex physiology was raised by Reverend Joseph Coles Kirby, the indefatigable campaigner for social purity. The Commissioners reported that Kirby had written to them expressing the view that 'boys and girls of a suitable age should receive instruction in sex physiology ...[and that] this matter should form a systematic part of the work of primary schools'.[39] Kirby had long supported appropriate sex education of the young. As was shown in the previous chapter, he advocated in 1882 that parents and guardians had a responsibility to 'take means of a wise kind for instructing persons with respect to their sexual nature';[40] to help the young be on their guard against 'the abuse of sexual nature'.[41] With appropriate instruction the young could be kept on the paths

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38 *ibid.*, p. 146.

39 *SAPP* No 27, 1911, p. ix.

40 Rev. J.C. Kirby, *Three Lectures Concerning the Social Evil: Its Causes, Effects, and Remedies*, (Port Adelaide, August 1882), p. 44.

41 *ibid.*, p. 32.

of righteousness and purity since prevention was 'ten thousand times better than cure'.[42] Given that he also believed that 'the sexual power [was] a public trust',[43] the onus was on the State to assist in preventing betrayals of this 'public trust'. This view underpinned his advocacy of legislative measures (and the role of the State therein) to define and police public sexual conduct. The same ideas animated his lobbying of the Commission in 1911.

He also wrote to the local newspaper in 1913 arguing that schools had a responsibility to ensure that the young received proper instruction about 'the laws of physical parenthood... ...to abate the misery which arises through youthful ignorance on this question'.[44] Kirby was alluding here to the problem of venereal disease and its social and reproductive consequences. What must be acknowledged was that at this time there was as yet no cure for venereal disease. The 'misery' that it could lead to was both real and terrifying. For Kirby, the young had to be warned of its dangers.

Note also Kirby's appeal to 'the physical laws of parenthood'. It was not incongruous for the discursive constructs of science (ie. 'laws of nature') to find expression within his social purity discourse; for side by side with his social purity ideas were also those of eugenic theory with a scientific cast in

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42 *ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

43 *ibid.*, p. 42.

44 Rev. J.C. Kirby, 'Instruction in Racial Hygiene', *Register*, 28 June 1913.

which issues of race dominated.[45] Kirby was as concerned with racial fitness as he was with social purity. Part of his rationale for instructing children about sex, especially venereal disease, was so that they would understand their 'racial nature' and not succumb to 'the misery which arises through youthful ignorance'.[46] Here Kirby was thinking of more than moral transgression. He was also concerned with what he saw as the problems that arose when those who were racially unfit, in terms of their relative poverty, susceptibility to disease, or mental deficiencies, were allowed to reproduce.[47] As he put it in another letter, 'they are constantly giving rise to a sad, miserable, unhappy, progeny, who have little or no sense of responsibility ...[and]... our Parliament allows poor, miserable beings to be born, who in their turn will become parents'.[48] Most of these consequences Kirby saw as being exacerbated if not caused by the perils of sex, in particular the problem of venereal disease. Appropriate instruction in sexual matters was one way of beginning to deal with this problem. Like many others of his day, Kirby believed that the future well-being of the nation depended on the propagation of the race by those who were of the highest possible moral, mental and

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45 For some general discussion of eugenics and race at this time in Australia see C.L. Bacchi, 'The Nature-Nurture Debate in Australia, 1900-1914', *Historical Studies*, October 1980, pp. 199-212; Stefania Siedlecky & Diana Wyndham, *Populate And Perish: Australian Women's Fight for Birth Control*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), Ch. 7.

46 Kirby, 'Instruction in Racial Hygiene', *Register*, 28 June 1913.

47 *ibid.* See also his pamphlet, 'The State and the Sterilization of Defectives' (1912).

48 Rev. J.C. Kirby, 'Mental Deficients', *Register*, 5 December 1912.

physical purity.[49] The point of sex education was to instil such values, in particular the values of chastity and self-restraint, for the good of the nation as a whole.

The Commission drew its evidence on from seven witnesses -- two professional educators and five doctors. These were Mr Frank Tate (Director of Education, Victoria), Mr J.D. Story (Under-Secretary for Public Instruction, Queensland), Dr R.S. Rogers (Medical Practitioner, Adelaide), Dr A.A. Lendon (Medical Practitioner, Adelaide), Dr W. Ramsay-Smith (Head of the Department of Public Health, SA), Dr Gertrude Halley (Medical Inspector, Education Department, Adelaide), and Dr R.E. Roth (Medical Practitioner, Department of Public Instruction, NSW). Surprisingly, the issue was never raised with Alfred Williams, the Director of Education, for most of the Commission's duration. Given that the Commission eventually recommended that all curriculum decisions be the prerogative of the Director of Education,[50] it seems strange that there is no record of his views on this particular curriculum issue. Nor did Kirby appear before the Commission though he did correspond with them on a number of occasions.[51]

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49 Rev. J.C. Kirby, 'Racial Decay', *Register*, 1 March 1911. In that letter he approvingly quoted a prominent eugenicist to the effect that the declining birth rate leads 'in most countries ...[to]... a decline in national physique and a steady multiplication of weeds and degenerates, ...[and]... it amounts to the greatest national peril that confronts modern nations. ...there is decline of birth rate among the most fit and great multiplication of the unfit'.

50 *SAPP* No. 75, *Final Report*, 1913, p. xxxvii, Rec 16.

51 *ibid.*, p. lxiii for a letter on the 'education of the feeble-minded' and pp. liv and lxxxix for letters addressing sex physiology. None shed any further light on his views nor explained his non-appearance at the enquiry.

The first person with whom the Commission raised the question of sex physiology was Tate. It should be noted that Tate's reputation as an educator was considerable. He was also a close personal friend of Williams and it is fair to suggest that a good many of the reforms envisaged by Williams in 1910 owed something to Tate's influence.[52] On the issue of sex physiology Tate informed the Commission that the matter was under consideration in Victoria; nevertheless there remained 'a difference of opinion as to the wisdom of teaching it'.[53]

There were several problems as Tate saw it -- at least as far as boys were concerned. First, Tate suggested that the average teacher would not have sufficient knowledge 'to do the work safely'.[54] The implication here was that teachers would need to be given extra training if they were not to be unduly burdened with duties for which they had not been prepared. This also related to a worry about the content that might be taught. Teachers who were untrained or underprepared for such a subject area might impart inappropriate ideas to (presumably) impressionable children. Now both of these problems, the untrained teachers and controversial (or risky) content might be offset by using a visiting teacher with appropriate expertise. But this raised a further set of problems for Tate.

Here the emphasis was not so much on the teaching process itself but

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52 Beare (1964), Ch. 3.

53 *SAPP* No. 27, First Progress Report 1911, p. 189/2663.

54 *ibid.*, p. 189/2664.

more on possible consequences of such teaching. That is, he feared that the boys would 'have a knowledge which probably they did not possess before, and it may be knowledge put to wrong use'.[55] While this outcome could also arise if sex physiology was dealt with by the class-room teacher, concern seemed to centre on the presentation of information in a context which might highlight its novelty thereby generating a greater level of interest. Informing this view was the fear, highlighted by Tate, that the mere presentation of sexual knowledge might provoke sexual activity or experimentation where none previously existed. Thus the nub of the problem, in the case of teaching sex physiology to boys, was how to integrate it into the curriculum in such a manner as to ensure that the teacher retained pedagogic control over the content while at the same time minimising the presumed potential for prurience.

For girls, on the other hand, the problems were perceived to be of a different order. Of importance here was the shifting gender bias of the curriculum signalled by the increased emphasis on the introduction of domestic economy subjects. Tate pointed out that in Victoria the Education Department was engaged in a process of working out a special course of study which 'will have reference to their physical side as girls, and will have special reference to their special work as women in the community'.[56] To that end, the Victorian Education Department, with some assistance from the

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55 *ibid.*, p. 189-90/2664.

56 *ibid.*, p. 190/2665.

University of Melbourne, had begun training thirty women specifically in domestic subjects. It was also recognised that physiological issues were an important part of domestic economy subjects. Sex physiology could thus be integrated within an overall package of instruction dealing with good housekeeping and child-rearing.

The 'special work of women in the community' provided an acceptable rationale for making available legitimate, but limited, space within the curriculum for some form of instruction in sex physiology for girls. This would also be consistent with the prevailing gender relations according to which the 'special work of women' was to raise children and manage the modern household according to the newly emerging canons of scientific rationalism.[57] Furthermore, Tate's view that it was acceptable to teach sex physiology to girls resonated with the gendered perception that women, to a greater extent than men, were expected (and encouraged) to be morally responsible in matters sexual. As future mothers they would be required to police their children's sexuality. It was simply presumed that girls would be less inclined than boys to put such knowledge to 'wrong use'.

Tate was also questioned about the strategy of providing evening classes where, as one of the Commissioners, Mr Peake, put it, 'specialists connected with the Department could give instruction on those subjects which

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57 For these developments in Australia see Reiger (1985). For an account indicating these developments in a wider context see Ruth Schwarz Cowan, *More Work For Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

are of so much importance to the health of boys and girls'.[58] Tate informed the Commission that a start had been made along these lines through the work of Education Department Medical Inspectors. The Inspectors often arranged meetings of parents where the parents of the children who had been examined were 'told plainly and frankly' what steps should be taken by them as parents.[59] Tate indicated that these meetings conducted by Departmental Medical Inspectors worked reasonably well in so far as they seemed to capture parents' interest. Tate's underlying strategy was one of educating the children by educating their parents. He regarded this as a promising step forward because in his view there was a 'very great disinclination' on the part of parents to discuss sex matters with their children.[60] Commissioner Peake seemed to share that view and pressed Tate as to whether the Education Department in Victoria should take a more forthright lead in such matters by appointing specially trained teachers. Tate replied that '[w]e would be guided very largely by the opinion of the medical inspectors' once the government established the policy and provided the necessary funds.[61]

Tate was the first witness to be interviewed about teaching sex physiology and in many respects his views formed a base line from which the Commissioners worked. While acknowledging that this was an area where

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58 *SAPP* No. 27, 1911, p. 190/2666.

59 *ibid.*, p. 190/2666.

60 *ibid.*, p. 190/2667.

61 *ibid.*, p. 190/2668.

parents often failed to help their children he also pointed to the dilemmas facing educators if they were to take up the issue. Certainly, he highlighted the key areas over which dispute has occurred for much of this century: the content of what should be taught; who should be responsible for teaching it; how should it be taught. But it is also important to note the discursive subjects that Tate is creating. That is, the sort of child who is posited within his educational discourse is presumed to be not just ignorant of sexual matters but to be sexually unformed in terms of adult sexual identities. Conversely, similar comments can be made of parents to the extent that they are portrayed as failing to provide their children with appropriate sexual knowledge. The measures suggested by Tate all involved some degree of educational enlightenment but they also exposed an educator's focus on the shaping of the children themselves (and in a related sense, their parents).

Finally, it is also important to note Tate's deferral to medical knowledge or at least to the opinions of his department's medical inspectors. Peake's comment regarding 'the health of boys and girls' and Tate's views indicated shifting frame of reference from a predominantly moral to a predominantly medical frame. That is, the problem was being cast as one requiring a solution in terms of medical knowledge rather than social purity. This is not to say that moral values were being discounted but rather that the rationale for teaching sex physiology was developing from within a convergence of medical and moral knowledge, an emerging medico-moral

discourse.[62] The self-avowed moralistic discourses pursued by Kirby and other advocates of social purity, with their emphasis on mobilising the state to criminalise transgressions of sexual conduct, were beginning to be displaced by an education oriented discourse grounded in medical terms. In effect, what can be seen here is the beginnings of a reconstitution of the guiding terms for the 'official' discourse on sex education. This signalled a changing discursive field.

A similar though less pronounced theme was also to be found in the views of the next witness interviewed by the Commission. This was J.D Story, Under-Secretary for Public Instruction in Queensland, who was interviewed when the Commission visited Brisbane in May 1912. Story told the Commission that sex physiology as such was not taught in Queensland schools although related aspects of it might occur in 'the lessons on domestic science' and in health lessons 'provision... ... is made in regard to the body and physiology generally, but it is not very largely touched upon'.[63] When pressed further, by Commissioner Peake, about 'sex physiology especially' Story said that his department had 'not seriously touched on that'.[64] Story gave two broad reasons for this. First, that it would be unfair of the Department to expect teachers to teach a subject for which they had not been trained. And

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62 Mort (1987), p. 174.

63 *SAPP* No. 27, 1912, p. 123/5076-7.

64 *ibid.*, p. 123/5078. Here it must be reiterated that the phrase 'sex physiology' was understood by Story, Peake and the other Commissioners to encompass sexual relationships and not just the physiology of sex.

second, that his Department felt that 'it would be injudicious to allow young and inexperienced teachers to deal with those subjects'.[65] Story favoured a 'system of medical inspection' which would include advice to parents on all aspects of 'the general bodily health of children'. Where appropriate, and if needed, Story thought that it would be possible to integrate occasional 'special lectures dealing with the special subject you [ie Commissioner Peake] have mentioned'.[66]

While the Queensland approach was more cautious than that of Victoria there were clear similarities between the positions put by Story and Tate. In the absence of specific government direction, especially in Queensland,[67] the strategy was to deal with the teaching of sex physiology through advising or instructing parents. Moreover, the preferred vehicle for this advice was that of medical knowledge. And like that of Tate, Story's testimony, especially his comments that it would be 'injudicious' to have such material taught by 'young and inexperienced teachers', also suggested a concern with the perceived dangers of the subject matter.

Whereas both Tate and Story were educational administrators, the rest of those interviewed about sex physiology were either practising doctors or those trained as doctors. The first of these to be interviewed was Dr Richard

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65 *ibid.*, p. 123/5078-9.

66 *ibid.*, p. 123/5079.

67 For further discussion of the position of the Queensland government see G. Logan, 'Sex Education in Queensland: A History of the Debate 1900-1980', *Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Queensland Education*, No. 2, (Department of Education, Queensland, October 1980).

Sanders Rogers who, apart from his medical practice in Adelaide, was also prominent in a number of community activities.[68] In 1909 he had also prepared a report for the Education Department on his observations of the health of South Australian schoolchildren.[69] He would appear to have been held in reasonably highly regard by the Education Department. Initially, Rogers was asked about the teaching of sex physiology by Commissioner A.W. Styles who, as it happened, was a friend of Kirby as well as a supporter of social purity ideals. Rogers was opposed to making sex physiology part of the primary school curriculum because it would 'unduly attract the attention of the child to prurient matters'.[70] He was convinced that it was a task 'far better done by the parents or guardians' and he doubted whether it could be taught properly (or as he put it 'safely done') in schools.[71] For Rogers, the problem was neatly summed up by Chairman Ryan who asked him if it was his view, 'as a medical man of 25 years practice... ...that to show children how

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68 Rogers held numerous high-level medical appointments, was closely involved with the management of the Public Library, the Museum, and the Art Gallery, the Justices' Association, and the SA Literary Society as well as a being a noted orchidologist, recognised as 'a world authority on Australasian orchids', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 11 1891-1939 NES - SMI*, ed Geoffrey Serle, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), p. 443.

69 *Report on the Medical Inspection of One Thousand Pupils Attending the Public Schools of South Australia During 1909*, (Adelaide: Adelaide Government Printer, 1910), *GRG* 18/Series 178. Rogers visited five metropolitan and thirty-three rural schools ranging from Mt Gambier in the south to Leigh Creek in the north.

70 *SAPP* No. 27, 1912, p. 157/5681.

71 *ibid.*, p. 157/5682.

evil can be done might lead to it being done'.[72] Rogers agreed and reiterated his view that attempts to teach sex physiology 'might do more harm than good'.[73]

Rogers' views were echoed to a large extent by Dr A.A. Lendon, another medical practitioner in Adelaide.[74] Lendon's contribution to the Commission's deliberations was very brief; no more than four short sentences. When asked about teaching sex physiology he challenged the Commissioners as to which one of them 'would like to undertake that delicate task'[75] -- as if to suggest that if they found the prospect of having to teach it daunting then they had no business raising the question in the first place. Lendon then went on to dismiss the issue in the following manner:

> I think it is a prurient matter to deal with. I think it would be better to leave it to nature. I am, perhaps, old-fashioned, but I think that the less things are ventilated the better.[76]

The problem of prurience was of concern for Lendon, as it was for Rogers..

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72 *ibid.*, p. 157/5684-5. Note also the assumption that a knowledge of sexual relations was in itself an evil. It is difficult to tell whether this reflected Ryan's own view or whether it was simply an attempt to frame the question in terms acceptable to Rogers.

73 *ibid.*, p. 157/5685.

74 As well as being a medical practitioner, Lendon was a consulting surgeon at the Adelaide Children's Hospital, lectured in obstetrics at the University of Adelaide, and acted in an unpaid capacity as a medical adviser for the Education Department where he provided medical examinations of the teaching staff.

75 *ibid.*, p. 161/5744.

76 *ibid.*, p. 161/5745.

For both doctors sex physiology was not a suitable topic to be included within the school curriculum.

A quite different perspective was provided by the next witness, Dr William Ramsay Smith. He was a controversial figure who held a number of prominent posts in South Australia.[77] Before the Commission he projected an image of a widely read intellectual who kept up with the latest, or at least most important, developments on a variety of public and social issues and who could point to a successful record of public achievement. In contrast to the previous two medical witnesses, Ramsay Smith framed his views on sex physiology from a pedagogical perspective in which the teaching methodology was crucial. While not forsaking his claim to medical expertise, or at least the authority of medical discourse, he nevertheless aligned himself with the expertise of the educators. This was in keeping with his background as a teacher and former school principal.

Ramsay Smith submitted that teaching sex physiology with a methodology centred on threats of punishment or fear of possible consequences (especially disease), as in social purity discourses like Kirby's,[78]

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[77] Ramsay Smith was Head of the Department of Public Health in SA, City Coroner, Principal Medical Officer for the Commonwealth Armed Forces, Commonwealth Medical Referee for the Commonwealth Public Service in SA. He had been a teacher and school principal in Scotland before putting himself through medical school. He subsequently came to South Australia to take up a post with the Adelaide Hospital in 1896 amid significant controversy. For further details see *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 11 1891-1939 NES - SMI*, ed Geoffrey Serle, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 674-5.

[78] Kirby (1882). This is also noted in the discussion of the White Cross League in Section V *infra*.

would not achieve the educational goal of creating moral individuals. Such a methodology would foster the very prurience that people like Rogers and Lendon were trying to avoid. Ramsay Smith likened it to attempts to 'mak[e] a parrot well-behaved by telling it the things it must not say'.[79] Contrary to the views of advocates of social purity (like the Reverend Kirby), simply declaring an act or event moral or immoral of itself would not achieve any lasting benefit since morality was not 'in the nature of things' but was tied to the circumstances giving rise to the act or event. Ramsay Smith was openly disdainful of Kirby's social purity approach. He regarded the sort of literature promoted by social purity advocates to be 'outrages on all that pertains to delicate feeling and high ideals of virtue'.[80]

Yet despite this there was a degree of congruence in some of their ideas. Both saw education as having a central role in creating moral individuals. Both believed that sex was a core aspect of being human and of significant importance for human happiness.[81] And both were influenced by

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79 *SAPP* No 27, 1912, p. 165/5802.

80 *ibid.*, p. 165/5802.

81 For Kirby's views on sex and human happiness see Kirby (1882). In addition see also E.S. Kiek, (1927), and F.W. Cox & L. Robjohns, *Three Quarters of a Century: in Which is Incorporated the Jubilee Record of Congregationalism in South Australian and The Story of the Last Twenty-five Years*, (Adelaide: Vardon & Sons, 1912). In addition to Ramsay Smith's views on sex given in his evidence to the Commission see also his 'The Desirability of Sex Teaching', *Everyladys Journal*, February 1914 where he began by stating that 'sex is the source of all that is pure and noble in humanity' (p. 1), and 'Woman and Her Possibilities', *An Address to the Women's Non-Party Political Association and the League of Liberal Christian Women of South Australia*, (Adelaide: G. Hassell & Son, 1913).

the prevailing fascination with eugenic issues, especially the relationship of sex and race. Kirby's views in this regard have already been noted above.[82] As for Ramsay Smith, his evidence was full of references to and liberal quotations from several writers such as Dr Saleeby, Dr Woods Hutchinson, Dr Munro, Dr Hugh Black, Dr R. Murray Leslie who wrote on or were influenced by eugenic theories.[83] Finally both Kirby and Ramsay Smith shared a similar view on the rationale for sex education, especially concerning the relation between sex, eugenics and the State. Ramsay Smith put it in the following manner:

> the very existence and well-being of the human race -- the facts, feelings, duties, aspirations, that concern men as men and women as women in their endeavour to give the best they possess, and the best they can produce, to the state.[84]

Ramsay Smith, like Kirby, believed that this could not be achieved if the issue remained shrouded in a 'veil of ignorance and prudery'.[85] And like Kirby, he too believed that it was up to the state to develop and implement an education policy that would remove the 'veil of ignorance and prudery' so that which concerned 'men as men and women as women' could be taught.

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82 See *Fnn* 44, 47, 48, and 49 *supra*. See also his letter 'Science and Life', *Register*, 23 July 1912.

83 *SAPP* No. 27, 1912, p. 165/5801 (Dr Saleeby, *Health, Strength and Happiness*, Dr Woods Hutchinson, *We and Our Children*), p. 166/5802 (Dr Munro, *Suggestive Therapeutics*), Dr Hugh Black, *Culture and Restraint*), p. 166/5803 (Dr R. Murray Leslie, *Teaching of Eugenics in Schools and Colleges*).

84 *SAPP* No. 27, 1912, p. 165/5802.

85 *ibid.*, p. 165/5802.

Having noted these similarities, however, it is necessary to remember that Ramsay Smith and Kirby differed fundamentally on pedagogical matters. For Ramsay Smith, what was needed was an approach that situated the understanding of sex and sexual feelings within a developmental model based on the principles and insights deriving from the newly emerging field of scientific psychology.

> Nothing should be taught before its time, that is the great point, unless it is of the most abstract description. Certain abstract things may be taught, but you must keep alongside the child in feeling, in order to answer questions regarding things it has nothing to be ashamed about; and above all do not try to open the rose while it is in bud. That is wrong, and yet I am sorry to say that it is the tone of much of the literature which goes into the hands of the boy and the girl. ...[I]n the higher classes I would teach general principles of health, and I would supervise the child as regards its own health, so that a great deal of sex physiology would never come into a child's mind at all. ...I would have botany taught at an early age, because it is a good means of training in itself. In the higher classes the teaching will be the high schools, for girls and for young women who like to go there, especially those who intend to be housekeepers and to have houses of their own. It is to the coming mothers that we must look. ... I want to get the prospective mothers educated by the school medical officer, if she is a woman. ...[The teaching of sex physiology]... does not require special skill in anatomy or physiology, but an explanation of certain feelings, which almost every human being has, and of certain conduct towards each other on the part of men and women, boys and girls.[86]

The point about mothers being assumed to be the best sources of instruction for children in sex physiology is taken up below. For the moment, the issue

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86 *ibid.*, p. 170/5828-31.

of it being taught in schools will be addressed.

In Ramsay Smith's view, there would need to be some extra training given to teachers because 'the personality of the teacher is every whit as important as his or her technical knowledge on the subject'.[87] He was quite adamant that trained teachers rather than doctors were best placed to teach sex physiology. He pointed out that doctors knew little about either child development or sex physiology, that medical students' knowledge of 'the structure of the sex organs was almost invariably defective', and that the standard physiology lectures and textbooks made no reference to the 'mental or moral side' of sex physiology.[88] Indeed, he added that 'to get information from a medical man, as such, on the subject of sex physiology and the teaching of it, is like trying to get heart's blood from a stone'.[89] In general, teachers were far better equipped than doctors to deal with teaching sex physiology since, as teachers, they were trained to be familiar with 'the children's condition'. As he explained it, teachers make

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87 *ibid.*, p. 167/5803. The quoted words here were actually from R. Murray Leslie, *Teaching of Eugenics in Schools and Colleges* which Ramsay Smith commended to the Commissioners with some enthusiasm.

88 *ibid.*, p. 167/5802.

89 *ibid.*, p. 165/5802. Ramsay Smith's evidence about the medical profession may well be coloured by his experiences at the hands of the medical profession in Adelaide in 1896 (immediately after his arrival to take up a post at the Adelaide Hospital) and again in 1903 (when there was considerable controversy over alleged misuse of bodies for medical research). Brief details are given in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (1988), p. 674. For a fuller discussion on the hospital dispute see Rob Van Den Hoorn & John Playford, 'The Adelaide Hospital Row' in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Political History*, ed Dean Jaensch, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), pp. 215-25.

> a study of a child in order to understand that child and instruct that child in health. A medical man is not required to do that as part of his training or his education. A doctor may pass through his course without being compelled at any stage of it to see a sick child, far less study a normal child.[90]

All that was needed to enable teachers to undertake the teaching of sex physiology was the appropriate training. This was properly the task of the school medical officer.[91]

In response to the Commission's concern about the implications for teachers' work loads, strain and so on, Ramsay Smith suggested that what was needed was a radical overhaul of both the curriculum and the Education Department's time-management practices. He claimed that teaching for examinations (at every level including University), homework, the practice of minimising outdoor activities and playing time, poor play facilities, badly designed buildings with inadequate lighting and poor ventilation combined to increase or exacerbate teacher stress as well as setting up the majority of children for failure.[92] He suggested numerous ways to improve the conditions and practices of teachers' work which he felt would also improve the educational quality and success rates of the children.[93] Whatever queries that

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90 *SAPP* No. 27, 1912, p. 176/5896.

91 *ibid.*, p. 166/5803.

92 *ibid.*, pp. 167/5806 *ff.*

93 Some care must be taken with Ramsay Smith's claims here to the extent that they often exhibit the privileged class-specific perspective of a successful middle class intellectual. See Miller (1986), p. 396 n. 40.

the Commission had concerning teacher strain Ramsay Smith had answers to meet them. The problems of teacher strain could be solved and therefore were not a sufficient reason for rejecting the adoption of sex physiology.

Ramsay Smith presented himself to the Commission as something of a progressive thinker. Like Kirby, he was also a supporter of equal political rights for women. And his ideas about women's and men's natures, particularly their sexual natures, remained well within the bounds of the prevailing gender order. Despite his hostility towards the advocates of social purity and his more conservative medical colleagues his outlook was strikingly resonant with their's when it came to assumptions about the gender order. In his view women were a civilising influence on men and he articulated his ideal of masculinity and femininity by quoting, with approval, a passage from the work of a leading eugenicist, Dr Saleeby:

> Already not a few men are capable of civilization and domestication under the influence of woman. He is most a man and least a brute in whom is possible, through woman's agency, the transmutation of nearly all sex energy into the myriad of activities of art, invention, and thought which are displayed by civilized men.[94]

That women should be responsible for policing sexual conduct was a key assumption underpinning his evidence. It emerged in comments pointing to the need to reach the 'prospective mothers'. This was a view he repeated in his essay on 'The Desirability of Sex Teaching' in which he emphasised not

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94 Dr. Saleeby, *Health, Strength and Happiness*, cited by Ramsay Smith in *SAPP* No. 27, 1912, p. 166/5802.

only that 'mothers especially need instruction' but that

> Man and woman are, not, therefore, antagonistic, but complementary, and education should emphasize and develop instead of obliterate the distinctive sex character of each.[95]

Men and women were (or should be) equal, in political terms, but different as to their physiological (and sexual) natures. Quite clearly, Ramsay Smith is positing sexual difference as the basis for the teaching about sex. That is, what children needed to know was to be built around an already gendered view of the relations between, and the presumed natures of, men and women. His advocacy of teaching sex physiology did not challenge the boundaries of a patriarchally structured gender order.

A view more in keeping with the other two medical witnesses was provided by Dr R.E. Roth, a medical practitioner with the Department of Public Instruction in NSW. During his testimony, which was largely concerned with the role of medical officers, Roth also stated his views on the teaching of sex physiology. He told the Commissioners that he had been asked by the Headmaster of the Grammar School 'to deal with the subject when addressing the boys' but that he 'objected to it most strongly' because 'the boys would compare notes'.[96] Roth preferred to deal with the boys on an individual basis and only if a teacher suggested to him that such a course of action was appropriate. He indicated that he then would 'have a chat with him

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95 W. Ramsay Smith (1914), p. 1. See also Ramsay Smith (1913) where he puts forward a view of women and men (and the relations between them) which could best be summed up in the phrase 'equal but different'.

96 *SAPP* No. 27, 1912, p. 211/6369.

on the quiet'.[97] He also noted that far too many parents were ignorant of the health issues affecting their children, though he never mentioned sex physiology directly in this context. It is difficult to tell from his testimony whether he thought that parents fulfilled that particular task. He did, however, stress that he (and by extension, medical inspectors in general) could 'do a great deal with the mothers of the children' by way of increasing their awareness of general health issues affecting their children.[98] Once again the strategy of shaping the children by training the mothers in appropriate health practices featured in Roth's approach, as in the comments of others.

Roth also advocated that men doctors should inspect the boys (except the infants) and women doctors the girls. He was particularly worried about boys who had reached puberty because he thought that the fact that women doctors would be examining such boys 'puts wrong ideas into a boy's head'.[99] Here there is an indication of a gendered perception as to the presumed sexual natures of males and females. The worry appeared to be that pubescent boys would be subject to their sex drives in a way that girls were not. This understanding derived from the prevailing view that men's and women's sexual natures were fundamentally different: men were sexually active and assertive whereas women were passive and ambivalent about sex. As in the wider society, so too within the schools, the preferred gender order values of

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97 *ibid.*, p. 211/6370.

98 *ibid.*, p. 211/6366 (and also p. 210/6353).

99 *ibid.*, p. 210/6354.

masculinity and femininity had to be inscribed at every opportunity.

The last witness to address the issue of teaching sex physiology was Dr Gertrude Halley who was interviewed on 25 June 1913. Halley was the first medical inspector appointed to the South Australian Education Department and had taken up her post in early 1913.[100] The creation of her position had been recommended by the Commission in its *Third Progress Report* though it seems that the Education Department had somewhat pre-empted the Commission on this.[101] Halley was 'very much opposed' to the teaching of sex physiology in schools. She thought that it would be impossible to teach it 'in the proper way' either by a teacher or a doctor on a classroom basis. Her view was that 'such teaching should be individual' and that if it had to be done then the most appropriate approach for the Department would be to 'teach the mothers and fathers how to teach their boys' since ultimately 'it is the parents' work particularly'.[102] Halley recounted

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100 Halley held degrees in Medicine and Surgery from the University of Melbourne. From 1906 she had been Medical Inspector for the Tasmanian Education Department. From 1909-12 she was Assistant Medical Officer in the NSW Department of Public Instruction and she also lectured in hygiene at the NSW Teachers College (*SAPP* No. 75, 1913, p. 193). For further details see *Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol. 9: 1891-1939 GIL - LAS*, ed Bede Nairn & Geoffrey Serle, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 170-1.

101 The *Third Progress Report* was presented to the parliament on 15 August 1912. However, a reference supporting Halley's application for the position was received by the Education Department on 27 July 1912 and a memorandum recommending her appointment was circulated on 3 August 1912 -- some twelve days before her position had been recommended officially. See *GRG* 18, Series 2, No 2465.

102 *SAPP* No. 75, 1913, p. 196.

that, if and when the occasion arose in Tasmania, she dealt with the matter by speaking to groups of parents so that they could then pass on the information to their children.

Halley's emphasis on 'teaching their boys' should be noted as it would seem to suggest that for her it was boys who were the central problem. She did not offer any explanation for her focus on boys. She might have meant that if boys were given appropriate sex instruction (by their parents) then they could take responsibility for their own sexual conduct. If that was her intention then it appears to be the only instance of testimony before the Commission in which the emphasis was shifted away from women policing men's sexual conduct.[103] Alternatively, and much more likely, Halley could have meant that schools should not give information about sex to boys as they would be very likely to make use of it in ways that might have been contrary to that intended. This would have been in keeping with the views of others such as Tate, Story, Rogers, Lendon, and Roth who feared awakening, prematurely and probably unnecessarily, boys' sexual interest. This is reinforced by the fact that Halley explicitly distanced herself from Kirby's views.[104] Seen in this light Halley's opposition to teaching sex physiology

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[103] Certainly, that approach was adopted by the social purity groups. Members of the White Cross League, for example, when they visited schools generally only talked to groups of boys; the assumption being that men had to be raised up to the purity standards of women. Hence teaching boys, rather than girls, about sex and sexual conduct was seen as an appropriate approach.

[104] She told the Commission that Kirby had written urging her to support sex physiology being taught in schools because her opinion 'would carry great weight'. However, she wrote back to Kirby to let him know that she did not support his view (*SAPP* No. 75, 1913, p. 196).

derived largely from a concern over boys' sexuality and its implications for attempts to teach them how to control it.

Halley's interview took place on 25 July 1913. The next day the Commission added the paragraph on sex physiology to its draft of the Final Report.[105] The Commission recommended that

> instead of instruction in sex physiology being given in schools, the medical inspector should include that subject in her addresses to the mothers of the children.[106]

The Commissioners presented their underlying reasoning in the following terms.

> The Rev. J.C. Kirby strongly urged on the Commission the necessity of giving some instruction to the older boys and girls with respect to sex physiology. The subject, however, is *a delicate one to deal with*, and we are convinced that the duty of talking to the older children on this matter ought not to be imposed on the general body of teachers. In expressing this opinion we are supported by the medical witnesses whom we examined. It is preferable, we think, to leave this duty to the parents. It is the practice now for the medical officer, who was appointed this year on the recommendation of the Commission, to discuss questions affecting the children's health with the parents, and it might be advisable for her to include the question of sex physiology in her chats with the mothers of the children.[107]

In some respects this reasoning closely paralleled Halley's testimony and it is tempting to conclude that the Commissioners simply adopted the views of the

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105 *ibid.*, pp. lxviii-lxix.

106 *ibid.*, p. xxxviii, Rec. 32.

107 *ibid.*, p. xv (emphasis added).

last witness on the matter. Yet it is also fair to say that her views were generally compatible with those of the other witnesses, with the exception of those of Ramsay Smith,. In varying degrees all but he opposed the inclusion of sex physiology in the school curriculum. The Commission's conclusion was thus not at variance with the dominant sentiments of the key witnesses.

In addition, there was effectively no public debate or controversy over the teaching of sex physiology. The only member of the public who bothered to pursue it with the Commission was the one who raised it in the first place, namely Kirby. At no stage in the three year proceedings did anyone else raise the matter with the Commission, either for or against. Only one letter appeared in the correspondence columns of *The Advertiser* and the *Register* directly addressing the need for teaching about sex physiology -- and that was written by Kirby.[108] There were certainly letters appearing between 1911 and 1913 addressing controversial issues such as sex, social disease, social purity and so on. With one exception,[109] none but Kirby wrote to advocate (or oppose) the teaching of sex physiology in schools. This letter is worth some brief comment as it linked together a number of themes that were of general concern at the time. The question of teaching sex physiology was mentioned in the context of a wider concern over Australia's falling birth rate, a concern

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108 Rev. J.C. Kirby, 'Instruction in Racial Hygiene', *Register*, 28 June 1913.

109 Jas Delahunty, 'A Vital Question', *The Advertiser*, 27 June 1912.

that preoccupied many people during the preceding two decades.[110] For many people the falling birth-rate was seen as a form of race suicide. One of the causes of this decline, suggested Delahunty, was the problem of sterility which in turn could be traced to sexual diseases. If children could be given right instruction at an appropriate time 'thousands of our young people would be saved from falling into bad habits and practices calculated to wreck their lives'.[111] While Delahunty's reasoning here was not identical with that of Kirby's, similar concerns were being voiced about the quality and fitness of the population. They shared a similar rationale for public instruction in sex physiology to the extent that ignorance (on the part of the young) was definitely not regarded as bliss. It was up to adults (and the State) to do the right thing to prevent this 'misery'.

The lack of public controversy cannot be explained as some sort of conspiracy of silence as both of the major newspapers provided reasonably detailed coverage of the Commission's proceedings. *The Advertiser* commended the Commission for squarely facing the issue of sex physiology. It also provided at least two editorials on the matter, both of which supported Ramsay Smith's general approach.[112] There was thus no public controversy or

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110 Neville Hicks, *'This Sin and Scandal': Australia's Population Debate 1891-1911*, (Canberra, (ACT): Australian National University Press, 1978). See also Siedlecky & Wyndham (1990).

111 Delahunty, 'A Vital Question', *The Advertiser*, 27 June 1912.

112 Editorial, 'Doctor and Child', *The Advertiser*, 30 June 1912 and Editorial, 'Teaching Sex Physiology', *The Advertiser*, 7 July 1912. This contrasts with the generally negative editorial views in evidence in Queensland on the appropriateness of class-room based sex education. See Logan (1980),

groundswell of opposition with which the Commission had to contend. And when the *Final Report* was made public the issue of sex physiology did not rate a mention in either of the two major newspapers.

The Ryan Commission based its recommendation on an appeal to the opinions of the medical witnesses. That is, they appealed to the authority of medical expertise and knowledge (and hence to the authority of science in general). It was certainly true that four of the five medical witnesses opposed the teaching of sex physiology in schools. However, none of their stated reasons were on strict medical grounds. Rather, their medical judgements drew on philosophical assumptions that their medical discourse presupposed. That is, particular assumptions about 'nature' (what was natural) and men's and women's sexual natures provided the implicit basis upon which doubts about group instruction or feared prurience (or both) could be expressed. Three of the doctors (Halley, Rogers and Roth) doubted that group instruction, that is classroom based instruction, was suitable for such a subject because 'the boys would compare notes' (Roth), it would 'unduly attract the attention of the child to prurient matters' (Rogers), or it could not be done 'in the proper way' (Halley). Yet their doubts owed little if anything to medical knowledge as such. Indeed, all of the doctors (even Ramsay Smith) infused their alleged medical judgements with their own particular values. The supposedly objectively based reservations about group instruction, resonated with the reservations about the perceived dangers of the subject matter

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pp. 19-20.

expressed by Tate and Story.

It was not so much the medical content of the doctors' advice to which the Ryan Commission appealed but rather to their status as medical authorities. Even though Ramsay Smith (the one doctor to advocate teaching sex physiology) cast some doubt on the reliability of this medical authority by pointing to deficiencies in their knowledge base where sexual matters were concerned, such authority remained useful for the Commission in underscoring its recommendation. It enabled the problem to be cast in terms of an emerging medico-moral discourse as opposed to a strictly social purity discourse. If sex physiology was to be taught then it would be from a medically derived perspective. This was clearly revealed in the Commission's preferred strategy for any future attempts of schools to deal with sex physiology, namely that this was the proper domain of the Departmental Medical Inspector who would be expected to raise the issue as needed with 'the mothers of the children'. Sexual information could be imparted as appropriate by educating the parents, especially the mothers, to do the job. This strategy had two further benefits.

First, it fitted well with the prevailing ideas of the gender order. Assumptions about masculinity and femininity and their respective sexual natures of assertiveness and passivity, together with a sexual division of labour with motherhood for women and paid work for men, could be reinscribed within discussions of sex physiology. In large part, mothers were to be the chief means for policing their children's sexual natures. Second, this

strategy enabled the Commissioners to reaffirm the rhetoric of parental rights and duty. It was deemed 'preferable... ...to leave this duty to the parents' implying some respect for parental wishes and values. Yet as was argued above,[113] the bulk of the *Final Report*, when translated into a legislative form, would in fact transform the nature of the relations between parents, their children and the state such that parents (and families generally) would have to conform to the exigencies of the educational state.

Kirby had raised the issue of teaching sex physiology to further his longstanding campaign of social purity reform and related eugenic goals. While there was obviously some general sympathy with the spirit of Kirby's views the Commissioners were not primarily concerned with upholding a specifically social purity agenda. Their main objective was to overhaul the schooling system, to rationalise it and render it more socially efficient. Sex education, initially, was not a key concern. However, the fact that the Ryan Commission devoted considerable space to it suggests that once it had been raised it could not be lightly dismissed. Even though the Commissioners might have felt that their recommendation would have put an end to the matter, such was not to be the case for the Education Department. In the time between the tabling and formal adoption of the Report[114] the Minister for

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113 See pp. 157-62, *supra*; Davey (1986), p. 396.

114 On 24 September 1913 Frederick Coneybeer moved that the *Final Report* of the Education Commission be adopted. Debate was adjourned and resumed on two other occasions, 29 October and 26 November 1913. Debate was then set down for 3 December 1913 but did not actually take place. *SAPD* 1913, p. 443, pp. 731-5, pp. 977-86. Coneybeer's motion seems to have lapsed because no further discussion on the adoption of the *Final Report*

Education was required to consider the issue of sex education. And in the year following the adoption of the *Final Report* questions were raised in the parliament concerning the activities of the Sydney based White Cross League, a social purity type organisation, and its visits to South Australian schools. Each of these developments will now be looked at in turn.

IV

In October 1914 Mrs Agnes Scott Broad wrote to then Minister for Education, Mr Archibald Peake, to offer her services 'as an expert teacher for girls' in the area of sex education.[115] She believed that she was well qualified for the task despite it 'being a difficult matter to treat'. She had published two relevant pamphlets, one entitled *The Necessary Reform in the Education of Girls* and the other *The Sex Problem.* Furthermore, she was 'a doctor's daughter, a married woman over fifty years of age, with a grown-up family, ...[and]... a student of physiology and anatomy and the processes of evolution'.[116] While it is unclear from this reference to evolution that she supported eugenic theory subsequent discussion will reveal that she was. She

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occurred until 1915 when the parliament was considering the proposed Education Bill. It was then that the formal adoption of the *Final Report* took place on the motion of its Chairman, Thomas Ryan. *SAPD* 6 October 1915 p. 1178 and 10 November 1915 pp. 1904-6.

115 Mrs Agnes Scott Broad to Minister for Education, 5 October 1914. *GRG* 18: Series 1/1914/No. 96. The letter is written in the first person singular but the letter bears two names: Mrs A. Scott Broad and Emmeline F. Scott Broad. The latter might have been a pseudonym but it is difficult to establish this from the text of the letter.

116 *ibid.*

informed the Minister that, as an experienced and knowledgeable woman of some standing, she considered herself 'fitted to occupy this difficult yet necessary position'.[117]

However, the Minister must have thought otherwise. His Secretary replied that 'I am instructed by the Minister of Education to acknowledge receipt of your letter of October 5th on the subject of Sex Education and to state that the matter will be considered'.[118] This was a fairly formal, standard reply. It was also a curious one given that the Minister well knew that the Ryan Commission had recommended against incorporating sex education into the curriculum. In effect, there was not going to be any 'matter to be considered'. The other curious aspect here was that the Minister gave no indication that he was familiar with her work. Yet Broad had enclosed extracts from letters and reviews of her book *The Sex Problem* among which were the comments of one Hon. A. H. Peake (Premier). Broad obviously thought that Peake's comments were sympathetic to her cause.[119] His comments actually said very little in terms of actual support for her writing. The most favourable was that there was 'no question of the importance of the

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117 *ibid.*

118 Secretary, Minister of Education to Mrs A. Scott Broad, 6 October 1914. *GRG* 18: Series 1/1914/No. 96.

119 Broad does not reveal how or why Peake came to write to her about her book. Given the nature of the comments, especially their generality, it is possible that they were made in response to having been sent a copy of the book by its author.

subject with which you deal'.[120] There was no specific endorsement of either her views or proposals. His response to her book would appear to be lukewarm at best.

Broad's objectives were firmly within a social purity and eugenicist mould. In sentiments echoing those mapped out by Kirby some thirty years earlier, she pointed out that 'the facts relating to the continuation of the race can be taught with reverence and delicacy'; such teaching was necessary to prevent the young from 'drift[ing] daily into impurity of life, thought and word, because they *are not warned or taught*'.[121] These views were also underpinned by a commitment to a specifically gendered social order and, like Kirby, they were infused with a similar feminist sensibility concerning the rights of the modern woman.

This was in fact what she meant by the phrase 'the sex problem'. The changing social conditions in which more women, especially young girls, were engaged in paid employment made uncertain the relations between the sexes. The boundaries between the public and private spheres were being eroded to the detriment of women in the sense that women were losing all that made them women, namely their femininity. There was no reason why, in her view, women should cease to be women just because they were striving to be men's equals in political and legal terms.

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120 Peake to Broad (n.d), extract in correspondence file Broad to Minister of Education, 5 October 1914. *GRG* 18: Series 1/1914/No. 96.

121 Broad to Minister of Education in *ibid.* (her emphasis).

> Everywhere we are faced with the problem of the sexes. ...Shall a woman do a man's work? How much is man's work? Who lays down the laws for woman, and why is there one law for man and another for woman? And all these conflicting thoughts and opinions are based on the old ground that what is right for one sex is wrong for the other. The old ground is ploughed up under our feet, and I feel that a hundred problems lie before us for solution, and they are very literally sex problems.[122]

While some of her views were compatible with many of the feminist ideas of her contemporaries[123] she regarded the feminist movement

> as a means to an end. ...the movement has my sympathy, though I feel it deeply that the inhumanity, ignorance, and shortsightedness of men in power have forced women to destructive militant tactics. I know well that all these dreadful actions are against the grain of the feminine nature, but they must force the situation, as men have over and over again. Women have rights, they demand a recognition of those rights, and are refused; so much the worse for those who refuse.[124]

As the phrase 'feminine nature' indicates, she believed that men and women

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122 'Our Adelaide Women of Interest, The Fearless Attitude Towards Reform, A Chat With Mrs Scott-Broad', *Herald*, 8 March 1913. Clipping held in *GRG* Series 1/1914/No. 96.

123 See Kate Spearitt, 'New Dawns: First Wave Feminism 1880-1914' in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed Kay Saunders & Raymond Evans, (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992). pp. 325-49; Carol Bacchi, 'The 'Woman Question' in South Australia' in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, ed Eric Richards, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), pp. 403-32; Carol Bacchi, 'First Wave Feminism: History's Judgement', in *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives*, ed N. Grieve & P. Grimshaw, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 156-67.

124 *ibid.* Broad's reference here to 'destructive militant tactics' was probably in relation to the tactics of the British suffragettes.

were different. Nonetheless, this did not necessarily entail unequal political rights as the tenor of the above passage clearly indicates that she was strongly committed to realising women's rights.

Yet she was no advocate of increasing women's presence in the public sphere.[125] Rather, she was committed to reforming education so that women would be educated to take their proper place and functions as wives and mothers. Modern educated women were, in her view, 'never taught that a woman's first duty is the care of the home and family'; even 'a thousand clever single women are not as valuable as one kind, intelligent mother'.[126] The point for Broad was not that women should be excluded from education but that their education should be built around the requirements of their 'first duty'. The means to equip girls in this regard would be to place the teaching of domestic science and related subjects at the centre of their educational experience -- a view which was also part of the thinking of the Ryan Commission. For Broad, the teaching of 'the natural facts of reproduction and motherhood', that is sex education, would form a proper adjunct to this.

As was noted above, the Minister effectively deflected her offer to teach sex education. And the Education Department evidently declined to follow up on her correspondence despite the fact that she had already

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125 Alison MacKinnon, 'The State as an Agent of Demographic Change? The Higher Education of Women and Fertility Decline, 1880-1930', in *Women and the State: Australian Perspectives*, ed Renate Howe, (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press in Association with the Centre for Australian Studies Deakin University, 1993), pp. 59-60.

126 A. Scott Broad, *The Sex Problem*, (Adelaide, 1911), p. 36.

consulted with the Director of Education prior to writing to the Minister.[127] Her efforts were unsuccessful largely because the Minister remained committed to the Ryan Commission's recommendation that sex education not be taught by schools.[128] Whatever the reasoning underlying the Minister's judgments, his obvious lack of support for Broad's proposal meant that the Education Department was thereby constrained from taking the matter any further. Yet things were a little different in the case of the White Cross League.

V

The White Cross League (WCL) was a social purity type organisation founded in Sydney in 1901. Its two key personnel were its President (and founder) Dr Richard Arthur and its Organising Lecturer Mr R.H.W. Bligh.[129] It enjoyed mixed success largely in the eastern states of Australia.[130] The League promoted its ideas of social purity, especially sexual purity, in a

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127 Broad to Minister of Education, 5 October 1914. *GRG* Series 1/1914/No. 96.

128 Even though Peake refused to sign the *Final Report* his grounds for doing so were because of the financial implications of many of the recommendations. Peake felt that, as Premier, Treasurer, and Minister of Education, his signature might be seen to pre-empt the government's deliberations. See *SAPP* No. 75, *Final Report* 1913, p. xlii. Nowhere did he indicate any dissent with the recommendation on sex education.

129 G. Logan (1980), pp. 10-11.

130 For some brief discussion of the League's activities in Queensland and Victoria see respectively G. Logan (1980), p. 8-21, and K. Reiger (1985), pp. 182-4.

variety of ways, one of which was to lecture to school children. This entailed the cooperation of the Education Departments in the relevant states. This was not always forthcoming, and even when it was, the visits remained fraught with controversy.[131]

Spurred on by the social panic (in part fuelled if not created by ideologues of social purity) over a possible epidemic of venereal disease during the 1914-18 war, the White Cross League stepped up its school based activities in 1916 in South Australia. As has been noted a number of times in this chapter, the concern with venereal disease was also linked to concerns about race fitness and the potential for race suicide. In September and October of that year Bligh visited seventy-five schools, as well as the Roseworthy Agricultural College and three military camps.[132] Bligh apparently had the full support of the Director of Education, M.M. Maughan, who evidently enabled Bligh to obtain a free railway pass and use of a motor vehicle 'to reach schools not served by train'.[133] Moreover, even in the wake

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131 The Victorian Education Department remained largely uncooperative with the White Cross League's requests for access to Victorian schools. See Reiger (1985), pp. 182-3; Logan (1980), pp. 17-20.

132 List of schools in the file *GRG* 18/127.

133 R.H.W. Bligh to Minister of Education & Acting Premier, 5 June 1922. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231. However, it needs to be noted that the only evidence for this is Bligh's letter of 1922 requesting a repeat of the benefits he claimed to have been given in 1916. Maughan's successor, William McCoy, informed the Minister that there was no record in his office that a car had been provided. He then pointed out to the Minister that, he considered 'the work of Mr Bligh [to be] of very great importance ...[and]...[i]n these circumstances I think it would be a good thing if both concessions [ie car and rail pass] could be granted'. Director of Education to Minister of Education, 7 June 1922. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231. Only a free rail pass was provided in 1922.

of parliamentary questions raised by former Minister of Education Peake, Maughan's actions indicated some sympathy with Bligh's objectives.

Peake, whose party was no longer in government, took issue with the Premier over these visits to South Australian schools. He asked:

> Is the Premier quite satisfied that this is a proper subject to teach in schools, whether it is not a parental duty, and whether he is quite satisfied that the lecturer -- whoever he is -- is thoroughly discreet, and will qualify the teaching in such a way so that prurient ideas may not be aroused in the minds of children?[134]

There may have been a degree of chagrin underlying these questions because Peake went on to draw attention, rather pointedly, to the fact that the Ryan Commission had taken 'a great deal of evidence on this question with a view of arriving at a proper decision... [and] ...were [*sic*] averse to this subject being taught in schools'.[135] It is certainly clear that the questions he raised were those which the Commission treated as central. And, it is to be inferred, he seemed to expect that the Premier also would have been familiar with them. Even though the Premier regretted an inability to recall 'all that the Commission did' he nevertheless acknowledged that the issue raised by Peake was 'a subject that should be dealt with delicately'.[136] This latter phrase was one used on several occasions, and quite prominently, by the Ryan Commission. The same, or at least similar, choice of words by the Premier in this context would seem to betray a degree of disingenuousness on his part.

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134 *SAPD*, 20 September, 1916. p. 1378.

135 *ibid.*, p. 1379.

136 *ibid.*

Nevertheless, he informed Peake that the work of Bligh would not be continued beyond the initial series of visits until 'we ascertain whether the teaching is all that it should be'.[137]

This was done almost immediately. The Director of Education sent a circular on 27 September 1916 to all Head Teachers requesting their views on Bligh's talks to the students.[138] One hundred and seventeen teachers replied. Of these only five or six were opposed outright because they felt that the matter was unsuitable for school instruction.[139] The rest were generally supportive though there were some reservations on specific aspects of the issue. For example, some teachers were worried about the effectiveness of teaching 'social purity' on a one off basis, other teachers felt that some of the children might have been too young, and one or two thought that 'a medical man' was required to talk on this sort of material. Two teachers questioned the practice of excluding girls from these talks -- one because girls 'set the standard of conduct' and hence in order 'to save the boys we must first save the girls from faults of ignorance and inexperience'; the other because excluding the girls from these talks 'might arouse their curiosity and set them on a mission of inquiry with results the reverse of what the lecturer intended'. Several teachers noted explicitly that Bligh filled a gap in the then prevailing

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137 *ibid.*, p. 1378.

138 Director of Education to Head Teachers, 27 September 1916. See *GRG* 18/127.

139 The following account is condensed from letters written to the Director, archived in file *GRG* 18/127. Material quoted from individual teachers is from this file unless otherwise specified.

'methods of training the young'. On the basis of the various responses from the teachers Maughan informed Bligh that he did not think that there was one 'that could be said to be adverse to the way in which you have given your Address'.[140] If not actually endorsing Bligh's work, Maughan nevertheless gave him an encouraging assessment of it.

In the correspondence dealing with this incident no reference was made to the content of Bligh's talks. Presumably, Maughan had no quarrel with it. It is difficult to know just what Bligh actually said to the students in 1916. However, a summary of the content of one of the talks that he gave in 1925 has survived. This gives an indication of the sorts of topics covered by Bligh.[141] The dominant theme was one of purity in mind and deed with an emphasis on a man's responsibility for maintaining chivalrous relations with women. In addition, there were general hints concerning appropriate health habits together with advice about bodily changes, especially those of a sexual nature. Most particularly, the boys were exhorted not to engage in the '[s]ecret vice of handling the private parts -- the penis -- taking and wasting semen'.[142] The social purity approach of the White Cross League thus differed little from that advocated and pursued by Kirby in the preceding thirty years. Again, the theme of race fitness, though not expressed directly,

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140 Director of Education to R.H.W. Bligh, 18 November 1916. See *GRG* 18/127.

141 Mr West (Principal, Adelaide High School) to William Adey (Superintendent of Education), 8 May 1925. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

142 *ibid.*

was also present insofar as the 'secret vice' was seen as contributing to a loss of vitality and manhood. Given that Australia was then caught up in the 1914-18 war threats to masculinity and national virility were of some moment for many in the wider community.[143]

Support for Bligh in 1916 was not restricted to the teachers who answered their Director's memo. Expressions of support came from a number of organisations and individuals such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (SA),[144] Our Boy's Institute,[145] the Mayor of Kooringa,[146] and Sir Charles Goode.[147] It should be noted that two of the letters (from Our Boys' Institute and Sir Charles Goode) were dated within days of Peake's raising the matter in parliament. This suggests that there was a definite effort to ensure that Bligh's credibility was not undermined by Peake's questions. However, not all in the community shared the enthusiasm for Bligh's 'mission'. The Australian Catholic Federation was one group that considered Bligh's

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143 See David Walker, 'Continence for a Nation: Seminal Loss and National Vigour', *Labour History*, No. 48, May 1985, pp. 27-42.

144 Secretary, Women's Christian Temperance Union (SA) to R.H.W. Bligh, 7 October 1916. See *GRG* 18/127. The Secretary informed Bligh of a motion passed at the WCTU Convention that year in which the government was congratulated 'on securing the able services of Mr Bligh' to provide 'suitable and helpful talks on sex education...[for]...the boys in many of the State Schools of SA'.

145 Testimonial from Our Boys' Institute (Inc.), 26 September 1916. *GRG* 18/127.

146 Telegram from the Mayor of Kooringa to the Premier, n.d.. *GRG* 18/127.

147 Letter of reference from Sir Charles Goode, 25 September 1916. *GRG* 18/127.

presence in schools undesirable. The State Council of the ACF wrote to the Minister of Education advising him that

> we emphatically protest against any such lectures as those given by a representative of the White Cross League being delivered in the State Schools throughout South Australia.[148]

The Council was of the view that the 'evils' to be combated would 'be aggravated rather than lessened' because the lectures might 'raise a curiosity in tender minds which can only have a baneful effect'. Moreover, that

> instruction on matters of sex is the duty of the parents of the children whose rights should not be infringed in any way and can only be delegated at their expressed wish, and therefore they should be consulted regarding the attendance of their children at any such lecture as the White Cross representative delivers, and their will with regard to their children should be absolutely respected.[149]

While there was certainly an element of doctrinal difference, given that the White Cross League was of a Protestant orientation,[150] the substance of its opposition was very similar to that expressed over three years earlier by the majority of the relevant witnesses at the Ryan Commission. The opposition of the ACF was not sufficient, however, to persuade the Minister of Education to deny Bligh access to South Australian schools.

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148 State Council of the Australian Catholic Federation to the Minister of Education, 30 October 1916. See *GRG* 18/127.

149 *ibid.*

150 As Logan (1980), p. 12 has noted in the context of these debates in Queensland, the Catholic Church throughout Australia was at this time 'opposed to sex education in schools, including the limited kind envisaged by the WCL'.

Bligh's fortunes remained in the ascendant until the early 1920s when it appears that the Education Department became increasingly lukewarm about his visits. Prior to this he seemed to have had open access to schools and to have enjoyed travel benefits in the form of a free rail pass and use of a departmental motor car. In 1922, the Director, who considered Bligh's work to be 'of very great importance', recommended to the Minister of Education that his talks be 'confined to boys 12 years of age and upwards'.[151] The Minister endorsed this but also added the further requirement that 'the work of the school is not [to be] interfered with for more than half an hour'.[152] A request from the White Cross League later that year for the Education Department to provide a grant of $L100$ to help offset the costs of Bligh's visits was turned down.[153]

Bligh returned in 1925 but this time the government refused to grant him a rail pass,[154] despite the favourable recommendation of the Director.[155]

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151 Director of Education to Minister of Education, 6 June 1922. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

152 Secretary, Minister of Education to Director of Education, 7 June 1922. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

153 Secretary, White Cross League to Minister of Education, 4 August 1922 and Secretary, Minister of Education to Secretary, White Cross League, 16 August 1922. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

154 Superintendent of Primary Education to R.H.W. Bligh, 16 May 1925. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

155 The Director supported a two-month rail pass being granted. Director of Education to Minister of Education, 27 April 1925. A member of the Legislative Council (Mr William Harvey) attempted, unsuccessfully, to get the Minister to reverse his decision. Harvey to Minister of Education, 6 August 1925; Minister of Education to Harvey, 10 August 1925. All correspondence

The basis for this decision by the Minister would seem to have been the aforementioned complaint (about Bligh's talks) from the Principal of Adelaide High School. This was the leading state high school at the time. Moreover, this complaint was endorsed by the Superintendent of Secondary Education, William Adey, who

> endorse[d] the opinion expressed by Mr West and his staff that such lectures should not be given to boys in large groups, neither should it be given to boys of tender years, and some of the subject [*sic*] in my opinion, are calculated to arouse curiosity in boys of tender years, and put notions in their heads long before they have the comprehension and will-power to properly understand and use their knowledge.[156]

Adey's view was probably significant in tempering the Education Department's past enthusiasm for Bligh's services. It would seem that the refusal of a rail pass was a way in which the government could establish some distance between the Education Department and Bligh's organisation in case any controversy should develop.

Even so, Bligh still retained some highly placed supporters within the Education Department. When, in late 1927, he sought permission to visit schools again in 1928, the Deputy Director, Mr Charlton, advised the Minister to grant permission.[157] As in 1925 Bligh was granted permission to talk to

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in *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

[156] Superintendent of Secondary Education to the Director of Education, 9 May 1925. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

[157] Deputy Director of Education to Minister of Education, 30 November 1927. Charlton also informed the Minister that he had heard one of Bligh's lectures in 1916 and he 'consider[ed] them of very great importance for boys in their teens'. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

boys over twelve years of age with the proviso that 'the work of the school was not interfered with for more than half an hour'.[158] Even though Bligh was unable to secure any financial assistance from the Education Department, the very fact that he was granted permission in 1927 indicates that he still retained some influential supporters within the Department. However, by 1929 this support had diminished as he was denied permission for a planned visit to schools in the following year. Charlton advised the Director that since Bligh had only been in the state in 1928 and that his visits were usually on a three year basis 'it is too early for Mr Bligh to pay another visit'.[159] Charlton's recommendation signalled the end of the privileged access to South Australian schools enjoyed by the White Cross League for nearly thirteen years. While this might seem somewhat paradoxical the answer is quite straightforward. In September 1929, the former Superintendent of Secondary Education, William Adey, replaced W.T. McCoy as Director of Education. Given that his views were lukewarm regarding Bligh's activities it is highly likely that his Deputy tailored his advice accordingly.

The episode with Bligh is important within any account of the politics of sex education for two reasons. First, his activities were made possible by the discretionary power over the curriculum that was vested in the Director of Education by the *Education Act, 1915*. Only professional educators were

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158 Deputy Director of Education to R.H.W. Bligh, 1 December 1927. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

159 Deputy Director of Education to Director of Education, 1 November 1929. *GRG* 18/Series 1/1922/No. 231.

empowered to decide what could or could not be taught, what was proper school knowledge and what was not. Bligh was successful in securing curriculum space but only because of the support from likeminded, or at least sympathetically minded, individuals within the Education Department. When this support began to diminish so too did Bligh's privileged access.

Second, the White Cross League was quite explicitly aiming to sex the subjects of its talks. The focus was to teach boys to be chivalrous in their relations with women, to be pure in word and deed. It was boys' behaviour that the White Cross League aimed to modify since men's sexual nature was what was seen as the problem. This would seem to indicate that the idea of men as sexual actors and women as largely passive beings in need of men's protection was very deeply ingrained within the White Cross League's vision of how the gender order should be.

VI

In the first two decades of the twentieth century the only significant attempts to have sex education located firmly within the school curriculum were animated by individuals associated with social purity ideals. These were the Reverend Joseph Kirby (founder and leading light of the Social Purity Society), Mrs Agnes Broad (a social purity advocate of women's equality), and Mr R.H.W. Bligh (the Organising Lecturer of the White Cross League). There was no public controversy surrounding either Kirby's or Broad's attempts. And even though Bligh's activities were subject to some brief

parliamentary scrutiny they did not bring forth any concerted public outcry.

Two important points emerge from this examination of the efforts to place sex education within the school curriculum, especially by the social purity advocates. First, was the displacement of social purity discourses by a 'medico-moral discourse'. The displacement was not so much a replacement of one by the other but the regrounding of the moral sentiments within a discourse of medical science. This was most clearly revealed within Ramsay Smith's testimony before the Ryan Commission, but elements of it could also be found in the ideas of the various educators. Moreover, the fundamental gender differences that characterised the ideas of the social purity advocates were finding a new home within the emerging 'medico-moral discourse'. As Mort has argued, a new ideology of sexual difference was being constructed 'by emphasizing the absolute polarization of male and female sexuality'.[160] This polarisation was the key link between the sex education ideals of the social puritans and the emerging ideas on sex education.

The second important point to be noted was that there was a central unresolved tension within the Education Department's approach to sex education. On the one hand was the view that it was the duty of parents to teach their children about sex. On the other hand, was the recognition, explicitly noted by the Ryan Commission, that parents often avoided the matter. Indeed, in the face of substantial evidence to the contrary the Ryan Commission simply asserted that teaching about sex was the duty of parents.

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160 Mort (1987), p. 189.

This became a cornerstone of all subsequent deliberations. The idea of 'parental duty', of rights predating any other claimants such as the Education Department, was from the beginning constructed as part of the 'medico-moral discourse' of sex education. In part, this might be said to follow from the idea that access to education was defined in terms of the duty of parents to send their children to school. But 'duty' constructed in this way does not imply any recognition that parents should have priority in the teaching of their children in terms of the content of the curriculum. The only level at which this right was recognised was at the broadest one of choosing between state and private forms of schooling. That is, ignoring financial constraints, the only choice for parents was that between competing sets of curriculum offerings. Whatever the choice, the prerogatives as to curriculum content remained with the professional educators.

Yet when it came to sex education the role of the professional educator was not invoked. There was no real expertise that could be pointed to as being definitive of the knowledge in question. As can be seen from the discussion undertaken by the Ryan Commission, a consensus concerning pedagogical matters failed to be achieved. The central questions remained unresolved. There were three key questions, namely, what should be taught, who should teach it, and how should it be taught? For most of the twentieth century these questions continually reappeared in various guises.

Nonetheless, as has already been noted, a medico-moral discourse began to displace that of social purity. Moreover, within the medico-moral

approach the influence of a range of psychology based discourses was starting to manifest itself. However, it was to be some time before the full influence of these new discursive forms would be felt. By the time that the Education Department next had to confront the issue of sex education the influence of psychology based discourses was considerable. An analysis of the renewed debates and developments during the 1940s is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

'The Regulation Of Primitive Desires': Sex Education and Character Training

I

In the decade of the 1939-45 war there emerged renewed pressure for the Education Department to become involved in some way with the formal teaching of sex education. This pressure arose from a number of sources. In the first instance it was fuelled by the social impact of the war effort and associated fears of outbreaks and transmission of sexual diseases.[1] A second source found expression in the war-time enquiry into education;[2] which was generated largely by growing pressure for some degree of education reform.[3] In that context the enquiry provided the opportunity for ideas about sex education to be aired. The third source of pressure came from two major

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1 For some discussion on the question of sexual diseases in Australia at this time see Michael Sturma, 'Public Health and Sexual Morality: Venereal Disease in World War II Australia', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 13 (4), 1988, pp. 725-40, and Kay Saunders & Helen Taylor, "To Combat the Plague': The Construction of Moral Alarm and State Intervention in Queensland During World War II', *Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women's Liberation*, xiv (i), 1988, pp. 5-30.

2 See *SAPP* No. 15, 1945: *Education Inquiry Committee: First Report*, (E.L. Bean, Chairman), presented 16 May 1945, (Adelaide: Government Printer, May 1945); *SAPP* No. 15, 1949: *Education Inquiry Committee: Final Report*, (E.L. Bean, Chairman), presented 11 August 1949, (Adelaide: Government Printer, August 1949). Hereafter referred to as the Bean Committee.

3 For some general discussion on this pressure for reform see Andrew Spaull, *Australian Education in the Second World War*, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), Ch 6; Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), Ch. 11.

organisations: the relatively influential Social Hygiene Association (SHA) and the organisation deemed responsible for representing parent views, namely the South Australian Public Schools Committees' Associations (SAPSCA).[4] By the end of the 1940s SAPSCA was prominent in trying to convince the Education Department to take greater responsibility for sex education.

This chapter begins by sketching briefly the national context of war-time concerns over venereal disease. For it was these concerns which prompted renewed links to be made between sexual conduct and the need for sex education. Attention then shifts back to South Australia, to the Bean Committee and to the particular ideas concerning sex education that were put before it. In its Reports the Bean Committee did not make any recommendations, or even offer any deliberations or discussion, about sex education. Nevertheless, the fact that submissions were made specifically addressing the issue means that it was of more than passing significance. The focus then shifts to attempts by the Social Hygiene Association to have its initiatives in this area taken up. An examination of this development also helps to explain the development of the Education Department's approach.

Finally, the position put by SAPSCA at the end of the decade will be examined. Insofar as sex education was taken up by what was accepted as the representative parent organisation it had certainly gained in prominence as an issue . Yet, as will be seen, there was no significant distance between what SAPSCA advocated and what the Education Department accepted. For the

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4 See the file *GRG* 18/2/1950/No. 3662.

Education Department sex education was still seen to be 'a delicate one to deal with'. There were many pitfalls and problems to be surmounted. Again, the questions that had bedevilled earlier discussions were never far from the surface. Who should teach it? What should be taught? How should it be taught? From what moral perspective?

As it turned out, the Education Department addressed these problems by continuing to treat sex education as a matter for parents. Assisting parents to teach their children about sexual matters was the boundary that the Education Department drew for itself. Nevertheless, there was one important development in these years that emerged alongside this approach. Several prominent educators, including the Director General of Education, Mr Charles Fenner, accepted that sex education was in some way central to the pedagogic formation of students' characters.[5] This was in large part linked to the consolidation of the psychologisation of educational discourses at this time. This theme is explored in more depth later in the chapter. For now, the task is to sketch a broader picture of the politics of gender and sex education as the background for the discussions that emerged in South Australia.

II

The outbreak of war and the consequent reorganisation of people's lives generated an increased focus on moral and sexual conduct. With large

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[5] Charles Fenner, 'Sex Problems in Schools', *Education Gazette*, Vol. LXI, 15 February 1945.

numbers of men engaged in military service traditionally accepted patterns of the sexual division of labour no longer obtained. Women were not simply making choices to enter the paid workforce -- they were actively encouraged to do so by business and government alike.[6] The various media also played their part. For example, the newspaper *Smith's Weekly* had printed under its banner on the editorial page the slogan '"Smith's" Defence Platform for Australia: Every One at Work Till the War is Won'.[7] It was women's patriotic duty to exchange the sphere of domesticity for that of paid work. Or perhaps more accurately, the immediate duty was to set aside domestic preoccupations for the duration of the war. For many women, especially those who were young and single, this move, however temporary it might have seemed to those promoting it, also signalled the beginning of a period of independence in a range of other spheres. What women (and men) actually did became increasingly contrary to the dominant or traditional ideas about gender roles and stereotypes. This was particularly pronounced in the area of sexual relations where an increased degree of sexual activity seemed to be more visible.

Of marked concern was the problem of sexually transmitted diseases,

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6 For an overview of some of these efforts see Kay Saunders & Geoffrey Bolton, 'Women's Mobilisations in World War Two' in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed Kay Saunders & Raymond Evans, (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), pp. 376-95. See also L. Davis, 'Minding Children or Minding Machines: Women's Labour and Child Care During the Second World War', *Labour History*, No. 53, 1987, pp. 86-98.

7 Taken from the edition of *Smith's Weekly*, 1 April, 1944. p. 10. See also Saunders & Bolton (1988) for references to other media outlets such as the *Australian Women's Weekly*.

especially venereal disease. This was given added impetus in 1942 when the federal government enacted the *National Security Regulations (Venereal Diseases and Contraceptives) Act* ostensibly to protect servicemen in the armed forces from venereal disease. By early 1943 the concern over venereal disease had escalated to the point of constituting a 'moral panic'.[8] This was despite the fact that the available evidence for the incidence of venereal disease did not provide any support for the view that it had reached a level warranting widespread legislative measures.[9] In Sturma's view, 'the actual low incidence of venereal disease during World War II suggests that... [the panic generated] ...was a response not so much to a threat to servicemen's health, as to a desire for stricter community moral standards'.[10] In effect, suggested Sturma, it was women's conduct which formed the target for anti-venereal disease legislation. This was despite the fact that both men and women were equally likely to be carriers of venereal disease. This was not simply yet another instance of the gendered double standard operating to women's detriment. It was also a result of perceptions about the effects of women's

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8 Saunders & Taylor (1988), pp. 13 *ff.*; Sturma (1988), pp. 727 *ff.*

9 See the *Ninth Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting Relating to the Question of Broadcast Talks on Venereal Disease and Other Sex Matters*, Chairman, Senator Stanley Amour, 11 March 1946, Canberra. (Cited hereafter as the Amour Committee). Evidence placed before the Amour Committee pointed out that although the problem of venereal disease was noticeable in 1942-43 its 'actual rate is only half what it was in 1914-18', (*ibid.*, p. 9). As Saunders & Taylor (1988), p. 13 put it, this moral panic was 'an alarm which had as its foundations all the force of uninformed prejudice, bigotry and punitive indignation'.

10 Sturma (1988), pp. 734-5.

increased presence in the workforce.

> Just as venereal disease threatened individual health, women's new autonomy was viewed as threatening the social body. ...[W]omen's changing role threatened the very fabric of domestic moral order.[11]

The legislation was seen to be necessary to buttress the moral exhortations imploring women to remain true to their traditional femininity, to uphold their role as guardians of the morals of the community. Women were the 'mothers of the next generation' and not only should they avoid the 'risks and dangers' of sexual diseases but they should remember 'that moral standards are set by the women of the community, *not* the men'.[12]

Calls for sex education were part of the campaign to raise public awareness about the perils of venereal disease. This is not to say that all of those who lobbied for some sort of public campaign of sex education necessarily also believed that women's new found independence threatened the domestic moral order. However, it would appear that the dominant voices within these campaigns worked with a range of assumptions linking changing sex roles with the perceived breakdown of public sexual morality. This is brought out quite clearly in the reasoning used by the federal government's Amour Committee. This committee was charged with the task of determining whether permission should be given for broadcasts of talks dealing with firstly, general sexual issues and secondly, venereal disease. On both

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11 *ibid.*, p. 740.

12 Captain W. Scott-Young, 'Lecture on Sex Hygiene' cited in Saunders and Taylor (1988), p. 13. (Emphasis in original).

questions the Amour Committee recommended that talks relating to sexual matters and venereal disease 'should not be broadcast from national or commercial stations'.[13]

The Amour Committee categorised the representations before it into three broad groups: the first 'regarded public discussion of sex matters as a means of inciting sexual promiscuity'; the second advocated that the potential for young people to 'indulge in immoral conduct' could be avoided if they were 'thoroughly instructed in the anatomy and physiology of sex'; and the third group maintained that 'knowledge alone is not a proper safeguard against improper behaviour, that moral training is essential'.[14] While these groupings, as constructed by the Amour Committee, clearly differed in the terms of their advocacy of sex education, they nevertheless were agreed that reinforcing (and if necessary reasserting) what they deemed to be proper moral conduct was the rationale for their actions. Moreover, they agreed that this was properly the domain of parents but, if this did not happen, then other avenues needed to be pursued. In the case of the second group appropriate sex education could be handled by the schools whereas for the third group assistance for parents, if needed, should be provided by those with appropriate moral credentials. However, the third group also emphasised that '[a]ny attempt by the State to supersede the parents in this delicate matter would be an invasion of natural

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13 Amour Committee (1946), p. 7/34 on 'sex matters' and p. 11/53 on venereal disease.

14 *ibid.*, p. 4 paragraphs 7, 8, & 9 for each group respectively.

rights and is but one step removed from totalitarianism'.[15]

Those whose views did not fit into any of these three categories, namely those who did not frame their ideas primarily in terms of moral rectitude, were not accorded any space for articulating their ideas. The Amour Committee did not recognise as legitimate those perspectives that appeared to endorse digressions from the sexual status quo. The language of the Amour Committee when referring to these views was always negative and deprecatory in tone. Holders of these views were 'morally subversive', advocates of 'degenerate tenets', an 'evil influence' and so on. A clear line was drawn between such people and those who were 'genuinely distressed by the prevalence of sexual promiscuity and its concomitants -- venereal disease, depravity and delinquency'.[16]

On the basis of its categorisation of the views of the participants in its enquiry the Amour Committee concluded that

> the weight of evidence is to the effect that sex education should be personal and individual and is a parental responsibility;... ... that many parents neglect their task for one reason or another; and that the most satisfactory remedy for this situation lies in the efforts which religious groups and public organizations are making to persuade such parents to discharge their obligation, assisting them with information, especially in the form of suitable literature, so that they may fulfil their duty competently and reverently. Where necessary, and with the parents' consent, consideration could be given to the instruction of children individually, at the proper time, by qualified

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15 *ibid.*, p. 7/30 (8).

16 *ibid.*, p. 5/21.

> clergymen, suitable doctors, directors of reputable youth organizations and (in the case of boarding schools) headmasters and headmistresses.[17]

This conclusion is not all that surprising given that it was written in late 1945 or early 1946. The war was over. The 'threat' posed by venereal disease was declining. It could be anticipated then that something approaching normal life would soon be reestablished. The gender order would return to normal. The need, therefore, for the state to take a more active role in addressing sex education was also diminished.[18]

Finally, it should also be noted that the committee's report concluded by reiterating the view that the responsibility for the sex education of children rested with parents. Parents could be assisted but not supplanted. Indeed, to do so would be an 'invasion of natural rights'. Just where in nature these 'rights' arose was not deemed to be in need of explanation. By dint of being parents, people received such rights from 'nature'. The conflation of 'nature' with the 'social' is clearly apparent. The tenor of the Amour Committee's findings, especially in relation to those views on sex with which it disagreed, made it quite clear that speaking about sexual matters outside the home was not appropriate. That is, decent Australians did not really speak about sex in public. It was a private and personal matter.

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17 *ibid.*, p. 7/32.

18 It also needs to be noted that even if the Commonwealth government had wanted to take initiatives in this area it still would have been constrained by the constitutional arrangements that gave individual states the responsibility for education and schooling.

III

At about the same time that the Amour Committee was deliberating, the Bean Committee was gathering evidence for its review of education in South Australia. During this process the issue of sex education was raised by a number of people appearing before it. Over thirty years had elapsed since sex education was last considered in South Australia by an official education enquiry. During that time public agitation for, or even discussion of, sex education remained largely non-existent. From time to time during the 1920s and 1930s local newspapers carried the occasional item on sex education: seven appeared in *The Advertiser*, four in the *Register*, and two in the *News*.[19] The general consensus during this time was that sex education, to the extent that it was accepted as needed, remained the responsibility of parents rather than schools.

For example, in 1929, a number of leading Adelaide citizens emphasised the need for parents to so educate their children. Among these were Dr W. Ramsay Smith whose views had changed from those that he had articulated in 1912. He now placed the emphasis on parents and significant

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[19] See *The Advertiser*, 'An Address to Fathers: Physiology in the Schools', 26 August 1926; 10 May 1929; 15 May 1929; 'Sex Education for Children: "Should be Left to Parents"',6 January 1931; 'Bishop on Sex Instruction in Schools', 17 May 1932; 'Training of Youth in Sex Questions', 'Presbyterian Assembly (NSW) on Sex Training of Youth', 19 May 1934; and 'Imperial Social Hygiene Conference in London', 15 July 1935. For the *Register*, 'Sex Education: Victorian Student's Enquiries', 8 April 1926; 'Teaching of Hygiene', 26 August 1926; 'Sex Education Plea Supported', 31 July 1929; 'Sin Confused with Freedom', 8 August 1929. See also the *News* 19 April 1932; 24 January 1933.

individuals rather than on class-room based teaching.[20] Fully endorsing Ramsay Smith's views was Mr C.W. Rutt, the SA President of the YMCA, who was reported as stating that 'sex matters are perfectly natural' and should be treated as such by parents.[21] Other views reported were that: 'the old method of teaching the child at the knee and gradually lifting the veil was sound' and that parents 'should not shirk their duty' (Capt. S.A. White, the State Commissioner of the Boy Scout Association); '[u]ndoubtedly our young people need a better and more wholesome enlightenment on the meaning of sex' (Mr A.T. Wreford, Chairman, Boys' Week Movement); mothers can teach sex education 'tactfully and make the subject beautiful and not ugly' (Mrs. O. Polkinghorne, Past President of the Housewives Association); '[i]t is the job for parents... ...I do not believe in delegating parental duties to outside bodies' (Mrs A.K. Goode JP, member of the St Peters Board of Health and the Advisory Board of Film Censors); and 'children should certainly be trained in their homes... ...there are dangers attached to class teaching' (Mrs W.H. Lewis, Past President Women's Non-Party Association).[22] Thus for the period between the two major wars sex education was considered largely a private matter for families to address.

With the outbreak of war and the consequent need for changes to

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20 A printed version of Ramsay Smith's 1929 views appeared as 'The Desirability of Sex Teaching', *Housewife*, 12 August 1931, pp. 30-3. This was an abbreviated version of an earlier article of the same title published in *Everyladys Journal*, February 1914.

21 'Sex Education Plea Supported', *Register*, 31 July 1929.

22 *ibid.*

social life to accommodate it the opportunity emerged for a rethink about schooling and education. Concerted agitation from the South Australian Primary Teachers Union (SAPTU), the South Australian branch of the New Education Fellowship (NEF), and the South Australian Primary Schools' Committees Association (SAPSCA), together with considerable favourable newspaper commentaries, led to the creation of the Bean Committee in 1942. It was an occasion when, as Spaull has suggested, substantial pressure 'forced a conservative government to hold an official enquiry'.[23] These groups drew on a range of educational ideas that they wished to see embodied in the schooling process. Significant among them was a renewed emphasis on child-centred and individual based learning, on educating the whole child, so that each child could, in the spirit of equality of opportunity, make the best and fullest use of their differing individual capacities for the benefit of society as a whole. These ideas were articulated by many who pressed for the enquiry[24] and they found strong expression in the Committee's introduction to its first report.[25] Even though many of these ideas had been around for some thirty years or more their prominence in framing the committee's thinking made the 'three volume report... ... a remarkable -- and self consciously --

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23 Spaull (1982), p. 200.

24 See for example the various speeches made by parliamentarians debating the setting up of the committee, *SAPD*, 5 August 1942, pp. 250-2, 15 July 1942, pp. 54-5, 30 September 1942, pp. 660-5, 7 October 1942, pp. 752-3, 14 October 1942, pp. 858-64.

25 *SAPP* No. 15, 1945, pp. 5-8.

radical document'.[26]

Miller's assessment here appears to contrast with that of Spaull who concluded that despite producing reports that were probably 'the most comprehensive and considered documents in Australian education of the war years' they nevertheless constituted, in total, 'a conservative report which rarely challenged the control or structure of state education'.[27] Spaull's view stems largely from his concern with the fact that the Bean Committee avoided challenging the highly centralised management and organisation of the education system. In those terms it was certainly a conservative series of reports. Its radicalness lay elsewhere -- in the areas of educational thinking identified by Miller. The reports gave voice to a new wave of thinking about the natures of and pedagogic relations between teachers and students. Central to this was the emerging space for psychology based discourses within educational thought. The latter was 'making full use of contemporary "scientific" advances in the area of psychology', especially in relation to intelligence testing.[28] This was the educational context in which the question of sex education arose.

As was noted above, the outbreak of war and the consequent changes to social life brought forth concerns with sexual issues, especially venereal disease. South Australia experienced its share of concerns about the effects of

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26 Miller (1986), p. 220.

27 Spaull (1982), p. 202.

28 Miller (1986), p. 220.

the war on the moral and sexual conduct of its citizens. The parliament moved, eventually, to address what it saw as the threat of venereal disease -- though the war was well over by the time it actually passed any legislation.[29] The schools too had to deal with a range of problems exacerbated or generated by what the Director of Education termed the 'abnormal social conditions brought about by the war situation'. In the Director's view,

> [t]he specific problems most noticeable are:
> (1) increasing truancy
> (2) behavioural problems in school
> (a) using undesirable language
> (b) sexual misdemeanours
> (c) dishonesty -- both direct and pilfering
> (d) begging for money
> (3) physical danger to themselves and others through the taking of military equipment from camps, e.g., ammunition and rifles.[30]

Fear of 'the growing menace to the lowering of the moral standards of our children'[31] was a constant backdrop to discussions about sex education during the war years. Fears for the moral order were fused with fears for the prevailing gender order. If the 'abnormal social conditions' were a sign that the moral order was beginning to fray then what might this mean for the gender order?

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29 See *SAPD,* Nov-Dec 1945 and Sept-Nov 1947.

30 Draft of Memorandum from Director of Education to Head Master, Head Mistress, Head Teacher, or Infant Mistress, c. May 1942. The draft was closely based on the views of the Education Department Psychologist, Dr Constance Davey, and Assistant Psychologist, Mary Smith, in their memo to Director of Education, 1 May 1942. Their memo was in response to a request from the Director for their advice on these issues. See *GRG* 18/2/1942/No. 734.

31 Draft memo of Director, c. May 1942.

Indeed, the Bean Committee made its small, possibly half-hearted, contribution to redrawing some aspects of the gender order as far as women teachers were concerned. It felt that the policy of requiring women teachers to resign on marriage deprived the Education Department of an important personnel resource and closed off a ready made solution to the potential problem of expanding the teaching force. It acknowledged the prevailing gender order by noting that such an approach 'would cut cleanly across long-established policy, and would be repugnant to the opinions of many people'.[32] Yet it went on to make the following points:

> Few would dispute that the caring for a family is a full and noble occupation, but it has to be considered whether women should be permitted to choose for themselves whether or not to continue teaching. ... [W]e feel, too, that women with the chief cares of their family behind them might have much to give to a school. They have had a richer and more intimate experience in the educating of children.[33]

This possibly reflected the influence of its only woman member, Mrs H.W. Hooper (President of the National Council for Women), for it is clear that the emphasis was placed on allowing women teachers to choose their own career and family priorities. Nonetheless, it is also equally clear from the above statement by the committee that the idea of woman as mother, as the mainstay of family life, also informed the its overall perspective. Finally, it is worth noting that the appointment to the committee of Mrs Hooper was an

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32 *SAPP* No. 15, 1945, p. 11. The policy requiring women teachers to resign on marriage took effect from 20 November 1919. See *Education Gazette*, Vol. XXXV, No. 400, 18 November 1919, p. 217.

33 *SAPP* No. 15, 1945, p. 11.

afterthought on the part of the government.[34] It is now time to turn to the views on sex education that were put before the now reconstituted Bean Committee.

IV

Four people appeared before the Bean Committee to provide their perspectives specifically on the issue of sex education. These were Dr Albert Ray Southwood (medical practitioner of Adelaide), Dr Henry Kenneth Fry (psychiatrist of Crafers), Dr William Christie (Principal Medical Officer with the Education Department), and Dr Constance Davey (Child Psychologist

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34 Initially the Minister for Education, Sir Shirley Jeffries, had announced the appointment of three men to conduct the inquiry: 'Mr E.L. Bean, the Parliamentary Draftsman, as Chairman, Mr. J.F. Ward, the President of the Headmasters' Association, and Dr Penny, senior lecturer at the Teachers' College'. In making his announcement the Minister informed the House of Assembly that '[t]he committee has sat and is likely to sit again on a number of occasions' (*SAPD* 19 January 1943, p. 1369). In the meantime the Minister had received substantial protests from twenty organisations representing women that their interests might not be adequately addressed by a committee made up only of men. In response to questions in the House, the Minister noted that the points raised in the representations from '[t]he ladies', as he described them, had been very ably put and 'that they would have the fullest opportunity to go before the committee' and make their views known. However, he would not change the membership unless the committee itself felt that 'the inquiry would be better conducted and better understood by the presence of a lady' and advised him accordingly. It was his view that the sex of members of committees appointed by the government was irrelevant insofar as the 'best committees are appointed in each case to deal with the subject of inquiry as far as the Government can select those persons' (*ibid.*, p. 1622). Eventually, however, after another round of questions in the House the following week, the Minister agreed to 'consult the members of the committee' to see whether 'their investigations would be assisted if a lady were appointed to the committee' (*ibid.*, p. 1697). It was in that context that Mrs Hooper was subsequently appointed.

with the Education Department until her retirement in 1942). The Director of Education, Mr Charles Fenner, like his counterpart in 1912, was not asked directly about the need for sex education in schools. However, in his capacity as Director, he had made a couple of formal and, it will be argued, significant pronouncements on the matter. They can thus be regarded as indicative of his general views as to how the Department should approach the issue. These will be discussed below in due course. Other witnesses, such as Mary Smith, a psychologist with the Education Department, and Harold Darwin (Chief Assistant at Black Forest Primary School) mentioned sex education briefly when giving evidence on other matters.

Southwood was not opposed to sex education. He believed that childhood was the time to 'learn about the human machine and how to care for it'.[35] He urged that more curriculum time be allocated to teaching about health.[36] He believed that sex education should be 'a definite part of the education of all boys and girls at school' because

> it is a knowledge they will obtain at some stage in life. It would be better done that way than by their getting it through the medium of smutty yarns.[37]

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35 *Education Inquiry Committee: Evidence Books 1-6*, Book 1. *GRG* 18/172/1, p. 140/633.

36 Southwood, *GRG* 18/172/1, p. 141/633.

37 *ibid.*, p. 146/673. Southwood's reference to 'smutty yarns' as the most likely source of children's knowledge of sexual matters implied that parents were probably avoiding dealing with this issue. Even if parents were more active than assumed in helping their children understand sexual matters, it was still up to the schools to displace 'the smutty yarn' as a source of knowledge in an area presumed to need sound moral guidance.

He was in no doubt that this was an area in which the schools should be involved. However, teaching of matters relating to sex should be pitched at a level appropriate for the age group. He suggested that 'at or before the time of puberty children should receive instruction in sex hygiene'.[38]

The relationship between health and education was crucial. He told the committee that he saw 'character-building as the main aim of education'. He elaborated this in the following terms.

> Education has many aims. It must equip the student to earn his living. It must train him to co-operate with his fellows, and so to become a good citizen. Most important of all, it must give that nice balance of soundly-developed body, mind and spirit. ... ...The schoolmaster and the doctor have great opportunities -- and grave responsibilities. ... ...The *whole* man must be a healthy man. ... ...The institution of compulsory schooling marked the recognition of the fact that the mental training of every citizen was important to the community as a whole. It was a matter too important to be left to chance, and so every child must go to school. ... ...When every citizen has good understanding of the value of pure air, good foods, personal cleanliness, and the other factors of orderly living, his own and the community's health will improve immeasurably. ... ...Unless people are taught in childhood how to live -- and that means how to live a balanced life -- they will never learn.[39]

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[38] *ibid.*, p. 142/633. Essentially, Southwood advocated a gradual approach to sex education integrated into a health and biology curriculum. Sex education should begin at the primary years with 'incidental instruction in regard to reproduction, biology and botany' as required (*ibid.*, p. 145/669). As the children reached puberty they could then be given more 'formal instruction' on sex matters, probably by doctors since 'the teachers would require special data' (*ibid.*, p. 145/670-1). He did add, however, that he saw no reason why 'suitably trained teachers could not handle the matter very well' (*ibid.*, p. 146/674).

[39] *ibid.*, pp. 138-40/633.

If people were not taught in childhood they would remain 'ignorant adults' who would be 'unteachable' as to the presumed facts of good health. Hence the task is to train them while they are still at school.

In his view, '[c]ivilization cannot crack if schoolmasters and doctors work together in training the citizens of tomorrow'.[40] Moreover, young people needed to be trained in how 'to spend their leisure time soberly and in an orderly fashion' so that they would no longer be 'frittering their time away and without profit to themselves.'[41] Southwood's testimony revealed, quite clearly, the discursive interconnections between ideas about character, citizenship, bodily and mental health, and sex education. It was up to the schools to provide the right pedagogic environment. Against a backdrop of war and changing social values Southwood's concerns pinpointed health education as a tangible and realisable means through which a civilised social order could be sustained.

Where Southwood advocated that children should be receive 'instruction in physiology, anatomy and hygiene',[42] including sexual issues, the next witness, Dr Henry Kenneth Fry, did not think that children needed to know anything about 'the anatomy and physiolgy of sex'.[43] This would only encourage children who, by definition, were 'immature beings', to take a

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40 *ibid.*, p. 142/633.

41 *ibid.*, p. 143/633.

42 *ibid.*, p. 140/633.

43 Fry in *ibid.*, p. 186/950.

'salacious interest in sex'.[44] He told the Bean Committee that 'all that children need[ed] to know is that sex is the basis of reproduction'.[45] While he felt that '[s]ex relate[d] to an essential part of ordinary life', good manners demanded that its significance be minimised in the minds of children until it could be brought under the control of 'decent personalities'.[46]

This was the central issue for Fry. His primary emphasis was on the need to 'creat[e] a decent personality'.[47] This was the key to enabling children to deal with sexual matters later in their lives. Only after children had grown up to the point where they could exercise adequate 'mental control of the situation' would it be appropriate to instruct them in sexual matters.[48] Even then Fry warned of drawing undue attention to sex. Essentially, discussions of sex should be centred on reproduction. Any mention of other sexual issues such as sexual diseases could then be kept to a 'very broad outline' and largely confined to informing the students that such things happen to people 'who live promiscuous sexual lives'.[49] Here the war-time concern with venereal disease made its presence felt. While it was not spoken of directly it is difficult to

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44 *ibid.*, p. 186/950 & 952.

45 *ibid.*, p. 186/951.

46 *ibid.*, p. 186/950.

47 *ibid.*, p. 187/955. In a public lecture some two years later Fry described, from a pyschological perspective, what constituted a 'decent' or at least, balanced, personality. See 'Sex Education Psychology: Dr H.K. Fry Advises Parents and Teachers', *The Advertiser*, 25 July, 1945.

48 *ibid.*, p. 187/954.

49 *ibid.*, p. 186/952.

avoid the conclusion that this is what lay behind the discussion of sex education at the Bean Committee. Some of Fry's other comments also point to this conclusion.

Fry's views included a strong belief in some version of evolutionary theory. Human beings possessed 'vastly superior powers of adaptation' which were themselves dependent upon mental rather than reproductive powers.[50] This was what accounted for 'human supremacy in the world'. The possession of such mental powers lifted humans above the status of mere animals by enabling them to transcend and channel their physiological drives, to control their 'instincts'. It was the task of the education system to ensure that children 'how to adapt themselves to conditions of living' by enabling them to develop their 'superior mental powers'.[51] This could be done through the teaching of biology, emphasising

> the evolution of adaptive mechanisms, anatomical, physiological and psychological. The inclusion of a scanty, but unblushing, teaching of sex could be included in such a course. Sex would then be taught not as a matter of prime importance, but in due perspective in the reality of things, as an example of emotional control, not as an example of technical knowledge of anatomical and physiological structure and function.[52]

This was the only context in which sexual knowledge should be made available to students. Discussions, if any, of sexual matters should be cast

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50 *ibid.*, p. 186/951.

51 *ibid.*, p. 186/951-2.

52 *ibid.*, p. 186/953.

largely in terms of 'emotional control'. If children's characters were properly formed, if their minds were properly focused towards the realisation of 'decent personalities', then they would have 'mental control of the situation'.[53] The emphasis on 'emotional control' revealed an attitude towards sex as a force or drive that needed to be controlled lest it wreak damage in the community. Once again, fear of the consequences of sex, particularly the spectre of venereal disease and promiscuity, were not far from the surface. The issue of shaping well-formed characters to enable children to grow into responsibile citizens was, for Fry (as indeed for Southwood), inextricably bound up with how sex education should be approached within schools.

Dr William Christie, the Principal Medical Officer, had a slightly broader view of sex education. Christie told the Committee that sex instruction did not form part of the existing school curriculum. However, curriculum based sex education could be provided as a proper part of a biology course.[54] In secondary school, it would be difficult for students to learn about biology without also learning about sex physiology. Students 'cannot take one without the other'.[55] Thus in his view 'the anatomical facts of conception, birth and puberty changes should be taught in schools'.[56] Teachers were probably best positioned to do this since he doubted whether

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53 *ibid.*, p. 186/955.

54 Christie in *ibid.*, p. 191/968.

55 *ibid.*, p. 191/968.

56 *ibid.*

students learnt very much from the talks given by visiting lecturers.[57] A biology based approach would be distinguished from, but nonetheless still intimately connected, with teaching about hygiene. Both were aspects of a broader health approach which he felt 'should be a compulsory subject... ...since the first objective of education should be to teach a child to live a healthy life'. His aim was for health to become 'a habit rather than just a subject in the curriculum'.[58] The curriculum could be redeveloped to enable broad based information about biology and health to begin in infant school. Thus by the time adolescence was reached knowledge of sexual functions would be largely a matter of fact. That is, in sentiments echoing those of Southwood, Christie suggested that it would then 'be looked on as normal and not something of the "hush-hush" type to be discussed only in smutty yarns'.[59]

The problem with 'sex instruction', as Christie termed it, was that it could encompass a diverse range of issues such as 'contraception, prophylaxis of venereal diseases, sexual morals, anatomy and physiology or any mixture of these'.[60] The difficulty was in knowing what could (or should) be included in such a course of instruction. There would also need to be a distinction made between physiological issues and moral issues. This distinction, as made by Christie, also recalled, implicitly at least, the link between mind and

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57 *ibid.*

58 *ibid.*, p. 190/968.

59 *ibid.*, p. 191/968.

60 *ibid.*

body similar to that advocated by Southwood and Fry. The physiological aspects of the body could be known and made subordinate to the moral imperatives through the appropriate education of the mind. Knowledge about physiological issues could be part of existing biology courses and moral teaching could be taught in a 'course dealing with ethical subjects'.[61] In part, this is illustrated by his brief comments on venereal disease. Information about venereal disease should be included with that relating to communicable diseases generally. This would be consistent with general instruction on hygiene matters. However, 'details and accounts of preventives should be reserved for adult education'.[62] Thus even though students were deemed to be in need of instruction about sexual 'facts' concerning anatomy and reproduction, there was also a distinction between which 'facts' dealing with the possible implications of that knowledge should be revealed. Knowledge of venereal disease could be dealt with under hygiene whereas knowledge of 'preventives' (ie. contraceptives) was a moral issue that need not be discussed as a matter of biology. It was deemed to be part of the world of adults.[63] This demarcation might seem strange but it was a reflection of the war-time concerns and fears over venereal disease. Where 'preventives' could be seen as a moral issue relating to sexual conduct, venereal disease went beyond that insofar as it was often understood to be an issue involving public health -- as

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61 *ibid.*

62 *ibid.*

63 *ibid.*

is revealed in the testimony of a number of the witnesses before the Bean Committee. That is, it was an issue that affected the health of the population, especially its fitness to reproduce. Parents could not necessarily be relied upon to impart the necessary message about sexual hygiene.

Indeed, even though parents were regarded by Christie as the appropriate inculators of morals for their children this was not always evident. The main difficulty according to Christie was the attitudes of parents. He told the Committee that some parents objected to teaching about the physical natures of human bodies because '[t]hey think it is indecent and seem to assume that the child is solid from the waist downwards'.[64] Christie presented no evidence to the committee to support this generalisation though he did temper it by questioning just how widespread such attitudes might be. Later in his testimony he noted that, on occasion, some parents had asked teachers to provide some help with sex education.[65] However, his point would appear to have been to underline what he saw as a general problem in introducing sex education into the curriuclum, namely parental opposition. Thus he suggested that this opposition might be 'common enough to cause sex instructions to be a voluntary matter like attendance at religious teaching'.[66] Where the issues were a matter of biology and hygiene the schools had a clear role to play. But where the explicit inculcation of moral values was concerned 'the home

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64 *ibid.*

65 *ibid.*

66 *ibid.*

influence is the chief factor in determining the moral standard'.[67] The school could but assist this process. Overall, Christie inclined to the school taking a greater role in teaching sex education but with due caution and concern for parents' sensibilities.

A more equivocal position on sex education was put to the Bean Committee by Dr Constance Davey. Davey was the first educational psychologist with the Education Department (appointed in 1924) and had just retired from that post in 1942.[68] Like Christie and Southwood, she saw some need for sex education to counter the influence of the playground. But like Fry she emphasised self-control and the development of a balanced personality. Davey used the example of eating to illustrate her view of sex education. Eating and sex were 'the two fundamental biological urges' -- one was necessary for the 'preservation of the individual' and the other for 'the preservation of the race'.[69] As a matter of course in schools, children are taught about different kinds of food, their nutritional value, how to discriminate between different foods, and most importantly, to be able to exercise self-control in making such choices. The aim was to attain an 'ideal

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67 *ibid.*

68 In addition to being a psychologist with the Education Department she also lectured in psychology and logic at the University of Adelaide from 1927 to 1950. She was also active in campaigning for reforms to legislative and other modes of addressing children's welfare. For further details of her life and achievements see *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 8: 1891-1939, Cl-Gib*, ed Bede Nairn & Geoffrey Serle, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 216-7.

69 Dr Constance Davey, *Education Enquiry: Evidence Book 4. GRG* 18/172/4, p. 932.

of physical health and development' through the exercise of informed choices. Thus 'in relation to sex', she told the Committee that

> knowledge is necessary but self-control must be combined with this knowledge if the standards set up by the society in the interests of the race are to be maintained.[70]

The key was self-control because no amount of 'abstract knowledge of the body or its functions will give control over its instinctive urges'.[71]

Yet the problem was just how to instil this habit of self-control. The schools were quite adept at encouraging conformity 'to authority from without'.[72] But the most difficult task, for both teacher and pupil, suggested Davey, was 'that of teaching the child to say *no* to himself'.[73] This was the essence of self-discipline, of mind over body, but it did not coincide with the onset of puberty. Self-control was a process that began 'in the early years of life' and was reinforced over time through the development and inculcation of the intellectual and emotional sensibilities of 'loyalty, justice, and goodness'.[74] While there was a certain similarity between Davey's and Fry's views in terms of their emphasis on character and personality, Davey paid more attention to the need for the schools to consider the question of sex education as part of the means to achieve this. That is, she pointed out that while schools had

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70 *ibid.*

71 *ibid.*, p. 932.

72 *ibid.*, pp. 932-3.

73 *ibid.*, p. 933.

74 *ibid.*

ignored the issue sex it was doubtful that the same could be 'said of the scholars in the school'.[75] The playground and the peer group, with overtones of smuttiness and furtiveness, often provided children with their main sources of sexual understanding. She felt that most parents probably would prefer that their children received such knowledge in a more responsible manner. However, ignoring or punishing or repressing the problem was not appropriate. Rather, a 'more scientific and psychological approach [was] needed'.[76] Hence her emphasis on character and self-control.

But there was another reason for placing the emphasis on self-control and ways of inculcating it. This was the problem of how the subject of sex should be taught. She did not favour teaching directly about sex in the classroom -- even though some issues such as 'racial aspects of hereditary and reproduction' might need to be taught in biology lessons.[77] She was not convinced that the teaching of 'abstract knowledge of the body and its functions ...[would]... give control over its instinctive urges'.[78] Where necessary teachers could give advice about sexual matters to individual students on a one to one basis. And while students might evince curiosity about sexual matters teachers should still exercise discretion, if not caution,

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75 *ibid.*, p. 932.

76 *ibid.*

77 *ibid.*, p. 932; p. 965/4856; p. 966/4862-3.

78 *ibid.*, p. 932.

by giving out such knowledge only with the consent of the student's parents.[79] Davey thought that a far better approach to class-room based sex education was to teach the children through teaching their parents. She told the Committee that '[t]he education of parents is much more essential than the education in the school'.[80] The rationale here was that if parents knew how to teach their children about sexual matters then there would be no need for the schools to take up that task either indirectly or as a specific curriculum issue.

Besides the emphasis on self-control, two other themes lurk beneath the surface of Davey's discussion. First, is the concern with ensuring that the 'standards set up by the society in the interests of the race'.[81] Clearly, this is a veiled reference to the problem of venereal disease. The appropriate sexual knowledge, that is an awareness of the consequences of sexual activity, combined with the requisite inner control was the means to ensure 'the interests of the race' were not placed in jeopardy. The second theme is also related to self-control This involves the idea that bodily activities, in particular those related to sex, are 'instinctive urges' that need to be kept under constant surveillance lest it lead to unhappy consequences.[82] It is difficult to tell from her evidence whether boys were more prone to their 'instinctive urges' than girls. However, it can be said that her view reflected the growing

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79 *ibid.*, p. 965/4859.

80 *ibid.*, pp. 965-6/4861.

81 *ibid.*, p. 962.

82 *ibid.*

orthodoxy within psychology, or at least psychoanalysis, that sexuality was in some way central to the psychological health of individuals. Inculcating self-control, 'teaching the child to say *no* to himself [sic]', was a goal that could be realised only through the adoption of 'a more scientific and psychological approach'.[83]

In a similar vein, Mary Smith, an Assistant Psychologist with the Education Department, told the Bean Committee that the problem of sex education in schools called for 'adolescent enlightenment rather than instruction for children'.[84] This could best be achieved if the Education Department were to 'concentrate on enlightening the teachers and helping the parents with their emotional problems on the matter'.[85] Parents, or more precisely mothers, could be reached through 'mothers' clubs and infant schools' and teachers could be assisted by appropriate course being developed at the Teachers' College.[86] When confronted with the view that 'parents do not seem able to handle the question, therefore someone must get the schools to undertake the work' she argued that this merely 'skirt[ed] around the problem' because '[i]f you get the schools to do the work the parents will put all the responsibility on the schools'.[87] Thus appropriate strategy was to teach

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83 *ibid.*

84 See Mary Smith, *Education Inquiry Committee Evidence Books, Book 6. GRG* 18/172/6 pp. 1206/5901.

85 *ibid.*

86 *ibid.*, p. 1206/5902.

87 *ibid.*, p. 1207/5903.

the adults so that 'the parents are enlightened'.[88] She also thought that class-room based forms of instruction were not appropriate for sex education. If any instruction was to occur then it should be on an individual basis but she conceded that it might be done 'conveniently with three of four children'.[89] Although she suggested that the whole physiology and biology curriculum 'should be revised to include some consideration to the functions of sex',[90] she did not believe that schools could undertake the whole burden of this independently of the parents of the children. She advised the Committee that schools should treat the issue of sexual reproduction in a direct and matter of fact fashion, to 'refrain from deliberate emotion and self-conscious reticence'.[91] This would appear to be an oblique reference to the then prevalent approaches to telling schoolchildren about venereal disease and other sexual issues. Schools had a role to play in not sensationalising the issues. While this was a necessary dimension it remained the case that in order to achieve effective sex education the schools would be best served by reaching out to parents to teach them how to teach their young about sex.

In contrast to the above views, a quite different perspective was put by Mr Harold Darwin, Chief Assistant at Black Forest School, and a teacher of some thirty years with the Education Department. He was very concerned

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88 *ibid.*, p. 1206/5901.

89 *ibid.*, p. 1206/5898-99.

90 *ibid.*, p. 1205/5897.

91 *ibid.*, p. 1207/5904.

about the decline of Australia's birth rate at a time when 'the teeming millions of Asia' were seen to be threatening a 'nearly white Australia with so very few white people in it'.[92] He attributed this decline primarily to the 'deadly destructive power of contraceptives' that enabled 'thousands of "would have been" parents ...[to]... murder their children and incidentally the nation'.[93] In addition, there was the prevailing moral decay in which many people were more interested in seeking pleasure than living an upright life.[94] Where once '[f]ear taught wisdom to many young people in the past' the free availability of contraceptives had now removed 'this safeguard against immorality'.[95] Darwin was here repeating much the same sort of arguments that were current some fifty years earlier and which linked attempts to curtail fertility and reproduction with a decline in the birth rate.[96] In Darwin's view, the nation's potential for greatness was under threat from a decided weakness in the moral fibre of Australia's men and women.

In his view the education system, through its secular emphasis, lacked 'the strength of purposeful morality and religion' and had failed 'to accept boldly the unavoidable responsibility of training the soul of Christian

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92 Harold Darwin, *Education Inquiry Committee Evidence Books, Book 1*, *GRG* 18/172/1, p. 204/1000.

93 *ibid.*, pp. 204-5/1000.

94 *ibid.*, p. 205/1000.

95 *ibid.* See also p. 211/1022-24

96 For some discussion of these earlier debates see Neville Hicks, *'This Sin and Scandal': Australia's Population Debate 1891-1911*, (Canberra, ACT: Australian National University Press, 1978).

people'.[97] This was one of the reasons why schools had failed to stem the tide. However, the failure ran to much deeper causes. He told the Bean Committee that education system provided a form of education that ignored the 'natural' fact that the 'female mentality differs from that of the male'; consequently it undermined what he regarded as 'the natural foundations' of Christian society, namely 'mothers'.[98] He expounded the point at length by pointing to what he regarded as the proper purpose of education for girls, namely,

> the bringing to full fruition the womenhood [*sic*] of the country through moral, religious, mental and physical preparation for motherhood and home-building. ... ...Mothers are literally the foundation of society. Girls must be made conscious of their possibilities and potential responsibilities; that women have a world of their own into which no man may venture; that this women's world of homes and motherhood is, in the long run, far more satisfying to women than chasing careers; that this is so because God has made it so and not because man wills it. They should be made to feel that they are preparing themselves for the time when the Creator of all life may entrust them with the greatest of all trusts, the care of a new life. Women trained to such an ideal will not suffer the inferiority complex which causes so many modern women to ape the man. We must help future women to a more wholesome appreciation of the worth while thing of life and their own immense importance in their own sphere.[99]

Clearly, for Darwin, the education system was failing to uphold what he regarded as the proper gender order of clearly defined public and private spheres for men and women respectively -- 'We cannot prepare women to be

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97 *ibid.*, p. 209/1000.

98 *ibid.*, p. 206/1000.

99 *ibid.*

men and men to be women; we are up against nature'.[100] The blurring of these naturally given gender boundaries, while accentuated by the war-time situation, was largely due to a misguided education system.

The only explicit reference made by Darwin to sex instruction was very brief. In effect it was a warning that those 'who advocate definite sex instruction should consider that good teaching demands demonstration'. If it really was to be a 'suitable class subject;[101] then one is justified in supposing that they would have it well taught'. For Darwin, sex education was not a suitable subject for the school curriculum. Moreover, it is implicit in his evidence that there would not be any need for 'definite sex instruction' if his ideas on a properly gendered and Christian education were adopted. Girls (and perhaps boys) would thereby know that sex took place only within the bounds of marriage of which they were the 'foundations'. And even if boys and men did not know this it would be up to girls and women, as the 'foundations of society', to ensure that boys behaved morally both before (ie. no pre-marital sex) and after (ie. no contraception) marriage.

On the surface, Darwin's views on sex education seemed quite out of step with most of those detailed above, with the possible exception of Fry. Yet when the broad sweep of his views are contrasted with those of the other witnesses, there emerge several important areas of overlap. First, there was some agreement with these other views that sex education was not suited to

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100 *ibid.*, p. 210/1005.

101 *ibid.*, p. 207/1000.

classs-room based teaching. Second, there was also agreement that education should be concerned with shaping the characters (or in his terms, the souls) of the future citizens. Third, was the belief that the chief influence on children's moral values was the home. And fourth, there was the view that within the home it was the mother who was of greatest importance in shaping the moral and intellectual environment for children. These similarities remained to the fore and were remarkably consistent with the general approach that had been endorsed by the Director General of Education, Charles Fenner.

V

Early in 1945 Fenner commented on news that a British public school was making educational history in teaching sex education. He told a local newspaper that sex education was taught in South Australia. In words that seemed to echo some of the sentiments expressed at the enquiry, he said that '[s]ex was included in the general science course at secondary schools ... ... but that children learn it as part of life, not as a special subject'.[102] The clear implication was that South Australian schools were well up with the latest in educational initiatives. He also pointed out that 'articles on sex education

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102 'Sex Education Given in Schools Here', *The News*, 31 January 1945. See also 'Sex Education for British Boys: Experiment at Public School', *The Advertiser*, 31 January 1945 where it was reported that an Inspector of Schools in Manchester said that 'if parents continue to fail to undertake sex education it is wiser to let schools provide it than to neglect it'. The Inspector was also reported as stating that parents had not been consulted beforehand. Note also that in this particular news story, in contrast with *The News*, *The Advertiser* did not carry any comment from Fenner.

were published from time to time in the 'Education Gazette' for the information of the teachers'.[103] Two examples of this, reveal some of the underlying ideas endorsed by Fenner as well as their general consistency with the tenor of thought that was being put before the Bean Committee. The first of these of the two articles in the *Education Gazette*, was published late in 1943, and the second just two weeks after his comments appeared in *The News*.

In 1943 the *Education Gazette* reprinted the chapter on sex education from Bertrand Russell's book, *On Education.*[104] Given that the point of publishing material in the gazette was 'for the information of the teachers' it can be presumed that Fenner was sympathetic, or at least not opposed, to Russell's approach. Russell preferred for sex education to be done at home rather than through the schools. Or rather that it should begin in the home before the child even began formal schooling. The schools should merely supplement what has already been established by the parents. According to Russell there were only two rules which needed to be observed and these applied to parents and teachers alike: 'First, always give a truthful answer to a question; secondly, regard sex-knowledge like any other knowledge'.[105]

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103 *ibid.*

104 *Education Gazette*, Vol. LIX, 15 November 1943, pp. 213-5. Southwood, in his evidence before the committte, also made some favourable references to Bertrand Russell's views on character building. See Southwood, *Education Inquiry Committee Books of Evidence*, Book 1, *GRG* 18/172/1, p. 138/633.

105 Bertrand Russell, *On Education: Especially In Early Childhood*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926/66), p. 117.

Knowledge about sex must be taught 'in a purely scientific spirit', as 'utterly matter-of-fact', and 'treated from the first as natural, delightful, and decent'.[106] It should not be taught from a prurient or guilt-laden perspective nor be gained from the 'ribaldry' or 'nasty talk' of the playground.[107]

Yet for all his noted progressivism on education, Russell remained within the gender assumptions of the times. For while 'both boys and girls ought to learn something of physiology and something of hygiene' it remained necessary that girls in particular 'should be taught to expect that one day they are likely to be mothers'.[108] This was not simply an instance of pointing to the balance of probabilities regarding girls' futures. Rather, it was an explicit reference to a gender ordering that Russell did not question. Indeed, he appeared to be advocating it unquestioningly.

> Instinct without knowledge is as inadequate in dealing with children as knowledge without instinct. The more the necessity of knowledge is understood the more intelligent will feel attracted to motherhood. At present many highly educated women despise it, thinking that it does not give scope for the exercise of their intellectual faculties; this is a great misfortune, since they are capable of being the best mothers, if their thoughts were turned in that direction.[109]

Russell's views here reveal a good deal about the sorts of ideas that infused debates about sex education. First, it articulated the link between

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106 *ibid.*, p. 117-8.

107 *ibid.*, p. 118-9.

108 *ibid.*, p. 120.

109 *ibid.*

knowledge and instinct that underpinned the educators' emphasis on self-control. Second, it linked both knowledge and instinct with concerns about a declining birth rate. Russell clearly attributed this decline to the actions of middle class women who appeared to be choosing to restrict or avoid getting pregnant. Indeed, and this is a third point about his remarks, a eugenicist cast was revealed by his comment that 'once the necessity of knowledge is understood the more intelligent will feel attracted to motherhood'. That is, among many leading intellectuals of the first half of this century there was a serious worry that the less able and less healthy sections of the population might reproduce far more rapidly than the better educated and generally healthier middle class.[110] Not just the quantity of births but the quality of those born was also at issue. In this context, the emphasis on hygiene as the focus for sex education courses was quite compatible with a supposedly direct, enlightened approach to instructing children about sex.

Thus sex education, even for Russell, was not to disrupt the commonly accepted understanding of appropriate gender roles. On the contrary, as is apparent from the passage quoted above and the issues that it masked, sex education was a way of rendering those roles more palatable. That is, the

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[110] Even though Russell was writing primarily with reference to the situation in England, the issues that he alluded to were also relevant for Australian conditions. For debates over fears about the declining birthrate and population issues in this period see Stefania Siedlecky & Diana Wyndham, *Populate and Perish: Australian Women's Fight for Birth Control*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), Ch. 2. Siedlecky & Wyndham point out that the birthrate declined by 50% between 1871 and 1939 (*ibid.*, 24). See also Hicks (1978) for similar debates earlier in the century.

point of sex education was precisely bound up with sexing the subject. Indeed, Russell's views, despite their apparent progressiveness, indicate precisely that. Such views seemed to be congruent with those current within educational circles in South Australia at the time, as noted in the discussion in the previous section.

Just over a year later, Fenner provided the introductory comments for excerpts reprinted from another discussion of sex education.[111] Fenner endorsed the book with the sentiments that it was 'strongly recommended for every school inspector and teacher'.[112] He informed teachers that sex education should be treated as part of ordinary life rather than be singled out for special attention. In a direct paraphrase of Russell, Fenner pointed out that 'the best method is to give simple and truthful answers to the simple questions that arise'.[113] He acknowledged that 'most of this was in the hands of the parents' but nevertheless reminded teachers that they too 'should also be ready to deal with such matters when the occasion arises'.[114] It was not so much that the school should provide direct teaching about sexuality. Rather, what was even more crucial was the school's role in shaping character, and thereby attitudes to sex and sexual conduct.

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111 Charles Fenner, 'Sex Problems in Schools', *Education Gazette*, Vol. LXI, 15 February 1945, pp. 60-2. (The book was Cyril Bibby, *Sex Education: A Guide for Parents, Teachers, and Youth Leaders*).

112 *ibid.*, p. 60.

113 *ibid.*

114 *ibid.*

> The school is, in short, the crucible of character training. And one important element in the crucible is sex education. It is clear that life in a civilized community implies the regulation of primitive desires and among them the desires of sex, and equally clear that the stronger the individual's character the greater the likelihood of effective regulation.[115]

Here Fenner's view paralleled closely those of Southwood, Fry, Davey and, despite the difference in perspective, Darwin.

Taking Fenner's introductory comments as a whole it can be seen that he provided a successful melding of the views of those who had addressed the issue of sex education at the enquiry. The idea that sex was a primitive desire, given by nature, that had to be regulated in a civilised community, was central. But what was of greatest import was the emphasis on the shaping of the character of the school-child to enable that regulation to take place. Where Darwin had couched this in religious terms the others, including Fenner, leant more to psychology based discourses. Further evidence for this will be addressed in the next section. The point to be stressed here was that the school was being explicitly acknowledged as crucial to the process of shaping children's characters, in short their subjectivities. It had an important role to play but not in terms of directly providing sex education in the class-room. At the same time a measure of openness was needed to ensure that the moral authority of schools, as providers of knowledge and shapers of character, was not undermined by their own actions. Thus it was that, for sex

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115 ibid.

education, the pedagogic strategy of reaching the children through their parents retained its appeal.

VI

Between 1943 and 1945 when the above views about sex education were being put to the Bean Committee the Education Department was itself giving the matter some thought. This culminated in a request from the Social Hygiene Association (SHA)[116] to meet with the Minister of Education. The SHA was preparing to publish a booklet on sex education and sought the Minister's support for the project. In particular, the SHA sought the Minister's assistance in enabling the booklet to be distributed to parents via the schools.[117] The Minister referred the SHA to the Chief Secretary because they had already asked for 'the insertion of a foreword by that Minister'.[118] Despite the Minister's apparent brusqueness in reply, he was not opposed to the project. Indeed, he had made a similar proposal not twelve months earlier. He had written to Fenner that 'some definite policy should be considered regarding these matters'.[119] Fenner was advised that although 'information of

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116 Among the notable members of the SHA in 1945 were Charles Fenner and Dr C.M. Davey (two of the four Vice-presidents), Dr H.K. Fry (Chairman), and Dr Marjorie Casley Smith (Committee member).

117 Secretary, Social Hygiene Association to Minister of Education, 16 March 1945. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

118 Minister of Education to Secretary, Social Hygiene Association, 21 March 1945. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

119 Minister of Education to Director of Education, 29 March 1944. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

this nature should be imparted to children by their parents', the Department could assist parents by preparing and distributing a pamphlet on sex education that they could use with their children.[120]

The catalyst for this policy discussion was evidently a request from a Dr Souter to continue a series of lectures in schools in the Yankalilla area.[121] The lectures went under the general title 'Origins of Life' and there appear to have been five of them -- Lecture 1 entitled 'Darwinian Theory', Lecture 2 'Reproduction of Plants and Animals', Lecture 3 is missing from the file, Lecture 4 'the Alimentary Canal and Digestion', and Lecture 5 on sex and fertilisation (and alcohol). Souter's discussion of sex and courtship warrants a brief mention as it gives some insight into what was taken to be the point of sex education. Souter likened courtship to a stairway leading down to 'an attractive valley'. The steps at the top were 'small and easy to return from' requiring 'little courage to venture onto the first time you descend'. But successive steps were bigger and more slippery, requiring more courage to venture forth, until finally 'you ...slip and slide to the bottom where fertilisation occurs'. He noted that some people might say that 'there are ways of going to the bottom without fertilisation occuring; but none of these ways are effective, or safe if you are not afraid'. His advice was to 'put up a fence

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120 *ibid.*

121 Minister of Education to Dr Souter, 29 March 1944. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917. In that letter the Minister noted that he was responding to Souter's request to continue his lectures. The request no longer remains on file though it may have been that the matter began informally and only became formal once the details of the lectures were made available to the Education Department.

on one of the top steps and not to go through it until you are married'.[122] Clearly, Souter was concerned with the issues of sexual activity, reproduction and contraception. He wanted to impress upon his young listeners that there were no reliable means of preventing pregnancies. The only reliable method was to avoid the 'slippery slope' of pre-marital sex in the first place by 'put[ting] up a fence on one of the top steps' thereby enabling their desires to be regulated. Souter's point about overcoming the fear of 'fertilisation', while probably directed to both girls and boys, would nonetheless have carried more weight with girls given that the consequences would have fallen more heavily on them. Thus, the admonition to 'put up a fence on one of the top steps' reminded girls of their responsibility to take the lead in keeping sexual desire at bay.

Copies of the lecture notes or outlines were given to Fenner who forwarded them for comment to the Superintendent of Primary Schools. Both Fenner and his Superintendent doubted the suitability of these lectures for school use. Consequently, the Minister advised Souter that the Department was in the process of considering an appropriate policy to deal with matters such as he (ie. Souter) had raised. In the absence of such a policy the Minister felt that giving Souter permission would entail the same for anyone else who made a similar request of the Department. Thus he asked him 'to refrain for the present until a more definite policy has been decided upon'.[123]

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122 From a transcription of 'Origin of Life: Lecture 5' by Dr Souter, *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

123 Minister of Education to Dr Souter, 29 March 1944.

In the meantime, Fenner sought the views of appropriate staff members and wrote to the Principal Medical Officer, William Christie. He advised Christie that he did not support the idea of school teachers or visiting lecturers teaching about 'sex as an isolated thing' but rather favoured a more integrated approach according to which teachers provided simple and truthful answers to questions as they arose in the context of existing curriculum work.[124] Fenner supported the Minister's view that a booklet to assist parents might be the best solution.[125] These then were the broad parameters within which Christie's views were sought. In preparing his advice Christie sought the views of the Departmental Psychologist (Mary Smith) and the Departmental Medical Inspector (Marjorie Casley Smith). Both provided Christie with written submissions on dealing with sex education in schools.

Mary Smith advised that Souter's lectures were 'not only useless' but, psychologically speaking, 'harmful and pernicious'.[126] She was particularly scathing of the final lecture dealing with sex and courtship. It was her view that neither teachers nor 'the average medical man' were currently capable of dealing with 'sex instruction'. Too many teachers were 'ignorant on the

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124 Director of Education to Principal Medical Officer, 1 April 1944. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917. In this note to the PMO, Fenner made the point that this was in keeping with the 'best method ...[as]... advocated by Bertrand Russell & Havelock Ellis'.

125 *ibid.*

126 Mary Smith to Principal Medical Officer, 13 April 1944. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

subject, ill-equipped for the work and maladjusted sexually themselves'.[127] On the other hand, doctors might be well versed in physiological matters but far too many were not capable of dealing with the more important aspect of addressing the problems of emotions and sexuality.[128] Smith was not very keen on the Department producing a pamphlet for parents because, despite it being prepared for parents to use, it might too easily become available to all. In any event, she thought that the Department should move cautiously. She suggested that 'a widely representative committee' be set up by the Department 'to discuss the problem of sex education'.[129] Such a committee could discuss three broad areas. First, it could assess 'the advisability of special courses for teachers in training' to gain some understanding of basic issues relating to sex education.[130] Second, the Committee could discuss 'the means of giving help to parents who *should assume their responsibility* in this respect'.[131] She regarded instruction about sex as a normal part of child rearing and suggested that more use could be made of Mothers' Clubs. And third, the issue of preparing a pamphlet for parents could be more thoroughly canvassed. If necessary a book rather than a pamphlet could be produced.[132]

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127 *ibid.*

128 *ibid.*

129 *ibid.*

130 *ibid.*

131 *ibid.*, (her emphasis).

132 *ibid.*

Smith's opposition was not to sex education as such but to the perceived inability of the Department's staff to undertake the task. Even so, she regarded sex education as first and foremost the responsibility of parents. And since child-rearing fell largely to mothers, this 'normal part of child-rearing' was largely a task for mothers to deal with.

Casley Smith, on the other hand, suggested that 'sex education should be given in schools by specially trained persons'.[133] She reasoned that most parents had neither the knowledge nor the ability to discuss sexual issues without embarrassment and hence mostly avoided the subject with their children. She was not convinced that 'any further knowledge or training given' to parents would improve matters. She pointed out that in Wales in 1943, 87% of some 1,844 parents of elementary school children responded to a questionnaire on sex education to the effect that they 'desired sex instruction to be given in schools'.[134] She pointed out that unless there had 'been a gradual training of the child since babyhood' (most unlikely in her view given her earlier comments) it was preferable that someone outside the family circle impart the knowledge impersonally. She concluded that 'for the next 20-30 years, the only satisfactory method of imparting sex knowledge to children at ages when it is necessary for them to receive it, is through the schools'. Perhaps, she suggested, the next generation of parents would be equipped to

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133 Marjorie Casley Smith to Principal Medical Officer, 20 April 1944. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

134 *ibid.*

'fulfil their obligations in this respect'.[135]

Casley Smith then mapped out a course of instruction for children from kindergarten to secondary school. The knowledge imparted would have a degree of simplicity (or complexity) depending on the age and physical development of the children. To provide a suitable base for this instruction it would be necessary to have Biology and Hygiene taught on a regular basis as 'compulsory subjects in the school'.[136] She also advocated that specialist teachers be suitably trained to teach sex education with 'male teachers provided to teach boys and females to teach girls'. Finally, parents would have the right, when it came to lessons on sex instruction, to 'withdraw their children should they wish -- as with religious instruction'.[137] Apart form the purely biological details the instruction would also involve an ethical, moral and religious basis. It was Casley Smith's belief that '[i]f sex is taught with a basis of religion its true importance should be realized by the children'.[138] Throughout her proposed course of instruction, especially at puberty, the issue of self-control recurred. Both boys and girls should be taught to place emphasis on learning self-control, on developing the appropriate strength of character to make responsible choices. Ultimately these choices turned on the received notions of the prevailing gender order. On this Casley Smith, like

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135 *ibid.*

136 *ibid.*

137 *ibid.*

138 *ibid.*

Bertrand Russell, was quite explicit. If sex education was to be taught with due heed to ethical, moral and religious aspects then 'the ideal of Wifehood and Motherhood can be taught more easily to girls'.[139] The fact that Casley Smith capitalised 'wifehood' and 'motherhood' indicated her commitment to these as appropriate and desirable goals. That such things were perceived as needing to be taught suggests a fundamental paradox implicit in her thought: though natural, gender roles required constant social reinforcement. Girls (and boys) needed to be continually reminded that the gender order had its basis in a sexual division of labour given by nature. Her views recalled those of Russell about middle class women turning away from 'motherhood'. Hence it was up to the schools to reinforce not just the presumed naturalness of motherhood but also its status as equivalent to a profession; one which only women had the particular attributes (and 'nature') to perform successfully. Within her view of sex education, the teaching of 'wifehood' and 'motherhood' contributed to sexing the subject in the sense defined earlier in this thesis.

In his report to the Director, Christie was concerned about the perceived increase in immorality or promiscuity. He acknowledged that the discussion then occuring in the newspapers, which had largely been generated by the question of broadcasting sexual information under the guise of sex education to combat venereal disease, was probably overstated.[140] Nevertheless, he felt that there was a problem with people's behaviour that

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139 *ibid.*

140 Christie was referring to the deliberations of the Amour Committee that were discussed earlier in Section II, *infra.*

necessitated a change in moral outlook. However, moral values and appropriate 'emotional habits',[141] as he termed them, must be inculcated from birth and perpetuated throughout childhood. This meant that 'the only persons who can influence sexual habits are the parents'.[142] He also pointed to a number of factors that would need to be addressed in formulating any plan for the schools to make sex education a part of the curriculum. First, it was his view that most parents were not equipped to teach their children about sexual matters. However, if the parents could be appropriately educated then this would be 'the best method of getting the next generation to adopt a different standard of sexual morals'.[143] Second, he felt that 'the majority of people have been immoral for a varying period before marriage ...[and]... a large number continue so after marriage'.[144] This further underscored his view that it was necessary to educate the parents if the 'next generation ...[were]... to adopt' an improved 'standard of morals'. Finally, he noted that alcohol was often associated with the problems of immoral behaviour hence both problems would need to be addressed.

With these factors taken as given, Christie divided the problem of teaching sex education into two broad categories -- the instruction of parents and the instruction of children. On the instruction of parents he pointed out

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141 Principal Medical Officer to Director of Education, 26 April 1944. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

142 *ibid.*

143 *ibid.*

144 *ibid.*

that this could be achieved by giving parents advice about suitable books that they might consult which could be made known through the Schools' Committees and the Mothers' Clubs. It would then be up to the parents to take it from there in that they 'would select those most suitable for their own children who could be asked to read them'.[145] On the instruction of children themselves, Christie further subdivided the problem into the categories of instruction at home and at school. The question of teaching children at home was largely addressed by the strategy of providing parents with appropriate advice and resources (ie. instructing the parents). However, the issue of providing instruction at school was less easily resolved. It was, in fact, where the nub of the dilemmas lay. If it was to be handled by the schools then Christie saw four possiblities. Sex instruction could be taught '(1) as a separate subject by the ordinary teachers, or (2) by specially trained teachers, or (3) by outside lecturers, or (4) as part of a general biology course with the moral aspects introduced into the moral lessons'.[146]

Christie did not favour external lecturers as he felt that this would give the subject 'undue prominence'. On the other three Christie made no specific comment at all. However, since creating a separate subject called 'sex instruction' or similar would also generate 'prominence' it is likely that Christie would have shied away from the first option. In addition, this was not an option favoured by the Minister hence to promote it would probably

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145 Principal Medical Officer to Director of Education, 26 April 1944.

146 *ibid.*

have been largely a wasted effort. In any case, in the previous year, Christie had already told the Bean Committeee that he favoured integrating 'sex instruction' into biology and physiology based courses with the moral aspects being dealt with in 'ethically based courses'.[147] He did not pursue this in his memorandum to Fenner but it can reasonably be assumed that this was because Fenner accepted and approved of such a practice -- at least in principle.[148]

Christie's recommendations can best be described as cautious, if not minimalist. Apart from using the Schools' Committees and the Mothers' Clubs he suggested that the Department purchase some of the recommended books for teachers. Copies could also be placed in school libraries so that they would be available for children to read if and when they needed them. He also recommended canvassing the opinions of Inspectors and teachers on the matter. In particular, feedback from Inspectors on the recommended approach would be useful in that they 'could report on the advisability of this Department doing more'.[149] This would make it possible to assess whether parents had actually been reached in the process. Since this was the rationale for Christie's recommendations, some effort needed to be made to ensure that

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147 See pp. 232-3 *supra*.

148 *Cf.* Fenner's comments in the *News*, 31 January 1945. While schools might not have actually done this to the extent intimated by Fenner, his comments indicate an endorsement of just that approach advocated by Christie in 1943.

149 Principal Medical Officer to Director of Education, 26 April 1944. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

this happened.

The Director submitted the reports of Christie, Casley Smith, and Smith together with his recommendation to the Minister. He opted for the strategy of reaching the children through providing their parents with appropriate pamphlets on the subject. He recommended that the emphasis of these pamphlets should be on the fact that 'sex is only one of the instincts of man [*sic*]'.[150] It was basically no different from the instincts of hunger or thirst and should be discussed in the same manner. The issue, as has already been suggested, was one of character forming such that the 'natural' desires could be regulated appropriately. Thus by mid-1944 the general policy position was focused on parents and helping them discharge their (presumed) responsibility for the sexual 'enlightenment' of their children.

It is difficult to judge what actually followed in practice. As far as can be determined, it did not result in the Education Department producing a 'suitable pamphlet'. The attempt, in 1945, of the Social Hygiene Association to get the Minister of Education to support its proposed booklet, as has already been noted, did not meet with success. Leaving that matter to one side, the position of the SHA did not differ in any substantial way from that adopted by the Education Department. In essence, the SHA was of the view that sex education 'should begin in the home, through the parents, but that the paretns [*sic*] first of all need a guide which we intend to provide through the

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150 Director of Education to Minister of Education, 27 April 1944. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

booklet'.[151] Perhaps this view was not surprising given that Fenner was one of its four Vice Presidents, Casley Smith was a member of its Executive Committee, and Fry was then its Chairman.

The SHA intended to have its booklet ready for distribution by 18 April 1945. It is difficult to know whether this deadline was met but the booklet was certainly produced.[152] A favourable review of it was featured in the teachers' union journal in which it was noted that the booklet 'fulfils a long-felt need in the community'.[153] Just how widely it was circulated is impossible to ascertain. Given the views expressed on behalf of the Minister for Education in correspondence with the SHA noted above, it is likely that the impetus for its circulation under the auspices of the Education Department began to wane. The fact that the foreword to the booklet was written by the Minister for Health (A.L. McEwin who was also Chief Secretary) rather than the Minister for Education might well have affected the enthusiasm with which the Education Minister greeted its publication. Even though the Director of Education was a member of the SHA it was still probable that the

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151 Social Hygiene Association to Minister of Education, 16 March 1945. *GRG* 18/2/1944/No. 917.

152 The booklet appeared as *Your Child Should Know*, (Adelaide: Social Hygiene Association of Australia, 1945). A copy is held in the Mortlock Library of South Australia.

153 'Review of *Your Child Should Know*', *South Australian Teachers' Journal*, Vol. XXX1, No. 6, 12 July 1945. p. 17. With the formation of the South Australian Institute of Teachers in 1951 the journal became known as the *SAIT Journal*. It was also renumbered from June 1951 beginning as Volume 1, Number 1. The volume numbers were subsequently dropped after April 1959 and then resumed again in 1962. It reverted to fortnightly publication in 1969 beginning a new series starting at Volume 1, Number 1.

blessing of the Minister was needed to have it circulated through the school system. Moreover, if the booklet had managed to achieve the sort of circulation that its proponents envisaged, then it it would hardly have been necessary for the body representing parent interests, the SAPSCA, to take up the issue in 1949. It is to that development and what followed that we now turn.

VII

At the 1948 annual conference of the Australian Council of School Organisations (ACSO) a decision was taken requiring each state affiliate to investigate and report on the question of sex education in their respective states. As a result of the ACSO resolution SAPSCA set up the Special Committee on Sex Education in Schools (SCSES) which produced a report on sex education in South Australian schools.[154] The SCSES was not strictly a creature of SAPSCA but rather was convened by it. Only two of its members, A.R.G. Bleckly (who chaired the committee) and Mrs T.T. Colquhoun, were listed as members of SAPSCA. Others on the committee were there by virtue of their membership of other organisations: Dr R.T. Binns (British Medical Association (BMA) - SA Branch), Miss D. Curtis (Principal, Women Police), Mr T.S. Raggatt (President, SA Teachers' Union), Miss M.L. Wauchope

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154 *Report of Special Committee on Sex Education in Schools*, Convened by the SA Public Schools Committees' Association in conjunction with the Australian Council of School Organisations, Adelaide, 12 April 1949. See *GRG* 18/2/1950/No. 3662.

(Adelaide Teachers' College), Father J.W. Gleeson (Roman Catholic Church), Rev. W.R. Ray (Church of England), Rev. E.H. Woollacott (SA Council of Churches).[155] While several of these individuals might also have been parents, the committee cannot be regarded as wholly typical of the wider cross-section of parents. It was a group of eminently respectable (largely) upper middle class individuals.

The SCSES reported that 'the majority of parents have averted satisfying a child's natural curiosity in sex matters' because they lacked the necessary training 'to deal naturally and efficiently with the situation when it arose'.[156] Underlying its approach was the view that children needed to be educated 'in sex hygiene from infancy, throughout the whole school-going period, and during adult life'.[157] Consequently, there was a need for schools to help parents to help themselves. However, this view did not entail that sex education should form part of the school curriculum. On the contrary, the SCSES stated specifically (Recommendation 3)[158] that sex education should not be 'a set subject in the curriculum in primary and secondary schools'.[159] Rather, the appropriate approach was a combination of lectures (for parents) by appropriate persons 'imbued with religious ideals and a healthy interest in

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155 *ibid.*, p. 1.

156 *ibid.*, p. 2.

157 *ibid.*

158 *ibid.*, p. 4.

159 *ibid.*, p. 3.

the subject' with occasional input from teachers themselves on an individual basis as the need arose. To enable teachers to provide informed and appropriate assistance it would be necessary that 'the most desirable approach to the subject from the parent-child-teacher angle be included in training courses for all teachers' (Rec. 2).[160]

The SCSES thus concluded

> that each State education authority [should] seek[.] the co-operation of the appropriate branch of the British Medical Association in arranging for a panel of doctors and other qualified speakers willing to address such groups as request their services. Also, that as the need arises, and provided that the explicit consent of the parents has been first obtained, morally responsible teachers may render assistance by giving individual instruction and counsel to school-going children. The Committee is of the opinion that specially selected books on the subject for parent use should be available at all schools.[161]

The key strategy was to provide, as a matter of policy, 'adult and parental guidance in sex education' (Rec. 1) through enlisting the support of the BMA (Rec. 4) and the provision in schools of 'specially selected books' for use by parents (Rec. 5).[162] The whole process would be informed by a commitment to the 'continuance and extension of the work of the Christian churches in this vital matter'.[163] The underlying rationale for the SCSES was 'to give young people a proper view of the subject and inculcate in them correct principles to

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160 *ibid.*, p. 4.

161 *ibid.*, p. 3.

162 *ibid.*, p. 4.

163 *ibid.*, p. 2.

aid them in living pure and wholesome lives'.[164] The SAPSCA view combined some by now familiar elements -- the deference to the authority of medical knowledge, a reiteration of Christian moral values, acknowledgement of parental prerogatives in imparting knowledge about sex, and the use of schools to facilitate rather than substitute for these parental prerogatives. This was the position advocated by SAPSCA to its national organisation, ACSO, in 1949. It was not too far out of step with that which the Education Department had arrived at in 1945.

When a deputation from SAPSCA (which included Mr Bleckly and Mrs Colquhoun) subsequently met with the Minister for Education (Mr Rudall) on this matter it received a sympathetic hearing.[165] The Minister 'thoroughly agree[d]' with the view put to him that 'the proper way to teach this is more or less through the parents'.[166] For him this was the nub of the problem since he too took the view that 'parents do not know how to go about it, that is how we get all this ignorance with regard to it'.[167] The strategy outlined by SAPSCA was one with which he largely agreed. He did not

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164 *ibid.*, p. 4. This statement of principle formed the substance of Rec. 6.

165 No date for this meeting is given in the *Transcript of the Deputation From S.A. Public Schools Committees' Association* (cited hereafter as *Deputation*). However, it must have been some time in September or October of 1950 because the Minister told the deputation that he would write to his counterpart in Western Australia for information about how sex education was treated there (*Deputation*, p. 4). The letter from Rudall to the Minister in Western Australia was dated 26 October 1950. Both documents in *GRG* 18/2/1950/No. 3662.

166 *Deputation*, p. 1.

167 *ibid.*, p. 4.

indicate to SAPSCA that he would take any action over every recommendation as such. However, he did take action over Rec. 4 which dealt with authorising the Department to cooperate with the BMA enabling appropriate speakers to address parent groups in schools. Thus in 1951 he informed the Director of Education that he had met with Mr Bleckly and told him

> that the Department would have no objection if the Association arranged for a panel of speakers from the BMA or a member of such panel to address the Mothers' Clubs in our schools during the meetings of such clubs.[168]

With the exception of the recommendation dealing with teacher training, the Minister's note amounted to an endorsement of the rest of the recommendations put by SAPSCA.

VIII

By 1951 there had emerged something that approached an articulated Departmental approach to sex education. This could be regarded as an innovation insofar as no such policy had hitherto existed. However, the perspective arrived at in 1951 by the Education Department was not all that different from the findings nearly of the Ryan Committee nearly forty years earlier. In 1913 it had been concluded that instructing children about sexual matters was primarily the responsiblity of their parents. So too in the 1940s a

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168 Minister for Education, handwritten annotation dated 14 February 1951 (for the Director of Education) to the file 'Sex Education in Schools' in *GRG* 18/2/1950/No. 3662.

similar role for parents was advocated. As Fenner made clear, '[t]he proper agencies for such discussions ... were first, the home, secondly, the school, and lastly, the gutter'.[169] The role of the Education Department was deemed to be one of teaching or assisting the parents to discharge their responsibilities. There was thus some continuity linking the ideas of 1951 with those expressed in 1913.

However, there were also significant differences. In 1913, the view of the respective responsibilities of parents and the Education Department had been formulated by the Ryan Committee in terms of an emerging medico-moral discourse. Yet while this discourse certainly helped frame the thinking of the Ryan Committee, it did not have much impact on the actual practices of the Education Department. That is, the Education Department had not determined or expressed a definite view of the matter and, as was shown in Chapter 4, specific action seemed to depend on the personal interest of the Director-General.[170] By contrast, in 1951, there was an emerging policy perspective within the Education Department about how it should deal with this 'delicate matter', a consensus largely built around a medico-moral discourse. Those engaged in the debate within education circles in the 1940s,

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169 'Sex Instruction Over Radio Stations', *The Advertiser*, 1 November 1945. As was noted earlier, several witnesses at the Bean Committee (Southwood p. 226, Christie p. 232, Davey p. 237 *supra*) acknowledged the 'gutter' or 'smutty yarns' as a source of sexual knowledge that needed to be countered by more responsible sources, namely parents with the assistance of the schools.

170 See the discussion on the White Cross League in Ch. 4 Section V, *supra*.

despite some differences over particulars, accepted that schools should be more active in helping parents teach their children about sexual matters. But, as has already been noted, parents remained prime the focus.

However, the nature of the medico-moral discourse of the late forties saw the consolidation of the growing hegemony of psychology based discourses within the wider discourses of education. As Davey so succinctly put it, the child's 'training has an emotional basis as well as an intellectual basis'.[171] This meant that developing the intellect alone would not be sufficient for inculcating the desired goals of 'self-control' or 'self-discipline'. It was to the education of the emotions that psychology looked. And in 1945 it was the influence of the psychologists both within the Education Department (eg Dr Constance Davey, Mary Smith) and without (eg Dr Fry), together with that of the other medically oriented persons (Dr Southwood, Dr Christie, Marjorie Casley Smith), that contributed most to the discussion of sex education in the mid-1940s. In 1913 the emerging medico-moral discourse had the emphasis on the medical in framing the understanding of sex instruction. In the 1940s the emphasis had shifted to the moral dimension via the influence of psychology to generate what might be described as a psycho-moral discourse. Rather than imposing morality on the student externally from a medical perspective, morality was to be inculcated from within.

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171 Dr. C. Davey, *Education Inquiry Committee: Evidence Books, Book 4*, *GRG* 18/172/4, p. 933.

This discursive shift is also illustrated by the changes in terminology from 'sex hygiene' to 'sex education'. 'Sex hygiene' had a distinct medical orientation in that instruction on sex from that perspective highlighted the restoration of health or at least the prevention of disease. 'Sex education', however, placed the emphasis on developing the child's character so that the child grew up to be self-policing. That is, as Davey put it, the child has to be educated 'to say *no* to himself'.[172] Both she and Fenner talked of 'sex education' rather than 'sex hygiene'. Their use of the former term rather than the latter symbolised the distinctive discursive shift in the debates over school-based sex instruction for the young.

Furthermore, this signalled a shift in the way in which schooling, sex and subjectivity were being articulated. Not only were schools 'the crucible of character training' -- this had long been an accepted function for schooling -- but 'one important element in the crucible ...[was]... sex education'.[173] Sexuality was now being deployed, to put it in Foucauldian terms, as a key means for the formation of character. This is not to deny the importance of morals or moral values within the debates discussed above. For many participants morality was significant if not central to their understanding of the issues. The point, rather, is the linking of 'sex' and 'character' in a way which saw sex education as a means of shaping character -- gendered character at that. It was the sexing of the subject.

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172 *ibid.*

173 Fenner (1945), p. 60.

On the one hand, 'sex' was understood to be an 'instinctual urge', a 'primitive desire'; a fact of nature that could not be eliminated but rather a force that had to be subjected to a specific knowledge-power regime. Thus were individual characters to be shaped. On the other hand, it served as an important social marker to distinguish between women and men, both as to their natures and their respective roles or places within society. As has been demonstrated in the preceding sections, the various educators discussed instruction about sex in terms of what they saw as the proper relations between women and men and the proper place that sex should occupy. A sense that the pre-war gender order was fraying, as exemplified by concerns about sexual promiscuity, venereal disease, and women's apparent turning away from reproduction, infused their views on sex education. Instructing children about sex was seen as one way in which children could be innoculated against the temptations to which they were increasingly exposed. The goal was not the 'enlightenment' of children but the protection and enhancement of the population. The various perspectives on sex education resonated, with varying degrees of intensity, with these concerns.

As Fenner made quite explicit, in 'the crucible of character training' that was the school, sex education was 'one important element'.[174] Yet if schools were to be more active in this area the problem remained as to just how this could be achieved. The thorny questions of who should teach it?, what should be taught?, and how should it be taught? were as pointed in the

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[174] Fenner (1945), p. 60.

1940s and they were in previous decades. The seemingly intractable questions of how sex education could be fitted safely within the curriculum tempered the influence of psychology based discourses. Educators dealt with these questions by focusing on the prior claim of parental instruction. Yet as has been demonstrated here and in the preceding chapter, this prior claim was largely of the Education Department's own making. While the Director-General might have regarded sex education as an 'important element in the crucible' of character formation, he too placed the burden of it, in the first instance, on the shoulders of parents. With the post-war reconstruction of the late 1940s, South Australian society appeared to be recovering something like its pre-war normality. With men returning to civil society and the jobs they had left behind and women to the home and domestic life, the question of sex education no longer seemed to carry much urgency. The hiatus was to be short-lived.

Chapter 6

'Get in First with the Healthy Truth': Changing Conceptions within the Educational State

I

For most of the 1950s until the beginning of the 1960s there was little concern on the part of the Education Department over sex education as an issue. The position reached in 1951 remained unaltered. However, by the end of the 1960s a new wave of pressure had grown to force the issue back into contention within education circles. By 1973, the outcome was that sex education found a place within the school curriculum. Neither a specialty unit nor add-on extra to be taught by 'outside specialists', sex education became a part of the normal (that is official) curriculum for which class room teachers eventually were to be responsible.

This chapter looks at the various dynamics that helped to bring this about. It charts the cross-currents of the discussions and agitations over sex education. Whatever the particular aims or motivations of the individuals and organisations, they were all agreed, tacitly if not overtly, that the issue of sexual knowledge was not one that could be left either to chance, to parents, or to the young themselves. Much of the discussion to follow centres on the years 1965 to 1968 when proposals from the South Australian Primary Schools Committees' Association (SAPSCA) served to focus attention on the issue. The aim in this chapter is to chart the gradual build up of pressure to the point when the Education Department formally changed its policy direction. The actual change of direction is dealt with in the next chapter.

Before this policy change occurred, however, the Education Department deployed, often reluctantly, various strategems which are noted below. These were to provide something deemed to be 'sex education' but which was not part of the curriculum as such. In the main, the Education Department continued the approach developed in the 1940s in which the schools assisted parents to teach their children about sex. However, the problem of sex education was not the only predicament facing educators. In many ways it was symbolic of wider socio-economic contexts. In order to situate the discussion that emerged in the late 1960s it is necessary briefly to sketch a couple of key points relating to that wider context.

II

As was noted in the previous chapter, there was widespread participation of women in the work-force as part of the 1939-45 war effort. For many, particularly politicians and trades unionists, this was just a temporary measure. It was expected, and indeed stated explicitly, that at the end of the war these women would return to domesticity.[1] As Prime Minister Curtin explained the situation in 1943, he believed that 'most women will ultimately be absorbed in the home'; and he agreed 'that the natural urge for motherhood, husband and home is the great motivatng [*sic*] force in a woman's life'.[2] Once again, the idea of 'nature', of what is presumed to be 'natural', is drawn into discursive

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1 Carol Johnson, 'Whose Consensus? Women and the ALP', *Arena*, No. 93, 1990, pp. 85-104.

2 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 87.

service to justify or ground a particular conception of the 'social'. Within the vision of post-war reconstruction the social welfare and economic objectives were cast largely in terms of men as breadwinners, women as homemakers.[3] There was no doubt, at least on the part of policy makers that a reassertion was needed of the pre-war gender order of a public sphere of work for men and private sphere of domesticity for women.[4] These changes were associated with a significant increase in childbirths in the first few years after the war as returning service men and women attempted to re-establish some sort of normality in their lives. Additionally, the post-war immigration program contributed to the rapid population growth as the federal government sought to expand and diversify the nation's workforce.[5]

The rapid expansion in population had serious social implications in

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3 Johnson (1990), pp. 86-90. See also her *The Labor Legacy: Curtin, Chifley, Whitlam, Hawke*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), Chs 2 & 3. For further discussion of key aspects of the political economy of post-war reconstruction and the long boom see Robert Catley & Bruce McFarlane, *Australian Capitalism in Boom and Depressions*, (Chippendale (NSW): Alternative Publishing Coperative Ltd, 1981), Ch. 4; Michael Brezniak & John Collins, 'The Australian Crisis from Boom to Bust', *Journal of Australilan Political Economy*, No. 1, October 1977, pp. 4-34; R. Maddock, 'The Long Boom: 1940-1970' in *The Australian Economy in the Long Run*, ed R. Maddock & I. McLean, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 79-105; A.G.L. Shaw, *The Economic Development of Australia*, 6th ed., (Melbourne: Longman Australia, 1973), Chs 21 & 22.

4 This is not to suggest that for many women the prospect of an end to the double burden of paid and domestic work was unwelcome. Rather, it is to note that, on the part of politicians and post-war planners, there was a conscious reassertion of what they took to be the proper spheres for women and men.

5 In addition to the references in Fn 3 above see also R.A. Foster & S.E. Stewart, *Australian Economic Statistics: 1949/50 to 1989/90*, Reserve Bank of Australia, Occasional Paper No. 8, Sydney, 1991.

terms of the rise in the number of children in the population. Severe pressures developed for the South Australian Education Department as student numbers increased dramatically. From 1945 to 1973 the number of children enrolled in state schools increased by 220%.[6] By 1968 the participation rate for fourteen year olds was almost 100%, for fifteen year olds it was well over 80%, and for sixteen year olds it was 61.6% for boys and 48.6% for girls. This was well above the national average as the Karmel Report made plain.[7] By contrast, in 1933, only 17.7% and 13.4% of sixteen year old boys and girls respectively were at secondary school.[8] During the 1960s, the number of secondary students enrolled in non-government schools 'remained almost constant' such that, in that period, 'government secondary schools have accommodated almost 90 per cent of the total increase in numbers of pupils entering secondary grades'.[9] These demographic pressures had implications beyond the obvious ones of providing enough teachers, classrooms, and other resources. In many respects the demographic dimension helped to redraw the curriculum boundaries with respect to sex education.

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6 Colin Thiele, *Grains of Mustard Seed: A Narrative Outline of State Education in South Australia: 1875-1975*, (Adelaide: Education Department, 1975), p. 216.

7 Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia 1969-1970, (Peter Karmel, Chairman), *Education in South Australia*, (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, February 1971), p. 66 and Table 5.9 on p. 67.

8 Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society,* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), Table A.8, p. 376.

9 Karmel Report, p. 72. See also Table 5.15 p. 73.

The broad political economy context within which this 'demographic crisis' occurred and its impact on education has been aptly described by Miller.

> In the two decades following the Second World War, South Australian society underwent a profound transformation. By the early 1950s, the radicalism of the war years gave way to conservatism of the cold war. A hesitant process of industrialisation was accelerated and consolidated by generous government subsidies to private industry, coupled with niggardly provision of schooling and other social services. Private affluence and public squalor, some called it. The recipe, in a period of world-wide economic boom, kept unemployment remarkably low, provided tangible rewards for educational certificates, put a lawnmower within the reach of every family, and sent ever greater proportions of young Australians to school.
>
> Education Department officials, badly shaken by the avalanche, creamed and streamed the new arrivals as they packed them into overflowing temporary classrooms. Money was scarce, innovative teaching methods in disgrace, and authoritarian teaching at a premium. Besides, everybody knew that most migrants, poor kids and blacks were rather stupid. In each school, and often against overwhelming odds, the best teachers tried to make sure that the flickering light of Real Culture did not get swamped by a sea of mediocrity. But the troops were getting increasingly restless...[10]

In these two decades the reality of near to full employment meant that the possibility of home ownership and the promise of relative affluence were within reach of an increasingly larger section of the population. For many who had experienced either the Great Depression or the 1939-45 war and its

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[10] Miller, (1986), p. 260. Even the account of this period given by Thiele (1975), Ch. 11, cannot gloss the low priority given to education by the governments of the day. For example, he noted (p. 214.) that '[a]lthough Mander-Jones was intensely loyal to his Ministers there must have been times when he felt that the Government was not giving him the support he deserved'.

attendant rationings this was not to be dismissed lightly. Moreover, the various waves of immigrants that arrived in South Australia during this period also looked forward to a better life than what they left behind. For them, an education for their children, no matter how overstressed the system providing it, was seen as a necessary means to build on their new beginnings -- even if the schools, as Miller suggested above, were rarely sympathetic to or even capable of coping with the problems that migrant families faced.

Another important development was the re-election of the Labor government in May 1970. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) had lost office in 1968 after being elected in 1965 for the first time in over three decades. The years after 1965 saw a wide range of reformist initiatives that began to redefine the social landscape and habits of the hitherto sedate South Australians.[11] Even with the re-election in 1968 of a Liberal & Country League (LCL) government led by Steele Hall the momentum for reform slowed but did not stop completely. Indeed, this was reflected in the fact that the incoming liberal government took seriously demands for reforms to abortion laws, the redrafting of the electoral boundaries, and the establishment of the Karmel Committee to enquire into education in South Australia. Once re-elected in 1970, the ALP government led by Don Dunstan, embarked on a

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[11] For some details see Neal Blewett & Dean Jaensch, *Playford to Dunstan: The Politics of Transition*, (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1971), pp. 34-77; See also Don Dunstan, *Felicia: The Political Memoirs of Don Dunstan*, (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981); Dean Jaensch, ed, *The Flinders History of South Australia: Political History*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986); Eric Richards, ed, *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986).

major series of reforms, amongst which the education system received a high priority.[12] The education system was to be modernised to meet the changed needs of South Australian society.

While the influx of migrants, the post-war boom and the dramatically changed political landscape were important parts of the underlying dynamic two other elements need to be noted. First, was the emergence or identification of a rapidly growing youth culture -- a presence beginning in the fifties and expanding exponentially in the 1960s. While this might be seen as largely a factor of the expanding market relations of capitalism its significance lies in the fact that this also lent itself to the development of a sense of identity centred around ideas and practices often at odds with the dominant moral and social values. Changing ideas about fashion and makeup (especially the mini-skirt), popular music (especially the dominance of rock and roll), films, books and so on contributed to the shaping of this sense of identity. So too did the increasing disenchantment with what was seen as the hypocrisy of an older generation in its acquiescence in, if not collaboration with, war, poverty and discrimination. Singularly important here was the growing realisation that the rhetoric of equal opportunity did not necessarily square with what was experienced.[13] The promise of education and a career was always qualified, if not limited, by the realities of class, race, sex, and ethnicity.

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12 Miller (1986), Ch. 15.

13 Indeed, it could be argued that it was just this sort of sentiment that contributed to the reformist zeal of many who supported the election of the Dunstan government in 1970.

The second significant factor to be acknowledged, and perhaps the most important given the matter under discussion, was the introduction into Australia of the oral contraceptive pill in 1961. As Siedlecky and Wyndham pointed out in their discussion of birth control in Australia, the Pill 'seemed to fit the criteria of the perfect contraceptive: simple to use, highly discreet, suitable for most women and promising nearly 100% effectiveness'.[14] This was in many respects a revolutionary development and it certainly contributed to the popular depiction of the 1960s as a time of sexual revolution. Yet, while the development of this particular technology certainly contributed to this it did not necessarily cause it. As Ehrenreich *et al* have argued, the

> causes of the sexual revolution were more sociological than technological: Without a concentration of young single women in the cities, there would have been no sexual revolution.[15]

Such a 'revolution' long pre-dated the development of the Pill.[16]

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[14] Stefania Siedlecky, & Diana Wyndham, *Populate and Perish: Australian Women's Fight for Birth Control*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), p. 43.

[15] Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, Gloria Jacobs, *Re-Making Love: The Feminization of Sex*, (London: Fontana/Collins Books, 1987) p. 41. See also R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics,* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987) p. 160.

[16] Ehrenreich *et al*. (1987), pp. 41-2. See also Shere Hite, *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study of Female Sexuality*, (New York: Macmillan, 1976) esp. pp. 303-48; Alfred Kinsey, *et al*, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1953); Alfred Kinsey, *et al*, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1948); W. Masters & V. Johnson, *Human Sexual Response*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966). While these authors were mainly concerned with developments in the USA their discussion is relevant for South Australia and Australia generally.

The revolutionary aspect of the Pill as a contraceptive technology was not inherent in its technological nature but arose from its implications for sexual conduct. For the first time, the linking of sex and reproduction could be severed such that sexual enjoyment was no longer tied to its reproductive consequences. This was something of a double edged benefit for women since it also provided men with the potential to ignore their reproductive responsibilities. As Stratton has shown in his discussion of working class youth in the fifties, the enjoyment (at least for men) of 'sexual intercourse was balanced by the responsibility of a forced marriage due to pregnancy'.[17] And herein lay the Pill's subversive potential for the prevailing post-war gender order. The seemingly natural links, in the sense of being due to nature, between sex, marriage, and women's role came under renewed challenge.

Granted, such challenges had been made before. However, the oral contraceptive pill presented a distinctively novel set of challenges. In the first place it made possible a shift in thinking concerning what had hitherto been accepted as natural, of what was accepted as due to nature and what was due to social convention. The seeming inevitability of the trajectory from sex to pregnancy to marriage could now be relocated within the social. The possibility of pregnancy, as an outcome of sexual activity, could no longer serve, of itself, to defer sexual activity until after marriage. Or at least it could no longer operate in such a way as to keep that activity confined to a

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[17] Jon Stratton, *Working Class Culture, Consumption and the Category of Youth*, (Perth: Black Swan Press, 1992), p. 180.

framework within which marriage was the prime organising feature. As such, marriage, and by extension the influence of parents, might itself be less effective in underpinning the accepted patterns of the prevailing gender order.

A second, and equally significant, revolutionary consequence of the introduction of the Pill, was the impact on the power relations of the sexes concerning contraceptive behaviour.[18] Up until the early 1960s it was more or less accepted that after marriage contraception became the woman's responsibility. Until marriage men were expected to take responsibility for contraception.[19] The introduction of the Pill meant that this would change, particularly for young single women, in two ways. First, in the context of pre-marital sexual intercourse, the responsibility for contraception shifted to the woman. And secondly, since it had to be taken by the woman on a daily basis this necessarily occurred almost always outside the context of sexual intercourse. Hence taking the pill involved an element of conscious thought and a degree of premeditation.

These changes did not happen all of a sudden. They took some time to gain momentum. However, by the early 1970s the Pill was the most widely used form of contraception.[20] Its social effects, for good or ill, left women

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18 *ibid.*, p. 177.

19 *ibid.*, p. 177.

20 Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia*, (Ringwood: Pelican Books, 1976), p. 224.

with a mixed blessing.[21] On the one hand, it opened up new possiblities for sexual activity in that sex without pregnancy was possible and, on the other hand, placed a different range of constraints and expectations on women. As such, its impact on the sexual and social relations between women and men has been quite profound. And this impact spilled over to affect the shape of the prevailing gender order.

III

It was against this background of quite significant social change that debates and arguments about sex education unfolded during the 1960s and early 1970s. Taking a leading role for most of the decade was the South Australian Public Schools Committees' Association. At its Annual Conference in September 1963,[22] a motion was carried which read:

> That the Education Department be asked that sex

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[21] On the less desirable side effects of using the pill see Ehrenreich *et al* (1987), p. 42, p. 195-6; Summers (1976), p. 225-6; Germaine Greer, *Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility*, (London: Picador Books, 1985), pp. 140-9.

[22] In two other documents, namely *Report Published by the South Australian Public Schools Committees' Association Incorporated* (September 1967) and 'Sex Education', *School Post* (May 1968), the date for this decision is given as September 1962. The 1968 article was a reprint of the 1967 Report. The date given in the latter would seem to be an error, repeated in the 1968 article. Unlike the situation in 1963, there was no mention of this issue in the newspaper reports of the SAPSCA Annual Conference for 1962. In addition, as will be discussed shortly, in the two months prior to the 1963 SAPSCA Annual Conference, there was a debate in the parliament over sex education triggered by fears about the apparent rise in the number of unwed mothers. This would have provided an appropriate climate within which a motion addressing sex.

> education be given in Primary and Secondary Schools; That sex education be taught in appropriate stages to the various age groups involved; That such education be given by qualified persons.[23]

The SAPSCA Executive agreed to set up a sub-committee to prepare a report on sex education in state schools 'to be used for an appropriate submission to the S.A. Education Department'.[24] This represented a shift from its previous position in which sex education was to be undertaken through the instruction of parents rather than as a subject to be taught in schools.[25] What precipitated that shift appears to have been a moral panic over the perceived increase in the numbers of unmarried mothers.

In July, a Labor member of the House of Assembly, Mr Tapping, tabled a story which appeared in his local suburban newspaper, the *Messenger*.[26] According to that story, there was growing alarm amongst 'Church leaders and social workers' and Tapping's own constituents in Semaphore (who had 'inundated' him with letters) over the increase in the numbers of unmarried girls and women (reported to be 1,017) giving birth to babies out of wedlock. Tapping quoted excerpts from the paper including the

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23 Quoted in letter from F. Kammer, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Sex Education in Public Schools and Vice President of SAPSCA, to all Members of the SAPSCA Executive, June 1965. See *SAED*: 14/16/1.

24 *ibid.*

25 The Australian Council of School Organisations (ACSO) reportedly reaffirmed its view on this matter at its Annual Conference in 1956. Reported in *SAIT Journal*, Vol. 6 No. 4, May 1956.

26 *SAPD*, 23 July 1963, p. 100.

view that '[s]ome parents are asking whose daughter will be next'.[27] He acknowledged that many parents often failed 'to impart the desired knowledge to their daughters' but he also felt that the schools could exert a greater influence. Thus he asked the Minister for Education 'whether the department will co-operate by including appropriate lectures in the curricula for girls?'[28] It is worth noting here Tapping's emphasis on the responsibility of girls and women for both the upholding and practising of the appropriate moral values and conduct. His call for sex education was clearly directed at addressing the perceived problem of unwed mothers. While Tapping's views might have implied some need for girls to have knowledge of how to prevent pregnancies, it is much more likely that his aim was to ensure that they understood, at the physiological as well as the moral level, the causal relationship between sexual activity and pregnancy. With that knowledge girls would then know why they should defer sexual acitivity until marriage.

The Minister for Education, Sir Baden Pattinson, agreed to act on Tapping's request but pointed out that he thought that such stories were often exaggerated in their assertions about young people. Pattinson also told the House that he did 'not think the panacea for the cures of all the ills and evils of the world can be included in our school curriculum'.[29] The day before an answer was tabled by the Minister, *The Advertiser* reported that the Woodville

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27 *ibid.*

28 *ibid.*

29 *ibid.*

Primary School Welfare Club was in favour of sex education being taught in schools. The Welfare Club suggested that the actual teaching could be undertaken by suitably qualified people from appropriate outside organisations.[30] Woodville was in the same geographical area as Tapper's electorate and it is likely that some of the parents of children at Woodville Primary School were also his constituents. The members of the Welfare Club would have been familiar with the details of the story in the *Messenger* since it was the delegate representing the Woodville Primary School Welfare Club who put a motion about sex education to SAPSCA the following September.

The Minister for Education told the parliament that he had received a report from the Director of Education which noted that the 'inclusion of sex instruction in the school curriculum' was a possible solution to the problem of teenage pregnancies and was worthy of serious consideration.[31] However, the Director of Education felt that as sex educaton was also 'plainly connected with public health' he recommended that he 'should be authorized' to consult with 'the Director-General of Public Health and the medical officers'.[32] The Minister indicated his approval of this course of action.[33] He also informed

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30 'Sex Education In Schools Urged', *The Advertiser*, 19 August 1963.

31 Director of Education cited in *SAPD*, 20 August 1963, p. 545.

32 Director of Education cited in *ibid.*, p. 546.

33 In his report the Director also wrote that he agreed that 'the tendency of many well-meaning people to think that the inclusion of a subject in the school course is a panacea for all ills is unjustified and to be deplored' (cited in *ibid.*, p. 545). This was a view clearly in tune with, indeed a direct repetition of, the Minister's own and one which the Minister quoted back to the parliament.

parliament of a report from the Director-General of Health in which it was noted that 'sex and other matters related to health' were important for the development of one's personality and affected 'the quality of subsequent life'.[34] However, while health education was important and would necessarily include some mention of sex the Director-General of health advised that 'it would be unwise to include in curricula, as a new or separate item, instruction related to sex'.[35] On the basis of those two reports the Minister told parliament that he would ask both Directors 'to collaborate and see whether some suitable form of instruction can be devised'.[36] However, the Minister was quick to point out that this did not amount to a promise to introduce sex education since before anything was finalised he would have to 'consult my colleagues in Cabinet'.[37] The Minister's statements were reported in the local press but did not prompt any significant public comment.[38] This was the context for the resolution that

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34 Director-General of Public Health cited by the Minister for Education in *SAPD*, 20 August 1963, p. 546.

35 Director-General of Health cited by the Minister for Education in *ibid.*

36 Minister for Education in *ibid.*

37 *ibid.*

38 The only response came from one of the Minister's parliamentary colleagues, Mr F.J. Potter, in the Upper House. Potter indicated that there was a need for the emphasis to 'be placed more on a programme for family life education', rather than wholly on sex education. To that end he wanted the Minister to ensure that the Directors of Education and Health respectively would be instructed to 'confer also with the marriage guidance authorities on this matter' (*ibid*, 21 August 1963, p. 585). This request was not surprising given that Potter was prominent in the activities of the Marriage Guidance Council of South Australia. An indication of the depth of his involvement was that in June 1970 he was the Chairman of Executive and Public Officer for the South Australian branch of the Marriage Guidance Council. The previous

was carried at SAPSCA's annual conference in September 1963 and the setting up of a sub-committee to follow it up.

IV

The Report of the SAPSCA Sub-Committee on Sex Education in Public Schools was completed in 1965. It was then circulated to members of the SAPSCA Executive for comment prior to the next Executive Meeting of 18 June at which time 'SAPSCA's further course of action [would] be discussed'.[39] Members were also requested to regard the matter as being 'at this stage STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL'.[40] At that meeting in June the SAPSCA Executive 'approved and adopted' the 'recommendations contained in the Report'.[41] Subsequently, three copies of the Report were sent to the Minister of Education together with a request for a meeting with the Minister and the appropriate senior officers. However, the overtures from SAPSCA

December, in 1969, Potter was elected to the position of President of the National Marriage Guidance Council of Australia (*Annual Report of the Marriage Guidance Council of South Australia Incorporated*, 30 June 1970, Held in *SAED*: 14/16/5). While there is no indication given in the parliamentary record of the Minister's view here Potter's request did have some impact. During the late 1960s the Marriage Guidance Council provided some assistance with sex education to a number of Education Department girls' schools (details in *SAED* 14/16/5).

39 Memo from F. Kammer, Chairman of the Sub-Committee to Members of SAPSCA Executive, June 1965. See *SAED*: 14/16/1.

40 *ibid.* (emphasis in original).

41 Mr R.E. King, President SAPSCA, to Minister of Education, 30 June 1965. King also informed the Minister that because this was 'a highly controversial matter' SAPSCA intended 'for the time being to keep the Report confidential'.

received little action or response. Indeed, after having had the report for ten months the Minister of Education, Mr Loveday, was reported as stating that 'he did not know when the report would be considered fully'.[42] It was not until 2 February 1967, some twenty months after the report had been first submitted, that a SAPSCA delegation actually met with the Minister. A follow-up letter from the SAPSCA Secretary, written a month later, reminded the Deputy Director-General of Education that '[t]o date we have received no opinion' from the Education Department and that 'we are still awaiting a firm reply on this matter'.[43] In the ensuing twelve months the SAPSCA was to step up its campaign. However, before looking at those developments it is necessary to pause to review the contents of the 1965 Report.

The Report contained a total of eighteen proposals. These were based on views obtained through interviews and correspondence with 'prominent and responsible citizens', some of whom were described by the Sub-Committee's Chairman, Mr Kammer, as 'experts in their field of activity'.[44] The responses were largely concerned with the familiar questions over the definition and teaching of sex education (ie what was to be taught, who should teach it, and when and how should it be taught). Kammer advised his fellow

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42 'Sex Report With Govt.', *The Advertiser*, 6 April 1966.

43 Secretary of SAPSCA, Mr C.W. Reed, to Deputy Director-General of Education, 8 March 1967. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

44 Mr F. Kammer, memo to SAPSCA Executive, June 1965. See also SAPSCA Secretary, C.W. Reed to Deputy Director-General of Education, 8 March 1967, where Reed noted that the 'report was prepared with the aid of expert advice'.

executive members that the Sub-Committee did not necessarily endorse or agree with every opinion put their way. However, the circulated summary included the range of opinions expressed 'so as to make it as far as is possible a true and unbiased record of the whole investigation'.[45]

With one or two exceptions there was broad agreement that the scope of a sex education course should address both the physiological and psychological aspects of sex. The general view was that

> Sex Education should be part of the child's education for living, inducing in the child an understanding of his [*sic*] nature, and to prepare it for a healthy relationship with opposite sex during courtship and marriage'.[46]

Here it is worth noting the use of a gender-specific pronoun to stand in for 'the child'. While the author(s) of this document may well have intended it as a gender-inclusive pronominal form it actually reveals an already assumed social ordering of gender. This point will be taken up again when the specific proposals put forward by SAPSCA are discussed. Returning to the comments on what should be taught, one contributor stated that 'any discussion <u>in class</u> on contraceptives would be completely inacceptable [*sic*]'[47] as such knowledge should be for adults planning their families and 'not for promiscuous adventurers'. Two other respondents felt that the course should be confined 'strictly to biological aspects' with the moral questions left 'to parents and

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45 *ibid.*

46 'Sex Education in Public Schools: Summary of Opinions Collected in Interviews and Correspondence', p. 1. in Report of the SAPSCA Sub-Committee on Sex Education (1965). *SAED*: 14/16/1.

47 *ibid.* (original emphasis).

churches'.[48]

All concerned were unanimous that parents should be able to 'discuss all problems of sex freely with their children'. However, most thought that parents were not necessarily best able or qualified to do so. One contributor disagreed and informed the Sub-Committee that 'a parent became qualified by simply being a parent'.[49] The SA State Association of School Welfare Clubs (SASASWC) thought that sex education was 'the sole prerogative of parents'. Even though the SASASWC acknowledged that some, perhaps many, parents did not actually take up this 'prerogative' and left 'their children to fend for themselves' it nevertheless opposed the introduction of sex education into schools.[50] The rest of the contributors ranged from those regarding sex education as a task that was 'quite beyond the capabilities of most parents' to those who saw parents as 'the best educators in this field' until the child was 'aged about 11 or 12 years' but after that needed more specialist guidance.[51] In consequence, most favoured some form of sex education being taught in schools.

Even so, there was some divergence as to where within the school

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48 *ibid.*

49 *ibid.*

50 *ibid.* This was similar to the view that SASASWC had developed some two years earlier. In 1968 SASASWC advised the Minister of Education that in 1963 its 'policy... [was] ...based on the written statements submitted by the majority of the 400 affiliated Clubs within our Association'. Secretary of SASASWC to Minister of Education, 15 October 1968. See *SAED*: 14/16/2.

51 *ibid.* (emphasis in original).

curriculum this could be undertaken. Some aspects relating to the physiology of sex could be taught within existing biology type courses. But those areas dealing with the psychology of sex might need a new

> course in human psycho-biology ...[which]... should provide some understanding of the mental development of the human infant and child, the relationship between parents and children, and the developmental psychology during the period of adolescence.[52]

Others, however, were of the view that all aspects of sex education, namely 'the anatomical, physiological, moral, social, religious and legal aspects of sex at the appropriate age levels', could be undertaken within a 'complete health education course'. This would be taught by the class teacher with 'additional help as required'. Such a course 'should start in primary and continue through secondary schooling'. Another suggestion was to make sex education a part of 'a course on Home Economics'. Supporters of this approach acknowledged that there was a problem here in that within such a context it was likely that only about 'one or two lectures could be devoted to actual Sex Education'.[53]

There were also reservations expressed by some who were, 'in principle', in favour of sex education in schools. Class-room discussion with large groups would not be 'suitable for talks and discussions dealing with sex'. This might lead to disruptive behaviour by 'smart Alec' types bent on

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[52] *ibid.*, p. 2.

[53] *ibid.* While this proposal did not gain endorsement it is worth noting that there was no recorded acknowledgement that a more serious deficiency might have been that such a course would only have reached the girl students.

'discomfort[ing] the lecturer'.[54] Others pointed to the problem that within any classroom there often would be wide variation in children's 'emotional and social maturity'.[55] Hence some children might not be ready to comprehend the full meaning of what was being discussed. They might even be disturbed or harmed by it.[56] In addition, 'treating sex objectively as a subject in the curriculum' might well result in it being 'robbed of all wonder and mystery'.[57] While a few thought that greater knowledge and frankness about sexual matters might 'weaken children's inhibitions against experimentation... ...most contributors thought that this was not the case [if] the discussions were normal, natural and complete'.[58] The general consensus was that '[i]gnorance is always more harmful than knowledge'.[59] There was also support for the view that if the sex education course was good enough it might help to reduce the number of 'forced marriages' which were 'often the consequence of ignorance', as was probably also the case for the 'high divorce rate amongst teenage marriages'.[60] It was acknowledged that '[i]gnorance in both girls and boys is widespread' and even though 'girls mature earlier than boys' it was not

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54 *ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

55 *ibid.*, p. 2.

56 *ibid.*, p. 4.

57 *ibid.*, p. 3.

58 *ibid.*, p. 4 (emphasis in original).

59 *ibid.*

60 *ibid.*, p. 5.

possible to generalise as to whether girls were 'usually better instructed than boys'.[61]

Most of the contributors to the Sub-Committee's enquiries were of the view that some sort of course on sex education 'should be part of the normal curriculum, and therefore compulsory in the same way that other subjects in the curriculum are compulsory'.[62] There appeared to be very little support for treating such a course as an optional subject. Significantly, however, there was wide agreement that the word 'sex' should not be 'in the title of any course' because it was felt that 'people who are prone to object to such a course are often more influenced by words than by content'.[63] Rather, 'the "sex" part of the syllabus [should] be presented as "wrapped up"' within a wider course of instruction.[64] It was to be expected that in the first instance a 'lot of controversy and opposition' might be expressed. However, parent support and co-operation for the introduction of sex education could be achieved through appropriate publicity and other measures to 'educate them on its aims and merits'.[65]

Overall, then, the SAPSCA Sub-Committee concluded that there was a fairly wide base of support for the schools to expand the curriculum to include

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61 *ibid.*

62 *ibid.*, p. 3.

63 *ibid.*

64 *ibid.*

65 *ibid.*

sex education. Many of the views noted above were reflected in the proposals endorsed by the SAPSCA. The Sub-Committee began by pointing out that it 'should be the privilege and the duty of parents' to be responsible for teaching their children about sexual behaviour but that it 'has to be recognised that a great number of parents are either unwilling or incapable of fulfilling this duty adequately'.[66] SAPSCA recommended the introduction of a course, 'compulsory like the rest of the curriculum', entitled Human Relations within which 'Sex Education in all its aspects [would] form an essential part'.[67] Such a course would provide 'an important adjunct to sex instructions given by parents' as well as providing a 'complete substitute where parental instructions are lacking'.[68] SAPSCA was adamant in its recommendation that a stand-alone course on sex education should be avoided. It recommended that '[a]t no stage should the course be high-lighted as one on "Sex Education" alone'.[69] The aim of the syllabus, covering the full range of biological, psychological and social aspects of sex, 'should be designed' to provide the child with 'an understanding of its nature, and to prepare it for a healthy relationship with the opposite sex during courtship and marriage'.[70] It was not to be confined just to the biology of sex.

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66 'Proposals' of the SAPSCA Sub-Committee on Sex Education in Schools, p. 1.

67 *ibid.* (emphasis in original).

68 *ibid.*

69 *ibid.* (emphasis in original).

70 *ibid.*

To this end the SAPSCA Sub-Committee recommended that the Education Department set up a panel of specialists to produce an appropriate syllabus.[71] This panel could also prepare educational material for organisations having an interest in assisting parents with sex education, such as the Marriage Guidance Council, the Father and Son Movement, the Mother and Daughter Movement, and SAPSCA. It was also recommended that a course on 'Human Relations' 'should be a compulsory subject at teachers' colleges' so that every teacher, though not necessarily destined to teach it, would nevertheless be trained so as to 'be able to understand the psychology of the child at every level of its development, and also be aware of the emotional relationship between teacher and child'.[72] This would ensure that eventually every teacher would be adequately trained in the area. To address the immediately foreseeable problem of providing enough specialist teachers when the course was introduced, the SAPSCA Sub-Committee recommended that 'a start should be made with the lower grades of Primary school' with expansion taking place as the students moved through the schooling system.[73] It was also recommended that 'all School Inspectors, Headmasters, Head

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71 *ibid.*, p. 2. The Sub-Committee recommended that the panel should have the following membership: Mrs A. Chopra (Education Department), Dr W. Fuller (Principal Medical Officer for Schools), Mr C.E.M. Harris (Hon. Sec. Marriage Guidance Council), Mrs Dr B.J. McIntosh (Child Guidance Centre), Dr K LePage (Child Guidance Clinic) and one representative of SAPSCA. One presumes that the inclusion of the appellation 'Mrs' for Dr McIntosh was to signal both her sex and her marital status thereby underscoring the respectability and gender balance of the proposed panel.

72 *ibid.*

73 *ibid.*

Teachers, and Assistant Head Teachers' should be instructed 'in both the subject matter and the method of teaching'.[74]

The SAPSCA Sub-Committee Report was quite comprehensive in that it addressed all the areas that had hitherto proven to be obstacles to the introduction of sex education. By arguing for a course that was a part of the curriculum in just the same way as Mathematics or English, the SAPSCA Sub-Committee minimised if not avoided the problems posed by questions over class-room teaching versus individual counselling or specialist guest speakers at one off school appearances or at after hours meetings at the school. The content, though remaining controversial, could nevertheless be cocooned within a wider pedagogic context 'designed to make it the child's "education for living"'.[75] This context of educating children 'for living' was bounded within the context of marriage and family.

> Girls have to be taught that it is <u>they</u> who have to set the limit and boys have to be made aware of the grave responsibility that rests on them. Both boys and girls have to be instilled with a deep respect for each others feelings and for the institutions of marriage and family, as constituting the very foundations of our society.[76]

Clearly embedded in this is the gendered view of relations between men and women; a gender order in which women are natural-ised as the guardians of proper sexual conduct and men are natural-ised as those in need of policing.

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74 *ibid.*

75 *ibid.*, p. 1.

76 *ibid.* (emphasis in original).

Women and men were assumed to have different sexual natures that justified their different roles as mothers and fathers. These views permeated the outlook both of the members of the Sub-committee and SAPSCA's wider membership. It was certainly true that the Sub-Committee could be seen as attempting to shift some of the responsibility for imparting sexual knowledge from parents to the school system. However, this clearly included the prevailing values of a gendered social order. It was in support of, rather than against, parental values that such moves were made. Even so, the Report remained more or less dormant within the Education Department.

V

As has already been noted, it was some twenty months before a deputation from SAPSCA met with senior officers of the Education Department, including the Deputy Director-General of Education, Mr Walker. A subsequent follow-up letter, in March 1967, requested feedback from the Education Department concerning its views on the specific matters raised in SAPSCA's 1965 Report -- a copy of which was also enclosed together with the covering letter of 30 June 1965. SAPSCA also reminded the Education Department that '[t]o date we have received no opinion on this matter'.[77] SAPSCA requested that the Report be considered so that the views of the Education Department could be made known. Similar sentiments were

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[77] Hon Secretary SAPSCA, Mr C.W. Reed to Deputy Director-General of Education, 8 March 1967. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

expressed by the President of SAPSCA, Mr R.E. King, at the half-yearly conference held in April when he reminded delegates that 'nothing had been heard from the Minister of Education about submissions made by the association on sex education'.[78]

A reply from the soon-to-retire[79] Director-General, Evan Mander-Jones, was sent in early May of that year. The contents of the letter became public knowledge a month later.[80] In his letter to SAPSCA, Mander-Jones mapped out what was to be the official position of the Education Department for the next few years. While this remained broadly similar to that which had prevailed since 1951 it is fair to suggest that a shift in perspective was beginning to emerge. Mander-Jones pointed out that he drew 'a clear distinction' between the physiological and psychological dimensions of reproduction. The former were already dealt with 'in the normal course of Science lessons beginning in the first year of the secondary curriculum';[81] and

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78 'Education In SA Defended', *The Advertiser*, 20 April 1967. King was also reported to have told the conference that the report had been 'forwarded to the Minister of Education three years ago'. However, this appears to be a reporting error as the documents clearly indicate that the report was not completed until June 1965; the date of the covering letter being 30 June 1965.

79 Mander-Jones retired in July and was succeeded by Mr J.S. Walker on 6 July. See the two articles by Stewart Cockburn, 'A Shy Educator Bows Out' and 'Dynamo Takes Over Education' in *The Advertiser*, 17 June 1967 and 19 June 1967 respectively.

80 'View On Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 6 June 1967.

81 Director-General of Education, E. Mander-Jones to Hon. Sec. SAPSCA, Mr C.W. Reed, 3 May 1967. *SAED*: 14/16/1.Mander-Jones prefaced this comment by suggesting that SAPSCA might 'care to consult the textbooks which are used in our schools' -- as if to imply that if this had been done much of its concern might have been allayed.

as such were already 'adequately covered'. The latter, psychological, dimension involved 'the far more complex human relationships which should find their ultimate expression in marriage'.[82] He pointed out that this constituted the field of what was 'commonly referred to as sex education' and as such he agreed that such matters should 'be included in the course which is more appropriately and properly named a course in human relations'.[83] He then stipulated what he saw as the 'essential conditions for such a course'.

a. Participation in the course must be on a voluntary basis.
b. The parents' consent in writing must be obtained by the Head of the school in every case.
c. The instruction should be carried out only by selected and specially trained staff, working in close consultation with the school medical officers, the Psychology Branch and the Marriage Guidance Council.
d. It should be conducted outside normal school lessons.[84]

These conditions were more consistent with the then existing policy than with the direction envisaged by SAPSCA.

Mander-Jones favoured a school by school approach in the sense that human relations type courses should be developed 'in response to a request from a significant group of parents to the Head of the school'.[85] He pointed to Port Adelaide Girls Technical High School as a good example of this

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82 *ibid.*

83 *ibid.*

84 *ibid.*

85 *ibid.*

approach. In fact much of the position outlined by Mander-Jones was based on his officers' appraisals of the development at Port Adelaide.[86] The emphasis was to be on the Department responding to parent requests at the school level rather than on a system wide approach. In addition, Mander-Jones told SAPSCA that he was also 'strongly opposed' both 'to expecting all teachers to take part in it' and the inclusion of human relations courses as part of the 'normal work at our teachers colleges'.[87] While the latter development might well have offset concerns about the former it seemed that Mander-Jones opposed this proposal to modify teacher training largely because he thought that trainee teachers would not yet have reached the level of 'maturity and stability of outlook' that would be needed to teach such a course.[88] Consequently, he concluded that developing a human relations course integrated into the curriculum along the lines suggested by SAPSCA would be 'unwise and inappropriate'.[89]

The strategy was to remain one of pursuing cautious initiatives limited

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86 See *SAED* 14/16/5 containing the following correspondence: L.S. Piddington, Psychology Branch to Supertintendent of Technical Schools, 22 February 1967; 'Human Relations Group Report', Head Mistress Port Adelaide Girls Technical High School to Director of Education, 26 February 1967; Director-General of Education to Superintendent of Technical Schools, 10 March 1967; and Supt. Technical Schools to Director-General of Education, 3 April 1967. See in particular the memo from Superintendent of Technical Schools to Director-General of Education, 3 April 1967. *SAED*: 14/16/5.

87 Mander-Jones to Reed, 3 May 1967.

88 *ibid.* This was also the view of the Superintendent of Technical Schools. See the memo from Superintendent of Technical Schools to Director-General of Education, 3 April 1967.

89 *ibid.*

to what were deemed 'to meet the specific needs of the students of that school'.[90] This school by school approach was consistent with earlier policy insofar as sex education, understood as the teaching of human relationships, was to remain outside of the normal school curriculum. As before, visiting experts of one sort or another from organisations approved by the Department were to be used to deal with sex education.

VI

However, the momentum was building for a broader, seemingly less *ad hoc*, more integrated approach. This is evident from the fact that the Education Department felt it necessary to make public the view that it had communicated to SAPSCA. It is also significant that this view was not reported in May, when it was made, but one month later.[91] The explanation for this appears to be that in early June the NSW government had been given a report advocating the introduction of sex education.[92] This report made a number of 'major recommendations' with the most important being that 'a broadly based sex education should be an active part of the syllabus in both primary and secondary schools'.[93]

This news was followed two days later by another item in which

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90 Superintendent of Technical Schools to Director-General of Education, 7 November 1967. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

91 'View on Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 6 June 1967.

92 'Education On Sex In Schools Favoured', *The Advertiser*, 3 June 1967.

93 *ibid.*

various people representing organisations connected to education in South Australia made public comments on the NSW report: Mr F.A. Woithe, President of the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT); Mr R.E. King, President of SAPSCA; Mr B.A. Cosgrove, President of the SA High Schools Headmasters' Association; and Dr T. Turner, President of the Marriage Guidance Council.[94] According to Mr Woithe, SAIT 'had been studying all aspects of sex education for some months'.[95] In fact the committee to do this had been set up at the Thirteenth Annual SAIT Conference in 1964.[96] However, Mr Woithe did not know when that report would be ready.[97] The President of SAPSCA repeated that his organisation had submitted a report to which the Education Department had only just responded. He did not reveal what the Education Department had advised, only that 'a statement would be issued by the association' once its executive had met to consider the matter. Mr Cosgrove indicated that the Headmasters' Association 'had no official policy' on sex education but 'he was very encouraged to see some kind of positive action being proposed' on what he described as 'a vital issue'.[98] In the same vein, Dr Turner thought that 'the introduction of sex education in primary schools would be a good thing provided that it was kept in proper

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94 'Sex Lessons Considered', *The Advertiser,* 5 June 1967.

95 *ibid.*

96 *SAIT Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 5, June 1964, p. 21.

97 'Sex Lessons Considered', *The Advertiser*, 5 June 1967.

98 *ibid.*

perspective'.[99] He pointed out that the Marriage Guidance Council '[f]or a long time ... had been working towards' a similar goal. In his view this was not necessarily to be called 'sex education' but rather it was about 'determining the proper attitudes' needed for 'living together and family life'.[100]

It was in this context that the Education Department made public its position of supporting the use of outside authorities to visit schools to help with sex education classes held outside normal school hours. But it was a position that *The Advertiser* contested on the same day. Commenting directly on the specific conditions stipulated by the Director-General *The Advertiser* noted that these indicated 'a reluctance to see State schools, at least in their normal lessons, go beyond the physiological instruction now being given'.[101] But, it asked pointedly: 'Is that enough?'[102] *The Advertiser* acknowledged that the NSW report might have wanted 'to go too fast and too far' and it probably did not place 'enough emphasis on the teaching of self-restraint'.[103] However, the issues raised, particularly the perceived increase in premarital and teenage sex, indicated 'a need for the guidance of youth' which *The Advertiser* argued would 'not be met by sidestepping the problem'.[104] Clearly the editorial

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99 *ibid.*

100 *ibid.*

101 Editorial, 'Sex And The Schools', *The Advertiser*, 6 June 1967.

102 *ibid.*

103 *ibid.*

104 *ibid.*

writers felt that the Education Department was dodging the issue.

Evidently *The Advertiser* must have felt that the point needed reiterating since it allocated all its editorial space some four days later to further pronouncements about the issue. The editorial began by noting that 'viewpoints differ' on the 'vexed question of sex instruction in schools', and then immediately went on to suggest to its readers the crucial point that

> there seems to be a growing body of opinion that the matter is too serious to be left entirely in the hands of parents, some of whom may have neither the understanding nor the inclination to do anything about it.[105]

Having established the premise that there were legitimate grounds for the schools to take a greater role, it adopted a moderating tone of knowing familiarity to acknowledge the wisdom of maturity before returning to its main theme that the need to impart such wisdom cannot be denied or dodged.

> Any mature person knows, of course, that knowledge alone will not suffice to give anyone a safe passage through youth to the haven of a happy marriage. ... Many adults may have known nothing of contraception until they were well into their teens, or even later, but primary school-children who read the newspapers to follow current affairs are bound to have seen something about the Pill, to take but one example. This being so, we have no alternative but to see that they are given accurate information and are helped to such an understanding of their own make-up and the reactions of others as could save them from hurtful experiences later on. ...

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105 Editorial, 'Youth and Sex', *Advertiser*, 10 June 1967. It was probably not a coincidence that the Biblical quotation for the regular 'Thought for Today' spot that ends the editorial column was: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'.

> Giving information always involves risk. ... knowledge of the emotional nature of the opposite sex may help a young man to chart a course of wise restraint. But it could also furnish him with a plan of seduction. Everything depends, finally, on whether he cares about the effect of his actions on the well being of others. This is to say, then, that instruction about sex is only part of what is needed. There is the larger problem of helping people to be morally responsible. A good school can be influential here, but it is obvious that this is really everybody's concern in one way or another. ...
>
> ...No one agency or section of the community can give the whole answer to all of this, but all who have to deal with youth have a responsibility to find what more they can do, and to do it as well as possible.[106]

While not placing the whole burden on the education system it is fairly clear that the message was that schools could and should do more than was then the case.

Some comment is needed here about several of the assumptions constitutive of the main argument of this editorial as they illustrate the central theme being traced in this study, namely that of sexing the subject. First, there is an ambiguity between the terms 'youth' and 'young people'. While the two terms seem to be synonymous, the former term is concerned with young males whereas the latter includes both young males and females. This emerges most clearly when the riskiness of 'giving information' was acknowledged: young men might use this 'knowledge of the emotional nature of the opposite sex ... to furnish ... a plan of seduction'.[107] A central question

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106 *ibid.*

107 *ibid.*

of educating 'youth' about sex was that of educating adolescent boys. Integrally related to this, indeed underpinning it, is the second assumption about the sexual natures of men and women. It is clear from the editorial that young men were assumed to be by nature sexually predatory whereas young women, being emotionally inclined, were the recipients of young men's sexual attentions. Thus 'helping ...[young]... people to be morally responsible' meant educating them about their natures and the need for self-restraint. Such an education would enable them to 'appreciate the emotional and personal factors involved in their relationships' so that they could chart 'a safe passage through youth to the haven of a happy marriage'.[108] In itself, this goal reveals the gender specific assumptions permeating the editorial analysis. Finally, it is significant that contraception was the example chosen by *The Advertiser* to illustrate the sort of knowledge it felt young people lacked. Problems such as 'hasty and unsuitable marriages or other situations which put happiness in jeopardy' could be minimised, if not completely avoided, by educating young people along the lines described above.[109]

The pointedness of *The Advertiser*'s perspective was not lost on the incoming Director-General who, within hours of taking up his post, pointed to the developments at Port Adelaide Girls Technical High School. In his view the results were 'encouraging and could be extended'.[110] However, he

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108 *ibid.*

109 *ibid.*

110 'Sex Lessons "Encouraging"', *The Adverstiser*, 7 July 1967.

repeated that teaching moral issues 'must begin in the home' because 'it is primarily the responsibility of the parents to guide the children on the moral aspects of sex'.[111] The Education Department could and did assist parents by 'holding classes... [when requested] ...on how best to approach the problem of sex education'.[112] Despite the prompting from *The Advertiser* the Education Department was not going to take the lead. Rather, it was going to maintain its cautious position of a school by school approach. Apart from the above editorial and the view of SAPSCA there was very little public dissent from this approach. One person wrote to *The Advertiser* in early June to express her concern with what she described as 'the somewhat negative views of various educationists on the subject of sex education in primary schools'.[113] For the most part, however, the Education Department did not have to contend with any real backlash to its approach either before or after the position reiterated by Walker in early July.

This approach appeared to be further justified by the view expressed a few weeks later by a report of the SAIT committee on sex education.[114] While it pointed to some level of educational need in this area it reaffirmed the dominant view that parents had the primary responsibility to teach their children about sexual matters. The SAIT report opposed the introduction of

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111 *ibid.*

112 *ibid.*

113 Mrs B. Bishop, 'Early Sex Education', *The Adverstiser*, 13 June 1967.

114 'Sex Education for S.A. Schools', *The Advertiser*, 31 July 1967.

any subject that was specifically labelled 'sex education'.[115] Factual information about physical reproduction could and should be provided within the relevant subject areas such as physiology and science but the more complex web of moral concerns should remain the province of the family. However, the report acknowledged the problem that some parents were either unwilling or unable to deal with this and hence there was a limited role for schools to assist parents. A series of lectures for secondary school students was proposed but these were to be arranged so as to complement parental responsibility along much the same lines as was already happening within the Education Department.[116]

The theme of the shortfall in parental responsibility was taken up by *The Advertiser.* It advocated that 'schools should fill the gap'.[117] It argued that if the aim of education was to 'equip them for life' then not including education about sexuality was like teaching English literature without mentioning Shakespeare. For *The Advertiser*, sex was 'such an important force in human behaviour' that it could not be ignored by the education system.[118] The issue then was not one of whether sex education should be taught but one of when and how. The real worry was that 'if the right facts are not given, any facts at all will be sought' hence it was far 'better to *get in*

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115 *ibid.*

116 *ibid.*

117 'Education About Life', *The Advertiser*, 1 August 1967.

118 *ibid.*

first with the healthy truth'.[119]

The editorial stance developed by *The Advertiser*, over the course of three editorials, did not lead to any substantial change in the policy approach then current in the Education Department. Yet the August editorial was quite significant in two respects. First, it reiterated a view that was at odds with the perceived wisdom about parents and the transmission of appropriate sexual knowledge. Second, and perhaps more significantly, it signalled that a changing conception of sexuality was gaining the ascendancy within public discourses about what children needed to know. That is, that sexuality was increasingly to be understood as having an intrinsic truth which needed to be imparted lest 'a distorted attitude ...[be]... implanted by furtive whispers'.[120] In part, this discursive shift was a re-emergence of the 'no lies' undercurrent that had been part of the wider sex education discourse for the previous sixty years. But where this earlier disourse had emphasised the need to be open about sex, to tell the truth about it, the shape of the discourse emerging in the late 1960s posited the idea of 'sex' as an intrinsic aspect of being human. That is, that sex itself had a truth that was crucial to the formation of one's being, one's character. Yet such an intrinsic truth was far from self-evident. The fact that *The Advertiser* needed to articulate its concern in the terms that it did demonstrates that 'the healthy truth' about sex required some assistance to emerge. To construct this truth and to manage its transmission was deemed

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119 *ibid.* (Emphasis added).

120 *ibid.*

by *The Advertiser* to be properly domain of the Education Department.

VII

Whilst SAPSCA did not necessarily share the views of *The Advertiser*'s editorial writers, it nevertheless took up the issue again in 1968. This time it published in its journal, *School Post*, the report of its views and recommendations on sex education.[121] This was a reprint of the revised version of its 1965 report. SAPSCA had submitted this amended report to the Education Department in the latter part of 1967. However, the matter went no further than a suggestion that the various Departmental officials 'be invited to comment on the S.A.P.S.C.A.'s proposals'.[122] Indeed, as has already been noted, the official view remained unswayed by SAPSCA's submission. By publishing its report in its journal, some seven months later, the SAPSCA executive signalled to the Education Department that, in effect, it was no longer intending to refrain from public comment about the details of its discussions with the relevant Departmental officers.

Although there were some changes, the substance of the 1967 report, relating to objectives and proposals, remained similar to that of the 1965 report. Apart from changes relating to format, there were four specific revisions. First, SAPSCA commended the developments at Port Adelaide Girls Technical High School. With Education Department approval these

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121 'Sex Education', *School Post*, May 1968, pp. 25-31.

122 Superintendent of Technical Schools to Director-General of Education, 7 November 1967. See *SAED*: 14/16/1.

were initiated by the school with assistance from the Marriage Guidance Council.[123] However, SAPSCA regarded these developments 'as a pilot course -- as a means to give the experience needed to plan adequately and with less restrictive practice universal courses in human relations for all levels at both Primary and Secondary schools'.[124]

Second, SAPSCA acknowledged the four 'essential conditions' stipulated by the Director-General, and already made public by him in June the previous year, as being necessary for any course in human relations taught at Education Department schools.[125] But in acknowledging these four conditions SAPSCA was not necessarily endorsing them. Indeed, three of them were largely contrary to the recommendations being urged by SAPSCA.[126] It is therefore not surprising that SAPSCA represented them as being generated by the particular initiatives undertaken at Port Adelaide Girls

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123 See Fn. 86 *supra* for details of relevant documents. *SAED*: 14/16/5.

124 'Sex Education in Public Schools: A Report Published by the South Australian Public Schools Committees' Association Incorporated', September 1967, p. 2. See *SAED*: 14/16/1. Cited hereafter as 'Sex Education in Public Schools'.

125 These four conditions were: (1) Participation in the course must be on a voluntary basis; (2) The parents' consent in writing must be obtained by the Head of the school in every case; (3) The instruction should be carried out only by selected and specially trained staff, working in close consultation with the school medical officers, the Psychology Branch and the Marriage Guidance Council; and (4) It should be conducted outside normal school lessons.

126 Since SAPSCA supported an integrated curriculum based approach to teaching sex education as part of a compulsory human relations course it was unlikely to support conditions limiting it to a voluntary, after school hours activity requiring parental consent.

High School. The third change related to the panel that SAPSCA recommended be formed to develop the syllabus for a human relations course. In its 1965 report SAPSCA had included the names of people from specific organisations that it considered suitable for this panel. In its 1967 report SAPSCA restricted its recommendation to listing these organisations. The list was also expanded to include the Mental Health Department.

Finally, the fourth change, while arising from a reorganisation of the format, enabled the objectives of SAPSCA to be grouped together, and thereby clearly articulated.

> (a) To secure for our children from the earliest possible age a healthy attitude towards sex and human relationships.
> (b) To offset the present undesirable influences of published printed matter in magazines, newpapers and books, which are freely available in the community, certain television and film programmes and other media which display ugly commercial attitudes towards sex and social problems, and other undesirable influences which, combined with ignorance, fear and feelings of guilt, affect the healthy education and development of our children.
> (c) To prepare our children for life in a healthy, educated society.
> (d) To assist the Education Department to achieve these aims.[127]

Implicit in these objectives is not just a view that there was a truth about sex, a correct way of being, to be imparted to children. There was also the perception that this truth was under threat; on the one hand, from the traditional quarters of ignorance and guilt and, perhaps more worryingly, on

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127 'Sex Education in Public Schools', September 1967. p. 3.

the other hand, from a rapidly expanding transformation of social values and mores. It is at least clear that SAPSCA saw the integration of a human relations course into the school curriculum as a key means to, as *The Advertiser* editorial put it the year before, 'get in first with the healthy truth'.[128]

The views of SAPSCA were duly reported in *The Advertiser*.[129] This was subsequently followed the next day by a supportive editorial comment. It declared that '[o]ne of the most glaring failures of our society has been its inability to hand down a knowledge of sex from generation to generation in a sensible, compassionate way'.[130] Having thus defined the problem it then endorsed SAPSCA's 'broad plan' as a 'rational and worthwhile attempt to remedy' it through the development of 'sensible and practical' proposals.[131] The editorial also acknowledged that some problems remained to be sorted out, particularly whether teachers would 'be prepared to shoulder the considerable burden being thrust upon them' and, perhaps most centrally, whether the education system should take up the moral issues previously accepted as 'the preserve of the parent'. Nonetheless, *The Advertiser* suggested that these issues were 'not insurmountable' and it expressed the hope that SAPSCA's proposals would 'not follow the ill-fated steps of the

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128 'Education About Life', *The Advertiser*, 1 August 1967.

129 'Sex Education in Schools Urged', *The Advertiser*, 21 May 1968.

130 'Teaching About Sex', *The Advertiser*, 22 May 1968.

131 *ibid.*

many which preceded it'.[132]

Yet it was precisely these two problems that recurred in subsequent public comment about sex education. The Professor of Education at Flinders University, Professor J.A. Richardson, pointed out that requiring sex education to be taught in schools was another instance of 'the increasing tendency to load schools and teachers with problems not concerned primarily with the intellectual development of students'.[133] Sex education, if it was to be taught at all, should be undertaken by those who were 'thoroughly trained in child psychology and development'.[134] This might be taken to mean that school teachers should be so trained but the gist of Richardson's comments was to give teachers a secondary role. On the other hand, a former Education Department Chief Psychologist, Mr L.S. Piddington, while commenting on the lack of a sex education policy in the Education Department, pointed out that schools could give effective sex education if the community demanded it and was 'prepared to pay for it'.[135] That is, the training of teachers and prospective teachers was not an insurmountable problem. Community demand, however, was another matter.

Even though SAPSCA could be said to be a prominent community based parent group it was not the only such group representing parents. As

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132 *ibid.*

133 'Education on Sex 'Not Easy'', *The Advertiser*, 23 May 1968.

134 *ibid.*

135 'No Policy On Sex Teaching', *The Advertiser*, 13 June 1968.

was noted in relation to SAPSCA's 1965 Report the SA State Association of School Welfare Clubs (SASASWC) was of the view that sex education was 'the sole prerogative of parents'.[136] When SAPSCA indicated its intention to have sex education debated at the annual conference of the Australian Council of School Organisations in October (1968), SASASWC again restated its opposition. Sex education was the responsibility of parents and while some discussion about sexual matters in schools might be appropriate for high school children SASASWC remained steadfastly 'against sex education at primary level'.[137] SASASWC also approached the Minister of Education, Mrs Joyce Steele, to apprise her of its policy and to urge her to give it serious consideration. SASASWC also asked for her assistance 'in encouraging our members in believing that the most important influence is the family, particularly the parents and nothing should be done to weaken the responsibility for the sex education of our children'.[138]

The key issue, both for SASASWC and others, involved the degree to which schools should take up what was deemed to be the proper responsibility of parents. Thus J. Christie argued for 'the sanctity of the home'

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136 See Fn. 50, p. 291 *supra*. See also H.J. Lewis, *On Behalf of Children ... A History of the South Australian Association of School Parents' Clubs Inc.*, (Hawthorndene (SA): Investigator Press, 1988), p. 93 where it was noted that in 1964 many affiliated parent clubs expressed opposition to the introduction of sex education into the curriculum.

137 (Mrs.) K.D. Rowe, State Secretary, SA State Association of School Welfare Clubs, 'Teaching of Sex', *The Advertiser*, 9 October 1968.

138 State Secretary, SASASWC, to Minister of Education, 15 October 1968. *SAED*: 14/16/2.

and 'parent and child relationships' and (Mrs.) W.N. Johnson endorsed the centrality of family and parental values as essential 'to give children a wholesome attitude to sex'.[139] Even advocates of some level of school based sex education, such as Dr Dennis Chambers, W.S.G. Owen and Doris Howles accepted the primacy of parents in the moral development of their children. However, they also pointed to a wider need along much the same lines as SAPSCA had indicated. That is, that there were many parents who felt 'inadequate to deal with the subject' as well as those whose 'own unhealthy attitudes of shame or obscenity are passed on to their children'.[140] Thus while some parents might be capable of dealing with the sexual education of their children, many were not, and it was because of the latter parents that sex education in schools was needed.

Interestingly enough, the underlying logic of supporters of sex education, of filling the gap left by such parents, was strangely congruent with Education Department thinking to the extent that assisting parents was the rationalisation that had been used for many years. In an effort to take some initiative to facilitate this the Minister of Education asked her Department to advise her of the feasibility of setting up adult education

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139 J. Christie, *The Advertiser*, 15 October 1968 and (Mrs.) W.N. Johnson, *The Advertiser*, 24 October 1968 respectively. It should also be noted that Mrs Johnson was active in SASASWC and held one of the two positions of Country Vice-President from 1968 to 1970. See Lewis (1988), p. 119.

140 Doris M. Howles, *The Advertiser*, 18 October 1968. Chambers and Owen both wrote to the *The Advertiser* on 12 October 1968. A similar view had been expressed within an editorial comment in the main journal of the medical profession. See 'Sex Education in Australia', *The Medical Journal of Australia*, Saturday 6 July 1968, pp. 25-6.

classes specifically 'for the guidance of parents in the matter of sex education'.[141] The Education Department subsequently advised the Minister that a course run over about six weeks could be set up if there was 'sufficient interest'.[142] In addition to advertising the course and the Minister's announcement of its existence letters were written to several groups to get them to encourage their members to enrol.[143] As it turned out there were thirty-six enquiries. Twenty-two formally enrolled when the course started in September maintaining an average attendance of eighteen per week.[144] While this was regarded as a success no plans were made to repeat the course unless there was renewed demand.[145] Consequently, no further adult education courses were held for parents to learn how better to teach their children about sex.

The above initiatives were not enough to deter SAPSCA from persevering with its longstanding objectives regarding sex education. Nor was the fact that the Liberal Party government indicated that it would not

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141 Minister of Education to Director-General of Education, 21 November 1968. See *SAED*: 14/16/4.

142 Director-General of Education to Minister of Education, 24 March 1969. *SAED*: 14/16/4.

143 'Sex Education for Parents', *The Advertiser*, 7 June 1969. Director-General of Education to Mr King, President of SAPSCA, 19 June 1969; Director-General of Education to Mrs Quinlan, President of SASASWC, 19 June 1969; and Director-General of Education to Miss Rumbold, President of the National Council of Women of South Australia, 19 June 1969.

144 Director of Technical Education to Deputy Director-General of Education, 19 January 1970. *SAED*: 14/16/4.

145 *ibid.*

pursue any decision on the issue until the fate of the then pending Abortion Bill had been resolved.[146] The government evidently felt that since a recommendation on sex education had emerged from the parliamentary Select Committee[147] enquiring into the reform of the existing abortion laws, it was best to address sex education after the issue of abortion law had been settled. However, the findings of a Gallup Poll published in December 1969 indicated that SAPSCA's general position was shared by a majority of parents. Some 51% of adults interviewed 'favour[ed] instruction in sex by specialists at school' while 37% felt that it was best left 'to parents and fellow teenagers'. A further 12% were either undecided or favoured 'instruction by both parents and specialists'.[148] Later that month SAPSCA wrote to the Minister reiterating its position. Despite the government's earlier stated views SAPSCA expressed the hope that 'some action will be taken in the future'.[149] Until that eventuated SAPSCA informed the Minister that it endorsed the work of the Family Life Movement (FLM) which had recently extended its

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146 *SAPD*, 6 November 1969, p. 2805. This was reported in the press the next day. See 'Sex Education Move Delayed', *The Advertiser*, 7 November 1969.

147 *SAPP* No. 105: *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Assembly on the Criminal Law Consolidation Act Amendment Bill, 1968 together with Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, (Adelaide: Government Printer, 18 February 1969). The sex education recommendation is discussed further below, pp. 327 *ff.*

148 'Gallup Poll: Teaching Sex at Schools', *The Advertiser*, 4 December 1969.

149 President, SAPSCA to Minister of Education, 22 December 1969. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

operations into South Australia. SAPSCA urged the Education Department to provide some financial support for it.[150]

The Education Department was certainly not hostile to the FLM. In its first two years of operations the FLM received some direct financial support in the form of monetary grants from Education Department.[151] When the FLM was established in South Australia, the then Director-General of Education, Mr John Walker, encouraged the organisation to develop a course on social development for high school students encompassing, among other issues, sexual development.[152] The course was implemented (and well received) at two technical high schools; at Smithfield Plains Technical High School and Kidman Park Girls' Technical High School in 1970 and 1971 respectively.[153] The Department also informed SAPSCA that it 'encourages Heads to support the Family Life Movement in giving talks to children of certain ages, in school hours, and where parents support it'.[154] The social development initiative marked something of a change insofar as it was

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150 *ibid.* This support from the President of SAPSCA was perhaps not surprising given that he was also a member of the Advisory Board of the Family Life Movement.

151 Memorandum from the Director of Primary Education to Deputy Director-General of Education, 22 July 1971, p. 1. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

152 Mr Geoff Horne, SA Representative of Family Life Movement of Australia to Mr A.W. Jones, Director-General of Education, 23 September 1971. *SAED*: 14/16/5.

153 *ibid.*

154 Mr A.W. Jones, Director-General of Education to Mr C.W. Reed, Hon. Sec., SAPSCA, 16 June 1970. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

consistent with the sorts of ideas being championed by *The Advertiser* in its editorials on sex education, namely that schools and education should 'equip them [children] for life'.[155] However, the initiative was also quite consistent with the Education Department's longstanding strategy of enabling individual schools to make use of outside specialists like FLM or the Marriage Guidance Council while at the same time keeping sex education outside the formal school curriculum.

In April 1970 SAPSCA informed the Education Department of a recent survey of its affiliated organisations. The aim of surveying the affiliates was 'to ascertain whether they were in accord with the recommendations of the Association' published two years earlier in *School Post*.[156] One hundred and forty replies were received of which ninety-one were in favour of the recommendations. Thirty-seven affiliates were opposed. A further twelve affiliates 'express[ed] no firm opinion but detail[ed] alternative suggestions'.[157] Thus almost three quarters of SAPSCA's affiliated members wanted some sort of positive change. However, the Education Department reiterated its view that 'it would not at this stage support the introduction of planned time-tabling of sex instruction...

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155 See for example, 'Education About Life', *The Advertiser*, 1 August 1967; discussed pp. 309-10, *supra*.

156 C.W.Reed, Hon. Sec., SAPSCA to Director-General of Education, 2 April 1970. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

157 *ibid.*

...to be taken by teachers'.[158] Within the established guidelines, teachers were expected at both primary and secondary levels to provide frank answers to questions that might arise 'in the course of normal school activities' or from the teaching of 'various subjects in the classroom situation'.[159]

While acknowledging, and praising, the 'necessarily unhurried and mainly experimental steps' being undertaken by the Department, SAPSCA pointed out that it was still necessary for teachers 'to be sufficiently trained and informed' in appropriate teaching methodologies 'concerning sex and human relationships'.[160] Consequently, SAPSCA wanted to know what provisions were made in the teacher training curricula of the Teachers' Colleges to enable this to happen.[161] The Education Department replied that while there was no specialist training there remained 'a good deal which [was] relevant as preparation for teachers to discuss matters concerning sex and human relationships'.[162] Teachers received a thorough grounding in psychology and sociology as well as being exposed to courses in health

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158 Mr A.W. Jones, Director-General of Education to Mr C.W. Reed, Hon. Sec., SAPSCA, 16 June 1970. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

159 *ibid.* For more details of the reasoning informing the Director-General's views see the memoranda to the Director-General from Director of Secondary Education and Director of Primary Education on 21 April and 30 April 1970 respectively. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

160 Mr C.W. Reed, Hon. Sec., SAPSCA to Director-General of Education, 20 July 1970. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

161 *ibid.*

162 Mr A.W. Jones, Director-General of Education to Mr C.W. Reed, Hon. Sec., SAPSCA, 14 August 1970, p. 1. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

education. Consequently, concluded the Director-General,

> through his [*sic*] professional education each teacher receives an adequate theoretical and technical background in human relationships which should enable him [*sic*] to carry out successfully in his [*sic*] teaching the kind of approach to sex and human relations which is currently being provided.[163]

The Director-General did note, however, that should the need arise to provide teachers for 'specific courses in the area [of sex education], then certainly appropriate courses will need to be provided for student teachers'.[164]

SAPSCA, which in the meantime had transformed itself into the South Australian Association of State School Organisations (SAASSO), remained unconvinced that the approach being pursued by the Education Department was appropriate. In SAASSO's view the approach was too dispersed and piecemeal to enable 'all children... ...to be given adequate guidance' on sex education.[165] Despite the good intentions this amounted to a 'deficiency in our education system' such that there remained 'considerable room for improvement' in both the provision of sex education and the training of the teachers needed to teach it.[166] SAASSO reiterated its (ie as SASPCA) earlier suggestion, made in 1968, that the Education Department appoint 'a panel of

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163 *ibid.*, p. 2.

164 *ibid.*

165 Mr D.G. Tonkin, Hon. Sec., SAASSO to Director-General of Education, 9 June 1971. *SAED*: 14/16/1. (Emphasis in original).

166 *ibid.*

experts... ...to compile a syllabus for a suitable course in sex education'.[167] SAASSO was advised that 'consideration ha[d] been given' to its proposals but that the current arrangements would remain in force.[168]

This view had also been conveyed earlier in the year to Dr Elizabeth Puddy, an active member of the Marriage Guidance Council and a pioneer of sex education courses in a number of private schools in South Australia. Dr Puddy had suggested to the Education Department that there was a need for 'more "specific" education in human relationships' in state schools. However, she was informed by the Education Department that there was both 'an absence of research findings on the need for and value of' sex education and that there was 'certainly no evidence of a concerted desire for an extension of such teaching in the community'.[169] This view was maintained despite the information provided ten months earlier by SAPSCA in April 1970 and with which the Director of Secondary Education was certainly familiar.[170]

Furthermore, there was strong resistance to the introduction of sex education on the part of Directors of Secondary Education. In 1969, the various Directors of Secondary Education in Australia resolved to recommend

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167 *ibid.*

168 *ibid.* See also the memo from Director of Primary Education to Director-General of Education, 22 July 1971. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

169 See Director of Secondary Education to Dr Elizabeth Puddy, 24 February 1971. *SAED*: 14/16/5.

170 See the memorandum from the Director of Secondary Education to Director-General of Education, 21 April 1970 commenting on the information provided by SAPSCA. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

to the Conference of Directors-General that such 'pressures on Departments of Education to introduce courses on Sex Education ... be resisted'.[171] This was despite the fact that the Standing Committee of the Australian Education Council, which usually met immediately prior to the Conference of Directors-General, had earlier that year noted that there 'appeared to be a case for training some teachers as specialists in this area'.[172] The resolution of the Directors of Secondary Education did not appear to have negated this view as the minutes of the March conference were approved at the next Standing Committee meeting in February 1970.[173]

Even the Karmel Report, despite a brief discussion of sex education, omitted making any specific recommendations on the matter that might have enabled the Education Department to develop a more consistent approach. Rather, the Karmel Report repeated much of the conventional wisdom of the day. Some children would not need school based sex education because they would come from homes in which such matters would have been addressed. Other children, however, would come from circumstances where 'no such reliance can be placed on the home' and hence would derive their knowledge

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171 Conference of Directors of Secondary Education in Australian States and New Zealand held in Brisbane 9-15 July 1969. See *GRG* 18/Series 105, Papers on Conferences 1965-72 (Box 1), Item 3, "Social and Moral Education', p. 3.

172 Minutes of the Standing Committtee of the Australian Education Council, 17-19 March 1969. See *GRG* 18/Series 159/6.

173 Minutes of the Standing Committee of the Australian Education Council, 19-20 February 1970. *GRG* 18/Series 159/6.

of sex from 'the mass media, the peer groups, the school, or the church'.[174] As such, the Karmel Committee stated its belief that

> the school must accept an obligation to help many children to acquire the factual knowledge and the values which will enable them to defeat ignorance. It is in a position to provide a more reliable source of information and evaluation than is available in the mass media or the peer group, which will otherwise shape values and establish as "facts" what may in truth be misinformation.[175]

But having stated its general belief, the Committee then avoided any specific recommendation about how this might be achieved. Before being equipped to teach in this area teachers would need special training to 'equip them to undertake the rational discussion of the many controversial issues and hazy ideas that surround sex education'.[176] Just in case, however, parents would still need to retain the right to 'decide whether or not their children will attend classes devoted to sex education, and that they should be given the option of withdrawing their children if they wish to'.[177]

In terms of actual policy direction this was very close to most of the key ideas advocated by SAASSO. And as we have seen SAASSO's perspective was more or less compatible with the actual practices of the Education Department in the late 1960s. A clear signal for a more forthright direction was not forthcoming from the *Karmel Report*. Nonetheless, the

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174 *Karmel Report* (1971), p. 35/3.22.

175 *ibid.*, p. 36/3.23.

176 *ibid.*

177 *ibid.*

pressure continued to build.

As was noted earlier, the issue of sex education was raised by one of the submissions received by the Select Committee of the House of Assembly that examined the laws regarding abortion. The submission was given by the Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Adelaide, Lloyd Woodrow Cox. In his view, 'properly structured tuition' in sex education would provide an important means for reducing 'a great number of unwanted pregnancies' thereby lessening the demand for abortion.[178] It might also 'raise the moral code of the community' insofar as appropriate sex education could lead to a reduction in the number of children either born or conceived out of wedlock.[179] Cox suggested that

> in its broadest sense, sex education should be a discussion of the biology and physiology of reproduction... [as] ...part of a course in health... ...given by the normal schoolteachers who had been properly trained for this purpose.[180]

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178 *SAPP* No. 105, 1969, p. 23.

179 *ibid.* Cox tabled information before the Select Committee which revealed that on average during the 1960s, ex-nuptial births were about seven per cent of total births and 25% of first pregnancies occured prior to marriage. In 1967 in South Australia, for example, there were 7,134 first born children. Of these, 2,194 were conceived out of wedlock and 1,366 were born ex-nuptially, constituting approximately 30% and 19% respectively of the total; and together accounting for almost half of all first births. See the Table: *Confinements S.A. 1967 (Resulting In Live Births)* provided in *ibid.*, p. 103. In the under 20 age group (ie the category of teenage pregnancies) Cox pointed out in a letter to the Committee that, after allowing for premature births due to medical reasons (about 10% of nuptial confinements), approximately 70% of teenage mothers conceived out of wedlock. See Professor L.W. Cox to the Honourable R. Millhouse (Chairman), 15 January 1969 reprinted in *ibid.*

180 *ibid.*, p. 23.

Such a course could begin early in the school life of the child and gradually increase in depth and complexity as the child progressed through the school years. Thus in secondary school the instruction would be more detailed and specific. He did not advocate giving 'contraceptive instruction in schools' but he did suggest that if children received honest and accurate information then they 'would know very well that they would later have to seek advice from their doctor'.[181]

Cox was in no doubt that schoolteachers should teach health education as they, together with parents, 'make the biggest impact'.[182] However, not only would schoolteachers 'need to be properly trained for this purpose', the government itself would need to take greater responsibility for the 'long-term education of the public, as the means of not preventing abortion but rather of preventing pregnancy'.[183] More particularly,

> [t]he government is responsible for the schools, and education is, basically, dependent on the schools' curricula. So that, unless the Government through its Education Department adopts a positive tone, there cannot be any change.[184]

It was thus up to the government to take the lead to give its Education Department the appropriate encouragement. As was noted earlier (p. 319 *supra*) the then Liberal government deferred pursuing the matter until after the

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181 *ibid.*, p. 24.

182 *ibid.*

183 *ibid.*, p. 41.

184 *ibid.*, p. 42.

abortion issue had been resolved. However, it is fair to suggest that Cox's evidence, particularly in linking sex education with the prevention of teenage pregnancy, provided a persuasive perspective that echoed the sentiments of others in the wider community.[185]

One relevant example of this is the Congregational Union of South Australia. At a meeting of its governing Council in September 1971 it unanimously passed a resolution calling on the government 'to give further encouragement to the introduction of appropriate courses of instruction [in human relationships] into school curricula'.[186] The crucial issue for the Congregational Union Council was that of a perceived increase in the number of legal abortions in South Australia. It regarded this development 'as an indication of the inadequacy of present programmes of training in human relationships'.[187] The Council did not seek, nor did it endorse, any changes that would 'mak[e] it more difficult for a woman, to obtain legally, the termination of her pregnancy'.[188] Rather it saw the problem in terms of preventing pregnancy through appropriate family planning and regarded the

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185 Similarly, Cox's counterpart at Monash University, Professor Carl Wood, when visiting Adelaide in 1968 for a medical conference, suggested that 'adequate sex education in secondary schools' was a necessary corollary of any liberalisation of abortion laws. See 'More Education in Sex Advocated, *The Advertiser*, 30 October 1968.

186 Mr Sawyer, Executive Minister, Congregational Union of South Australia Inc., to Hon. H.R. Hudson, Minister of Education, 24 September 1971. *SAED*: 14/16/12.

187 *ibid.*

188 *ibid.*

necessary solution as sex education which would involve 'training in human relationships' together with adequate 'knowledge about and availability of contraceptives'.[189] As it happened the resolution from the Congregational Union Council arrived not long after the public announcement that a Health Education Committee had been formed and was beginning to address the matter.[190] The Minister was thus able to advise the Council that its points had been noted and that some progress was now being made in directions similar to what it had proposed.[191]

The South Australian Association for Mental Health (SAAMH) also attempted to persuade the Education Department that 'schools needed to accept more responsibility... ...for the general teaching of human behaviour and relationships'.[192] Its emphasis was on addressing the mental health needs of school children so that individual problems could be recognised and addressed through counselling as they arose. The SAAMH felt that there were particular 'deficiencies in the present educational system which [were] unfavourable to the healthy psychological and social development of students'.[193]

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189 *ibid.*

190 'Not Just Sex but Drugs and Disease: All Part of the New Lessons in Living', *The Advertiser*, 22 September 1971.

191 Hugh Hudson, Minister of Education to Mr. M.F. Sawyer, Executive Minister, Congregational Union of SA, 27 October 1971. *SAED*: 14/16/12.

192 Chairman, Executive Committee, South Australian Association for Mental Health to the Honourable H. R. Hudson, Minister of Education, 24 June 1970, p. 3. *SAED*: 14/16/6.

193 *ibid.*, p. 1.

Consequently, the SAAMH urged the Education Department to develop a human relations type course. It put forward a basic outline of such a course which it suggested could be used as a basis for further development. The aim of the course, as proposed by SAAMH, would be to 'encourage young people to seek self-understanding, to develop considerate relationships with others, and to aim at life roles which are constructive and satisfying'.[194] Within this context the issues of sexual development, sexual values, and sexual relationships and behaviour could be discussed.

The primary purpose of the proposals put forward by the SAAMH was concerned with the psychological wellbeing of the child. It is nevertheless clear that it was broadly consistent with the growing emphasis on educating children for living -- a theme long extolled by *The Advertiser*. Moreover, much of the spirit of what the SAAMH was proposing eventually found its way, some two years later, into the general views of the Minister of Education concerning the role of schools in developing and teaching courses on human relations.[195] This development will be taken up in the next chapter.

VIII

The convergence of the various pressures noted above, together with the rapidly changing social values of the time, served to accentuate the need for

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194 *ibid.*, p. 5.

195 Minister of Education, 'Role of Schools in Counselling on Problems of Human Relationships', Speech given at *Education for Human Relationships Conference*, South Australian Institute of Teachers, 11 August 1972 reprinted in *SAIT Journal*, 4 (13), 23 August 1972.

the Education Department to take some initiative. Hence its announcement that an interim health committee had been convened to think about an appropriate health syllabus.[196] The Acting Director of Secondary Education had advised the Director-General in June that a committee chaired by Dr C.O. Fuller (Principal Medical Officer for Environmental Health in the Department of Health) was 'considering the construction of this syllabus'.[197] However, SAASSO was not informed of the existence of this committee at that time. Its frustration at the seeming lack of progress emerged clearly when it wrote again to urge the Department into action stressing that 'the necessary preliminary actions, such as the appointment of a panel of experts to investigate syllabuses and teacher training should not be delayed any longer'.[198] Clearly this indicated that SAASSO was not then aware of the existence of the Health Education Committee. Indeed, the existence of this committee and its purpose became public knowledge just six days after SAASSO had written the letter noted above.[199] Some two weeks later the Education Department wrote to SAASSO about this development also pointing out that if the planned pilot health education course proved

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196 'Not Just Sex But Drugs and Disease: All Part of the New Lessons in Living', *The Advertiser*, 22 September 1971.

197 Acting Director of Secondary Education to Director-General of Education, 30 June 1971. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

198 Mr D.G. Tonkin to Director-General of Education, 16 September 1971. (Emphasis in original). *SAED*: 14/16/1.

199 'Not Just Sex But Drugs and Disease: All Part of the New Lessons in Living', *The Advertiser*, 22 September 1971.

'successful at the first year level, the next logical step will be to modify it for use at the levels above and below'.[200]

For all intents and purposes sex education was poised to become part of the day to day school curriculum. A curriculum space for sex education was about to become a reality. At long last, or so it seemed to its proponents, 'the healthy truth' of sex could now be managed in a responsible manner so that students could indeed be 'equipped for life'. By the end of 1971, a shift in pedagogical approach was clearly evident. The nature of this shift will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter. But it is worth repeating here that there was also a shift in the knowledge to be imparted. Self-restraint remained important but to this was to be added knowledge of contraception. As *The Advertiser* editorial writers argued, sex education, though still a difficult one to deal with, was a matter of 'get[ting] in first with the healthy truth'. In the conveying, indeed constructing, of this 'healthy truth' lay the sexing of the subject.

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[200] Acting Director-General of Education to Mr D.G. Tonkin, Hon. Sec., SAASSO, 8 October 1971. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

Chapter 7

'Naturally And Without Drama': Placing Sex Education In The Curriculum

I

In September 1971 the Education Department announced that it was investigating the development of a syllabus that would address what it saw as a need for sex education. Yet very little appeared to follow from this announcement. It was not until early 1973 that any substantial developments took place. In the intervening sixteen months two things occurred. First, in the latter half of 1972, the Minister of Education delivered a clear policy statement on human relations education; and secondly, the Director-General announced that as part of an overseas study trip to attend a UNESCO Conference he would also be visiting Sweden to look at its approach to sex education[1]. On his return definite steps were taken to incorporate sex education into the curriculum.

As was shown in the previous chapter there had been growing support for this measure -- both from specific organisations as well as from the general public.[2] Following the Minister's announcement in January only one parent organisation voiced any opposition, the South Australian State Association of School Welfare Clubs (SASASWC); and even then it was not to sex education as such but to the prospect of it being taught in schools by teachers. A majority of SASASWC affiliates evidently favoured its being taught under the auspices of the

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1 'To Study Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 27 September 1972.

2 See for example, 'Teaching Sex At Schools', *The Advertiser*, 4 December 1969 for the results of an Australia wide Gallup Poll in which a majority of adults favoured some form of 'instruction in sex by specialists at school'.

Family Life Movement.[3] While expressing some concerns about the importance of consultation with parents, other parent organisations like the South Australian Association of State School Organisations (SAASSO), the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT), the Marriage Guidance Council, and the Family Planning Association all indicated their support for the initiative.[4]

The chief focus of this chapter is an examination (in Sections III and IV) of the steps taken by the Education Department to implement this decision including its evaluation of its initiative (Section V). However, before doing this it is necessary to preface that discussion with a brief acknowledgment of the changing social dynamic of the early 1970s.[5] At this time there were growing worries that schools and other social institutions were failing to shape the manners and behaviours of the young. On a regular basis concerned citizens, often spurred on by newspaper reports, would lament what they represented to be a decline in moral and social standards. There are any number of issues that could be chosen

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3 'Parents: No To Sex Classes', *The Advertiser*, 10 January 1973.

4 For the views of SAASSO and SAIT see 'Sex Lesson Plans: Parents Want To Be Consulted', *The Advertiser*, 9 January 1973; for the Marriage Guidance Council and the Family Planning Association see the letters to the editor 'Parents' Role in Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 18 January 1973 and 'Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 22 January 1973 respectively. See also the favourable editorial, 'From Maths to Sex', *The Advertiser*, 9 January 1973.

5 For some discussion of this era in Australia, though written from varying political perspectives, see the following: Stephen Alomes, 'Cultural Radicalism in the Sixties', *Arena*, No. 62, 1983, pp. 28-54; Peter Coleman, *Obscenity, Blasphemy and Sedition: 100 Years of Censorship in Australia*, rev. ed., (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1974); Robin Gerster & Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: 'The Sixties' and Australia*, (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1991); Donald Horne, *Time of Hope: Australia 1966-72*, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980); Craig MacGregor, *Profiles of Australia*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1966).

to illustrate this concern over standards. However, two are particularly pertinent. One involved the actions of the Adelaide branch of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM)[6] and the other the controversy occasioned by the publication of *The Little Red Schoolbook*. Both illustrate the perceptions of the changing relations between knowledge, sex, and education. In addition, they illustrate the emerging concerns about how knowledge of contraceptive techniques should be managed.

II

In a front page report, *The Advertiser* informed its readers that the WLM planned to distribute to secondary school girls a pamphlet entitled 'What Every Girl Should Know About Contraception'.[7] The aim of the pamphlet, according to the WLM, was to provide accurate information about contraceptives and contraceptive methods, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases. A spokesperson for the

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6 For some discussion about the early development of the Women's Liberation Movement in Adelaide see Sylvia Kinder, 'Adelaide Women's Liberation: The First Five Years, 1969-74', in *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, ed Margaret Bevage *et al*, (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982). For a more general picture see Ann Curthoys, 'Australian Feminism Since 1970' in *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, ed Norma Grieve & Ailsa Burns, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); Ann Curthoys, 'Doing it for Themselves: The Women's Movement Since 1970' in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation,* ed Kay Saunders & Raymond Evans, (Sydney: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanich, 1992). Note that the above references do not mean to imply that opposition to sex discrimination only began then. Rather it is to note the growth of a new wave of feminist agitation which built on and added to already existing campaigns such as those for equal pay and employment opportunities -- especially within the teaching profession.

7 'Contraceptive Advice For Schoolgirls', *The Advertiser*, 24 February 1971.

WLM pointed out that they were not 'urg[ing] the girls to have sexual relations'.[8] Rather they recognised that irrespective of the prevailing moral strictures to the contrary, teenagers had and would continue to engage in sexual activities. It was necessary that those upon whom the burden would fall most heavily, namely girls, should at least have access to reliable information.[9] The pamphlet acknowledged in its preface that decisions about 'virginity, contraception, abortion and "promiscuity" were 'big decisions'.[10] However, it was precisely in order for girls to make their 'own ethical decision' about such matters that they should be 'informed about the issues' so that they could 'make them in a responsible way'.[11] The fact that this information was to be made available directly to secondary students, bypassing the usual authorities, especially that of parents, caused some degree of consternation in the wider community. This was further underscored by the presentation of the story on the front page *The Advertiser*.

Certainly the response from several concerned members of the general public was immediate. Within two days there appeared three letters to the Editor questioning both the method of imparting this knowledge and the authority of WLM to do so. The first letter writer informed the newspaper that 'there is still a majority of people today who consider it part of bringing up a family to discuss

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8 *ibid.*

9 Recall the discussion in the previous chapter (see pp. 281-2 *supra.*) in which the appearance of the Pill brought with it a consequent shift in the contraceptive behaviour of the sexes, particularly in relation to pre-marital sex.

10 'Contraceptive Advice for Schoolgirls', *The Advertiser*, 24 February 1971.

11 *ibid.*

such matters in the privacy of their home with their children'.[12] Two further letters similarly questioned the WLM's authority to displace parental prerogative. One, a father, viewed this 'with grave concern' and stressed that he did not want 'my daughter to be a well-instructed and fully equipped sex-machine ... I want her to be a woman, loved and loving for herself'.[13] The other, also from a father, 'strongly object[ed]' because the WLM were 'taking upon themselves a duty which should remain wholly with the parent'.[14] For these parents the transmission of sexual knowledge was largely a matter for families to address. Their authority was being bypassed by a group that was outside of the accepted channels of the education system. Indeed, the WLM had an agenda, namely that of challenging the prevailing ordering of the relations between the sexes. This was seen by at least one of these parents to be threatening the proper sexing of his daughter[15] and by another parent to be the product of a 'busybody group ... proffering literature to people who have not asked for it'.[16]

The issue of authority was taken further by another letter writer, Mr D.W. Griffin, some days later who disputed the Education Department's view that with respect to the issue of sex education the 'matter could safely be left to the

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12 'Sex Advice 'Family Matter'', *The Advertiser*, 25 February 1971.

13 'Advice On Sex', *The Advertiser*, 26 February 1971.

14 *ibid.*

15 'Sex Advice 'Family Matter'', *The Advertiser*, 25 February 1971.

16 'Contraceptive Advice for Schoolgirls', *The Advertiser*, 24 February 1971.

judgement and discretion of the headmaster'.[17] Mr Griffin pointed out that it was 'doubtful whether [parents] have any authority whatsoever in the educational affairs of their schools' because in his view 'with regard to educational matters, the headmaster [was] in undisputed control' and as such 'need only inform parents of actions he may take and is not required to consult parents'.[18] He suggested that in consequence the reality was that

> [n]either parents nor school councils have any clearly defined role regarding school decisions on sex education. These are entirely within the power of the headmaster according to the freedom and authority granted him.[19]

Mr Griffin had thus taken the matter beyond that of the specific actions of the WLM and widened it to address the rights of parents to have 'a voice in the decision-making in the educational affairs of their school'.[20] Moreover, he had also shifted the focus from sex education to that of education generally.

This letter brought a swift reply from Mr A.W. Jones, the Director-General of Education. Jones pointed out that Mr Griffin had misconstrued the Department's policy under the 'Freedom and Authority in the Schools' memorandum that he had promulgated in 1970 to provide greater scope for school based decisions.[21] This policy entailed that

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17 Cited in 'Little Say In Education', *The Advertiser*, 2 March 1971.

18 *ibid.*

19 *ibid.*

20 *ibid.*

21 Memorandum to Principals of All Departmental Schools, 'Freedom and Authority in Schools', from A.W. Jones, Director-General of Education, August

> while the official decision on school policy must rest with the Head, the procedure would be one of cooperative decision making by headmaster, staff, students and parents at the school level, as free as possible from the central authority.[22]

This, he pointed out, was clearly stated in the original memorandum on 'Freedom and Authority in the Schools' and applied to all aspects of educational activities in schools. With respect to sex education, and particularly 'the human relations sessions conducted in schools by the Family Life Movement and the Marriage Guidance Council, no student is permitted to attend without the approval of his parents'.[23] Thus parents' rights to have priority over the sex education of their children were neither ignored nor discounted within this policy approach.

While the Director-General had shown that the situation within schools did not over-ride parents' presumed prerogatives he did not address what happened just outside the school gate. School principals could indeed control the dissemination of information about sex within the schools.[24] Thus groups like the

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1970. Reprinted in A.W. Jones, *Ebb and Flow: Papers and Addresses by A.W. Jones Director-General of Education*, (Adelaide: Education Department of South Australia, 1977), pp. 5-6.

22 "Say' In Education', *The Advertiser*, 3 March 1971.

23 *ibid.*

24 Of course, such control did not, indeed could not, extend to the informal peer group networks within which many students acquired and exchanged sexual information. See 'Sex Education in Sweden's Schools: Report by the Director-General of Education', *SAIT Journal*, 28 March 1973, pp. 1-3 where the Director-General specifically acknowledged that children would learn about sex regardless. As such there was a legitimate role for schools to provide a counter-balance within the curriculum to recast these informal sources of sexual knowledge. This point is developed further in Section III *infra*.

WLM could only distribute their material within schools with the cooperation of the principal. But once the students were outside of the school gate then groups like the WLM could not be prevented from handing out their literature. And this was where the real problem was perceived to lie; namely that students might gain information about sex that undermined good moral order.

Several months later the controversy over the publication of *The Little Red Schoolbook* renewed the fears about waning school and parental authority. Originally published in Denmark in 1969 the book drew its inspiration and format from a red-covered, pocketsized edition of quotations from the works of Chairman Mao Zedong commonly referred to as 'Chairman Mao's Little Red Book'. In much the same spirit *The Little Red Schoolbook* presented itself as a something of a revolutionary handbook for high school students. It summarised the nature, structure and organisation of education in a capitalist society, the rights of students, and provided explicit information about sex and drugs.

The initial furore derived, in large part, from a decision taken earlier in the year by the Federal Minister for Customs and Excise, Mr Don Chipp, to allow the book to be imported and sold without restriction in Australia. For Chipp, a decision to ban the book would amount to political censorship[25] -- a view with which *The Advertiser* editorial evidently agreed insofar as it quoted him favourably to that effect.[26] Some of Chipp's political colleagues, however, were less tolerant. They sought to have the full Federal Cabinet meet with the view of

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25 Coleman (1974), p. 25.

26 'The Red Schoolbook', *The Advertiser*, 19 April 1972.

having the decision overturned.[27] In the event, the Federal Cabinet decided to uphold the Minister's decision.[28] Even so the book ended up being banned in Queensland[29] and formally excluded from schools in New South Wales.[30] In South Australia, Mr Hudson, the Minister of Education, 'did not approve of the unqualified use' of it in schools but pointed out that 'this did not mean [that] matters covered in the book could not be discussed in a sensible and intelligent way'.[31] He expressed 'every confidence' in the ability of school principals and their staff to develop 'school policies... ...within the framework of overall departmental policy' which would deal with any problems that might arise for their schools from the distribution of the book.[32]

The issue was represented largely in terms of political censorship. Those who opposed Mr Chipp's decision favoured banning it because for them the key issue was the book's challenge to the traditional authority of home and school. In their view it encouraged the students to think and act on their own behalf. That it encouraged students to think for themselves was certainly the intent of the authors. In the preface entitled 'All Adults Are Paper Tigers' the authors made

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27 "Red Schoolbook' To Go To Cabinet: Chipp Might Quit', *The Advertiser*, 17 April 1972.

28 "Little Red Book' Gets Federal Clearance', *The Advertiser*, 19 April 1972.

29 "Red Schoolbook' To Go To Cabinet: Chipp Might Quit', *The Advertiser*, 17 April 1972.

30 "Red Book' Sold Out In Adelaide', *The Advertiser*, 22 April 1972.

31 "Little Red Book' Not Approved -- Hudson', *The Advertiser*, 18 April 1972.

32 *ibid.*

this quite explicit:

> If you discuss things among yourselves and actively try to get things changed, you can achieve a lot more than you think. We hope that this book will show you some of the ways in which you can influence your own lives. We hope it will show you why adults are paper tigers.[33]

However, for many adults, especially the opinion makers, this was precisely the nub of the problem.[34] Students were being encouraged to trust their own judgement, if needs be without reference to their parents or teachers. For these people *The Little Red Schoolbook* was 'yet another wedge in the generation gap'[35] because it 'supplie[d] the know-how and the confidence' for the young to experiment with sex[36] and other forms of behaviour 'whether parents and teachers like it or not'.[37] In short it was understood as an attack on the rights of adults, particularly parents and teachers, to shape and control the knowledge about sex being made available to the young.[38]

The book devoted a small section to a discussion of discrimination against

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33 Soren Hansen & Jesper Jensen, *The Little Red Schoolbook*, trans. from the Danish by Berit Thornberg, ed and rev for Australian conditions by a diverse collection of teachers, university lecturers, students, doctors, journalists, editors and lawyers, (Adelaide: Alistair Taylor/Brolga Books, 1972), p. 9.

34 See for example the feature article by Stewart Cockburn, 'Down With Adults! Thanks Mr. Mao', *The Advertiser*, 19 April 1972.

35 Helen M. Soar, 'Sex Issue In Book', *The Advertiser*, 25 April 1972.

36 P.P. Kelly, 'Sex and the Red Book', *The Advertiser*, 24 April 1972; A.P. Brammall, 'Sex Issue In Book', *The Advertiser*, 25 April 1972.

37 Mr George Basisovs, Vice-President of the Democratic Labor Party (SA), 'Release of Book', *The Advertiser*, 13 April 1972.

38 Stewart Cockburn, 'Down With Adults! Thanks, Mr. Mao', *The Advertiser*, 19 April 1972.

girls. It informed its readers that 'many schools seem to think that girls shouldn't be treated the same as boys' because it was assumed that 'the vast majority of girls will become either typists or housewives, or both'. Consequently, it pointed out that when it came to educational opportunities 'girls are either fobbed off with typing or domestic science'.[39] The girls were urged to '[r]efuse to be discriminated against because of your sex' both at school and later when in paid employment.[40]

It is therefore not particularly surprising that the announcement by the Minister of Education that a health education syllabus was to be prepared occurred in the midst of this furore over *The Little Red Schoolbook.* However, it needs to be stressed that it was not that this particular furore caused such a decision to be announced. Rather, the decision was one of a series that together saw the formalisation of some form of sex education within the school curriculum. It was also certainly true that the Education Department was under some pressure to provide wider and allegedly more relevant forms of education so that students would be educated or equipped for life.[41] Yet there was nothing particularly new about that since, for most of the twentieth century, there had been successive cycles of demands to make education more relevant for the

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39 Hansen & Jensen (1972), pp. 170-1.

40 *ibid.*, p. 171.

41 See for example the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia 1969-1970, (Peter Karmel Chairman), *Education in South Australia*, (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, February 1971), Ch. 3. In particular, the Report (p. 42-3/3.39) pointed out that schools 'are expected... ...to prepare pupils for their future as well as to equip them for their participation in the world about them now'.

workplace, to adapt it to fit the needs, diverse though they might be, of students as future workers and industry alike.[42] By the early 1970s, the idea of equipping children for life was understood to mean more than just the utilitarian purpose of preparing students 'for work'.[43] It also meant that schools explicitly were 'expected to assume an increased share of a number of other purposes of an emotional, social, vocational and personal character'.[44]

III

This was brought out quite clearly by the Minister of Education in a key speech discussing the role of schools in developing and teaching courses on human relations.[45] In that speech the Minister pointed out that he saw 'two important parts for the school to play' -- one dealt with responsibility for curriculum matters and the other with the (complex) relationship between schools and families. On

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42 See the various enquiries into education in South Australia such as *SAPP* No. 69, 1931, *First and Second Progress Reports of the Committee of Enquiry into Education*, (J.W. Stanford, Chairman), April 1 and June 19, 1931, to the Chairman of the State Advisory Committee on Public Finance, (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1931); *SAPP* No. 15, 1949, *Education Enquiry Committee: Final Report*, (E.L. Bean Chairman), presented 11 August 1949, (Adelaide: Government Printer, August 1949); the *Karmel Report* (1971); Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia, (J.P. Keeves Chairman), *Education and Change in South Australia*, (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, January 1982); 'Educating for the 21st Century: A Charter for Public Schooling in South Australia', *Policy Statement*, Education Department, November 1990.

43 *Karmel Report* (1971), p. 30/3.8

44 *ibid.*, p. 25/3.3.

45 Minister of Education, 'Role of Schools in Counselling on Problems of Human Relationships', Speech given at *Education for Human Relationships Conference*, South Australian Institute of Teachers, 11 August 1972 reprinted in *SAIT Journal*, 4 (13), 23 August 1972.

the first 'part', the Minister pointed out that schools provide

> formally for courses which are directed at encouraging young people to seek self-understanding, to develop considerate relations with others, and to search for life roles which are constructive and satisfying.[46]

Note that this repeated, almost word for word, the aims of the sort of human relations course that the South Australian Association for Mental Health (SAAMH) had advocated in 1970.[47] The Minister thought that these aims were already part of the teaching of existing subject areas like English Literature, History, Social Studies and so on. With the development of the new course in health education he suggested that 'an important new dimension will be added next to these'.[48] He outlined in brief what he saw as the broad ambit of this course.

Beginning with first year high school students, the course would address

> all aspects of physical and emotional health, with the physical, emotional and social implications of diseases and disability, drugs (including aspirin, smoking and alcohol), nutrition, sex, urbanisation, home and occupational safety'.[49]

He pointed out that appropriate teacher training was planned so that the schools

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46 *ibid.*, p. 6.

47 This submission was noted above in Chapter 6, pp. 325 *ff.* The SAAMH argued that young people needed to help 'to seek self-understanding, to develop considerate relations with others, and to aim at life roles which are constructive and satisfying'. Chairman, Executive Committee, South Australian Association for Mental Health to the Honourable H. R. Hudson, Minister of Education, 24 June 1970. *SAED*: 14/16/6.

48 Minister of Education, 'Role of Schools in Counselling on Problems of Human Relations', in *SAIT Journal*, 4 (13), 23 August 1970, p. 6.

49 *ibid.*, p. 6.

would have the expertise to implement the course. In addition, the Education Department could still draw on the various organisations within the community that had some acknowledged expertise in the field of health education. These groups, suggested the Minister, included the Marriage Guidance Council, the Family Life Movement and the SA Association for Mental Health. However, the Minister also pointed out that the 'extent to which the schools can undertake this formal role' depended very much on the support of parents.[50]

And this was where the second 'part for the school to play' revealed its importance. There needed to be ongoing and increasing interaction and involvement between 'the family and the community with the life of the school'.[51] Developing this cooperation would enhance students' educational experiences as well as minimising potential conflicts and misunderstandings between the school and the home.[52] In addition, and in sentiments echoing the view of the SAAMH, the Minister thought that the school could thus effect the 'means for reaching expert assistance and counselling as soon as problems of distress and adjustment

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50 *ibid.*, p. 6.

51 *ibid.*, p. 6.

52 This theme recurred on a regular basis in the pages of the *SAIT Journal*. Some representative instances of this are E.A. Bott, 'Aims and Methods in Child Development', 16 June & 20 July 1931, pp. 11-12 and 15-16 respectively; Irene H. Timco, 'Partners in the Classroom: Parent-Teacher Pupil Bonds Produce Better Classroom Management', 4 (5), June 1954, pp. 20-1; G.S. McDonald, 'Home, School and Family', 6 (1), February 1956, pp. 23-4; 'Australian Teachers Federation Resolutions 1958', Resolution No. 2, 9 (1), February 1959, p. 20; A.W. Jones, 'Lessons of US Education', 9 (3), April 1959, pp. 22-3; F.A. Vickery, 'Relations with Parents and Children', 13 (3), April 1963, pp. 25-7; David Forward, 'Priorities in Education; The First Should be Parenthood', 4 (18), November 1972, p. 3.

arise'.[53] On the specific issue of sex education the Minister reiterated that parents who so indicated could have their children exempted 'from that section of the health education course'.[54] This caveat, though consistent with past approaches to the teaching of sex education in schools, meant that the sense in which curriculum subjects, such as mathematics, history or English literature, were accepted as compulsory was not to apply to sex education. Sex education was a special case.

The significance of the Minister's speech also lies in the fact that it made explicit the dominance of the input of psychology based discourses into education. This is not to say that before this time the influence of psychology on educational thinking and practice was negligible. On the contrary, its influence, especially in the areas of intelligence testing, vocational guidance, and behavioural problems has been considerable.[55] The point being made here refers to the consolidation of a shift from a medicalisation to a psychologisation of sexuality. That is, as was discussed earlier in Chapter 3,[56] this shift signified an understanding of sexuality in which issues and questions of sexual identity could be understood as separate and detached from those of anatomy. Further, as is

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53 Minister of Education, 'Role of Schools in Counselling on Problems of Human Relations', in *SAIT Journal*, 4 (13), 23 August 1970, p. 6.

54 *ibid.*, p. 6.

55 Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), pp. 169-80. As was earlier noted in Chapter 5, the first Education Department psychologist, Dr Constance Davey, was appointed in 1924. However, it was not until 1946 that a specific Psychology Branch was formed within the Education Department.

56 See Chapter 3, pp. 114 *ff.*.

clearly evident in the speech of the Minister of Education discussed above, the idea of sexuality as central to emotional well-being was now positioned at the centre of the discursive construction of a curriculum based sex education. Sex education, at least in principle, came to be seen as a legitimate and even necessary part of these 'other purposes'. That 'crucial element' of 'the crucible of character formation', as Fenner described it some twenty-seven years earlier, had finally arrived.

A month later the Director-General of Education announced that his impending overseas study trip, being made in conjunction with his attendance at a UNESCO conference, would also include a visit to Sweden to assess its approach to sex education.[57] Thus he could draw on the experiences of education authorities overseas to inform his own policy pronouncements. This would enable them to be seen as having been derived from education oriented parameters rather than simply in response to the views of the Minister. The point here is that the Director-General is mandated to have sole responsibility for determining what is to be taught in schools. While accountable to the Minister (and the parliament) for the management of the education system any decisions about curriculum content and so on remained with the Director-General.[58] The

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57 'To Study Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 27 September 1972.

58 See *Education Act, 1972*, Pt VII, 82 (1) for the Director-General's curriculum responsibility and Pt II, 12 (a) & (b) for the managerial and administrative authority. This Act, No. 154 of 1972, replaced the *Education Act, 1915-1971*. The clause dealing with curriculum responsibility dated from 1915 as a result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Education 1911-13. See *SAPP* No. 75, 1913: *Royal Commission on Education: Final Report (together with Minutes of Proceedings, Evidence, and Appendices)*, (T.J. Ryan Chairman), (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1913).

study tour provided a breathing space to enable the Director-General to be seen to be arriving at his own conclusions. As it turned out, on his return he spoke favourably about developments in Sweden.[59] Just over a month later the government announced the formation of a Health Education Committee to oversee the ongoing development of a health education curriculum.[60]

Now this could be understood as simply the logical result of the Director-General's trip to Sweden -- which was precisely how *The Advertiser* represented it.[61] It was also how the Minister of Education represented the issue to a member of the community who wrote to find out who had 'initiated the idea to have this introduced in the school curriculum'.[62] Thus the Minister replied that 'the Director-General of Education, Mr. A.W. Jones, with my concurrence, had formed a Health Education Committee'.[63] Yet it must be remembered that this was also the outcome of the pressure brought to bear over many years by a number of organisations. Representing developments in the manner described above gave the impression that the Education Department was acting only from educationally inspired pedagogic principles. This was true only in part in the

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59 'Juniors May Be Taught Sex', *The Advertiser*, 8 January 1973. See also his comments in 'Stemming Freer Sexual Habits 'Not Schools' Job'', *The Advertiser*, 8 June 1973; "Objective' Study of Sex Needed', *The Advertiser*, 26 July 1973.

60 'Study Of Sex, Drug Courses', *The Advertiser*, 1 March 1973.

61 *ibid.*, A similar perspective was given in 'Sex Education in Sweden's Schools: Report by the Director-General of Education', *SAIT Journal*, 28 March 1973, pp. 1-3.

62 Minister of Education to Mrs J.V. Lynch, 9 November 1973. *SAED*: 14/16/1.

63 *ibid.*

sense that many of those lobbying for this development from an education perspective saw it in just those terms. However, as is revealed by a closer look at some of the Director-General's public statements, behind such representations was another perspective expressing more familiar concerns about the efficacy of the 'crucible of character formation'.

In speaking publicly about the introduction of sex education the Director-General stressed the fact that children would learn about sex regardless. Interestingly enough this view was also shared by those in the Women's Liberation Movement who had prepared the pamphlet to advise young girls about contraception.[64] The inevitability of children learning about sex was one of the two key assumptions reported by the Director-General as underpinning Sweden's approach to sex education.[65] The other assumption was that schools were best placed to provide students with 'the most objective account of sex biologically and ethically' because only there could such knowledge be taught 'naturally and without drama as the student's growth, development and maturity allowed'.[66] Both of these assumptions were endorsed by the Director-General. However, he did not see the role of the school usurping that of parents. Parents would retain their right to withdraw their children from such lessons if they so advised the school. It was up to the schools 'to convince them of the worth of the course for

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64 'Contraceptive Advice For Schoolgirls', *The Advertiser*, 24 February 1971. See pp. 334-5 *supra*.

65 'Sex Education in Sweden's Schools: Report by the Director-General of Education', *SAIT Journal*, 28 March 1973, pp. 1-3.

66 *ibid.*, p. 1.

the children'.[67]

The Director-General made this quite explicit in a subsequent speech in which he was ostensibly spelling out the parameters of what could realistically be expected of schools in this area. He pointed out that schools should 'not be expected to "stem the tide" of forces which promote freer sexual behaviour', to do 'what the community as a whole and parents have failed to do'.[68] On the surface this would seem to be a disavowal of the pastoral role of the school in inculcating responsible social and moral values. However, the point for the Director-General turned on the fact that there were limits to what schools could be expected to achieve. Reiterating the view that he had put earlier that year,[69] he stressed that schools could only aim to present 'the most objective account of sex, both biologically and ethically'.[70] This certainly did not mean either that schools would teach sex education in a moral vacuum or that such objectivity precluded reference to the moral values of an ostensibly Christian society. On the contrary, a 'factual and objective' approach to sex education included teaching it 'with the ethical mores of our kind of community placed firmly before the children' which meant that 'on some principles schools should not remain neutral'.[71] For the Director-General, these 'principles' involved teaching students

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67 *ibid.*, p. 3.

68 'Stemming Freer Habits 'Not Schools' Job', *The Advertiser*, 8 June 1973.

69 'Sex Education in Sweden's Schools: Report by the Director-General of Education', *SAIT Journal*, 28 March 1973, pp. 1-3.

70 'Stemming Freer Habits 'Not Schools' Job', *The Advertiser*, 8 June 1973.

71 *ibid.*

that 'it was wrong' to produce an 'unwanted pregnancy' or 'to get venereal disease or give it to another', or 'to force or encourage another to act against his or her moral standards'.[72] The schools would complement, if not reinforce, parental authority and family values thereby, in the view of the Karmel Committee, 'reflect[ing]... ...the interpersonal relations that are thought desirable in society at large'.[73] Despite appearances, these values were constitutive of a gender order in which men were the "naturally" sexually active beings inhabiting the public sphere of paid work and women were "naturally" sexually passive and more suited to the private, domestic sphere. There was no question that sex education would challenge this gender order -- especially the moral values defining what was deemed to be sexually responsible behaviour. Only now the problem was to accommodate the changes that were occurring in sexual conduct where women were no longer accepting either the gender bias or the presumed sexual identities of the sexual double standards of previous years.

Furthermore, the two key assumptions firmly endorsed by the Director-General, namely that children would find out about sex regardless and that schools were best placed to provide 'the most objective account of sex biologically and ethically', reveal much about what was at issue. This is particularly so for the assumption about the objectivity of educational discourse. Here the notion of 'objectivity' is clearly a discursive construction of a particular knowledge regime. For the education based discourse on sex was to be

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72 *ibid.*

73 *Karmel Report* (1971), p. 43/3.39.

constructed from within 'the ethical mores of our community'. Central to those 'ethical mores' was the assumed naturalness of marriage. That is, that marriage was more than just the social space within which nature was enabled to operate. It was the social space that was itself a 'fact' of nature. Such ideas clearly informed the views of the Director-General as it did nearly all of those involved in lobbying for school based sex education. Sexual urges were given by nature, were part of one's individual nature. As has already been noted on a number of occasions, manhood or masculinity was presumed to involve an active sexuality whereas ideas of womanhood or femininity invoked a reactive, mostly passive, sexuality. The sexual natures of men were not to be condemned but social-ised to manifest themselves in an acceptable manner. Sexual intercourse was represented as occurring most properly within the institution of marriage as an expression of monogamous, heterosexual loving commitment.[74]

If students were gaining their sexual knowledge from dubious sources then some control had to be reasserted over the sort of sexual knowledge being put before them. School based knowledge was assumed to be appropriate to the extent that it would provide an authoritative filtering of the other sources of sexual knowledge. It would not necessarily 'stem freer habits' in the first instance

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[74] See for example, Bernard Boucher, 'Sex Talk to 16-Year-Olds Well Handled', *The Advertiser*, 17 August 1973 which provides an account of a sex education class given at Underdale High School by the Director of the Family Life Movement, Mr Geoff Horne. Sexual intercourse was described as a relationship that 'should be reserved for marriage. That was a total relationship between two people which was all the more precious if neither shared it with anyone else. Intercourse was a way of saying I love you and I belong to you'. Horne's views were indicative of those expressed at various times by members of parent organisations such as SAASSO and SASASWC.

but it would provide a means of counterbalancing, and eventually outweighing, these other, presumably less desirable, sources of sexual knowledge. This continues the same sorts of concerns that were expressed in the 1940s in relation to character formation. Once again, a natural-ised sexuality was to the fore, deployed to inculcate appropriately gendered social behaviour. The above points are further underlined by the actual process enabling sex education to be introduced into the school curriculum under the auspices of a wider health education syllabus. It is that process which now needs to be discussed.

IV

The composition of the Health Education Committee, set up on the return of the Director-General from his overseas study trip, illustrated the Education Department's concern to include a wide cross-section of community opinion. It also reflected the composition advocated in its various submissions by the South Australian Primary Schools Committees' Associations (SAPSCA) and its successor organisation SAASSO.[75] Membership of the committee included representatives from the Education Department, the Health Department, parent organisations, the Colleges of Advanced Education, the SA Family Life Movement, the Marriage Guidance Council, the Catholic Education Office, and the SA Institute of Teachers. It was chaired by the Deputy Director-General of Education, Mr J.R. Steinle.[76]

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75 For details see the discussion in the previous chapter of these submissions.

76 'Sex Education in Sweden's Schools: Report by the Director-General of Education', *SAIT Journal*, 28 March 1973, p. 3.

The task of the committee was to advise the Minister on 'the feasibility of introducing a general health education course, including drug and sex education, for primary and secondary students'.[77] As such it reported on the experiences of the pilot program that had begun already that year in thirteen high schools. The committee also addressed additional issues such as teacher training, preparation of appropriate curriculum materials, and points of interaction and support for work that was already being done in schools by existing groups such as the Family Life Movement and the Marriage Guidance Council.[78] While a copy of the Committee's report appears no longer to be extant[79] some of the details of its findings were made known to teachers through the *Education Gazette*.

The most important of these was that the Minister of Education endorsed the gradual introduction of a Health Education Course into the curriculum in all schools.[80] The health course was defined as having two main aims with respect to educating students. In the first place, it was to enable the recognition of

> physical, mental and social health as being essential to the individual and community[81]

and secondly, to inculcate the acquisition of

> knowledge and attitudes adequate to recognise, face, and

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77 'Study of Sex, Drug Courses', *The Advertiser*, 1 March 1973.

78 *ibid.*

79 A search of active (ie 1970-90) Education Department files undertaken by Education Department officers failed to locate this report.

80 *SAEG*, 1 (33), 24 October 1973, p. 4.

81 *SAEG*, 1 (22), 25 July 1973, p. 2.

> deal constructively with health problems which confront the individual.[82]

To achieve the above aims, the health course was to cover ten broad topics or areas. These were input/output (ie food, sleep, exercise), disease and disability, consumer health, ourselves and others, drug education, work and play, family life education, safety education, environmental health, and coping with stress.[83] While the words 'sex education' did not feature in this list it was clear that a number of the topic areas (such as 'ourselves and others', 'disease and disability', 'family life education') provided the space within which sexual knowledge could be formally addressed. Teachers were also reminded that although the Health Education Committee regarded sex education as important, 'parents [would] continue to have the right to withdraw their children from sections of the course dealing with sexual matters if they wish to do so'.[84] Parental prerogatives remained significant in the thinking of the deliberations of the Health Education Committee. In addition, the Education Department stressed that 'only those schools for which formal approval ha[d] been given' could teach the pilot health education program.[85]

Towards the end of 1973 a Health Education Project Team (HEPT) was created to prepare a more detailed set of aims and objectives for a health course

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82 *ibid.*, p. 1.

83 *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

84 *SAEG*, 1 (33), 24 October 1973. p. 5.

85 *SAEG*, 2 (3), 20 February 1974. pp. 4-5.

that would 'extend[...] from the first year to the twelfth year of schooling'.[86] Teachers with an interest in health education were invited to join the team to help implement the new program.[87] The initial members of the Health Education Project Team were N. Wadrop, (Coordinator), M. Conley (Largs North Primary School) and R. Henderson (Para Hills Primary School).[88] A new version of the Health Education Committee provided the oversight for the Project Team. It had, however, a slightly different membership than its predecessor. The various community groups that were invited into schools to assist with sex education were no longer formally represented. The members of the Committee were N. Wadrop (HEPT Coordinator), Mr T. Evans (SAASSO), Dr O. Fuller (Department of Public Health), Mr J. Grandioso (Senior Teacher, Royal Park High School), Mr H.H. Gray (Superintendent of Secondary Education), Mr C. Lafleur (Research and Planning), Mr A. Lawson (Education Officer, Secretary), Mr H. Mutton (Principal Education Officer), Mrs S. Nolan (SASASWC), Dr E. Puddy (Independent Schools Association), Mrs H. Smith (Teacher, Flinders Park Demonstration School), Dr G. Speedy (Sturt CAE), and Mr L.W. Whalan (Superintendent of Primary Education).[89] The composition of the Health Education Committee was thus a little narrower reflecting its new brief to go beyond a pilot scheme to prepare a system wide health curriculum for Education

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86 *SAEG*, 2 (38), 20 November 1974. p. 5.

87 *SAEG*, 1 (30), 3 October 1973. p. 1.

88 *SAEG*, 2 (38), 20 November 1974. p. 5.

89 *ibid.*, p. 5.

Department schools.

The number of secondary schools using the pilot program for Year 8 students grew from the original thirteen in 1973 to thirty-two (18 metropolitan and 14 country) in 1974. About half of these high schools also offered it to Year 9 students and in one metropolitan high school the program had expanded to include Year 10 students.[90] The Education Department expected the health course to become available to most third year students by 1975.[91] This gradual expansion appeared to generate little or no real controversy -- or at least the few expressions of concern that did emerge were of insufficient moment to deter the Education Department from its path. These concerns will be addressed as part of the discussion in the next chapter. For now attention is directed to the Education Department's initial assessments, conducted in 1976, of its health education initiatives.

V

There were two types of evaluations carried out during 1976. The first was a questionnaire sent out by the Royal Commission on Human Relationships (chaired by Justice Elizabeth Evatt)[92] to various education authorities. Education

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90 *SAEG*, 3 (14), 7 May 1975. pp. 3-4.

91 'Sex Education To Be Expanded', *The Advertiser*, 3 July 1974.

92 *Royal Commission on Human Relationships* (Justice Elizabeth Evatt, Chairperson), in five volumes, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1977). Members of the Royal Commission were Justice Evatt, Mr Felix Arnott, and Ms Anne Deveson. A summarised version of the above five reports was also subsequently published in one volume as Anne Deveson, *Australians At Risk*, (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1978).

Departments were asked to provide information about 'education programmes dealing with human relationships/personal development/sex education'.[93] In effect, this survey mapped the Education Department's own perceptions of its efforts in these areas. The second was a more formal evaluation conducted by the Research and Planning Section of the Education Department.[94] The conclusions reached were drawn from evidence provided by a cross-section of those involved or affected by the pilot program.

The Royal Commission questionnaire was completed by the HEPT Coordinator, Mr N. Wadrop. There were a total of sixteen questions of which all but one were specifically concerned with sex education.[95] The questions enquired about the existence, organisation and nature of sex education in the school system, the general attitude of the Education Department towards it in terms of support and policy, the contributions to its teaching by non-Education Department organisations, the training of teachers, the adequacy of existing teaching aids and resources, the topics covered, the rights of parents, and estimates of the numbers of children receiving sex education. Some of the

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93 Director-General of Education (Mr A.W. Jones) to Ms A. Deveson, Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 13 September 1976. *SAED*: 14/16/33.

94 *Health Education Evaluation Program: Summary of Surveys Conducted in South Australian High Schools Piloting Health Education*, (Research Section, Research and Planning Directorate, Education Department, Adelaide, 1977). Hereafter cited as *HEEP*.

95 Question 15 referred to human relationships, personal development, and sex education. All the rest focused on issues related specifically to sex education. See 'Survey of Education Programmes Dealing With Human Relationships/Personal Development/Sex Education', 6 September 1976. *SAED*: 14/16/33. Hereafter cited as 'Survey of Education Programmes' (1976).

answers given were somewhat tentative as many of the responses could only be given in relation to the pilot program -- which was then in its fourth year of operation. This was evident in the hand written qualifications made by Mr Wadrop to some of the questions.

The Commission was informed that over the three years that the pilot program had been in operation it was estimated that sex education had been provided for up to 10% of the school population in 1973, 20% in 1974 and 40% in 1975.[96] The pilot program was described as 'centrally formulated' and 'general and obligatory' to which the Education Department was described as 'well disposed and actively involved'.[97] It was a matter of policy for sex education to form a part of the health education curriculum for primary, junior and senior high schools.[98] Nonetheless, parents retained the right to withdraw their children from such classes if they so wished.[99] The Commission was also informed that the contribution of voluntary organisations (such as church groups, the Family Life Movement, the Family Planning Association, and the Marriage Guidance Council) counted for no more than one third of the initiatives. The contribution from Health Departments was described as being 'far below one-third'.[100] Within the pilot program lessons were described as 'always organised in mixed groups

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96 'Survey of Education Programmes', (1976). p. 5.

97 *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

98 *ibid.*, p. 3.

99 *ibid.*

100 *ibid.*, p. 2.

of boys and girls' but for lessons conducted outside the auspices of the pilot program there was considerable variation with the 'arrangements... [being] ...left to the discretion of the teacher'.[101] It was acknowledged that there was little availability of any specific continuing education for teachers of sex education apart from some in-service sessions in health education of varying duration up to about thirteen weeks. In the teacher training institutions it was revealed that despite the occasional lecture or optional session, 'fundamentally nothing is happening'.[102] The provision of resources (such as textbooks, pamphlets, display charts, and educational films and videotapes) for the pilot schools was deemed to be adequate in the sense that supplies could be obtained if needed.[103]

The Commission also sought information on a range of topics that it expected might be taught within the area of sex education. The topics listed were male and female puberty; male and female sexual hygiene; the social role and sexual roles of men and women; sexuality and sensuality; personal interaction and communication skills; marriage, divorce etc; parenthood and child development; sexual intercourse; pregnancy, and the development of the human foetus; childbirth; contraceptive techniques; consequences of unplanned pregnancies; issues arising from adolescent sexual activity; venereal disease, and other sexually transmitted diseases; masturbation; nocturnal emission (wet

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101 *ibid.*, p. 3. (Emphasis in original).

102 *ibid.*, p. 6.

103 *ibid.*, p. 4.

dreams); homosexuality (male and female); and rape.[104] The Commission wanted to know how frequently they were discussed (ie usually, seldom or never discussed) and at what levels (ie primary, junior high or senior high). For senior high school students, all topics were acknowledged as 'usually discussed'. This was also the case for junior high school students with the exception of one topic, sexuality and sensuality, which was described as 'seldom discussed'. This was also a topic that was 'never discussed' at primary school level. Other topics placed in the category of 'seldom discussed' in primary schools were contraception, consequences of unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and rape. On the surface at least the coverage of topics was quite wide despite the potential for controversy that might exist for individual topic areas.

In general, the picture that was presented to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships was of an Education Department well to the fore in implementing a broad based sex education program. However, the fact that the responses indicated what the HEPT Coordinator of the pilot program thought would or should be taught needs to be taken into account. For the actual topic areas listed by the Royal Commission were much more specific than those designated in the pilot program. The former were more directly germane to sex education whereas the latter were more generalised to a broader health perspective. Moreover, at that stage of the development of the health education program there was no real data as to what topics, whether general or specific, were actually dealt with in schools. Consequently, the HEPT Coordinator's

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104 *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

evaluation was indicative rather than definitive. The gathering of more concrete data had to await the second sort of assessment carried out by the Research and Planning Directorate of the Education Department.

This took the form of a series of questionnaires sent to seven designated categories of people within the education system. These were every secondary school Principal, Deputy Principal, Principal Education Officer, and Student Counsellor; two randomly selected samples of Health Education teachers; a randomly selected sample of teachers responsible for areas other than health education; and selected samples of students taking health education courses in twelve randomly selected schools involved in the pilot project. The response rate[105] for each group was 65% and 83% for Principals of non-pilot and pilot schools respectively, 48% and 76% for Deputies of non-pilot and pilot schools respectively, 51% for Student Counsellors, 52% for Principal Education Officers, 36 % for the sample of non-health education teachers, 70% for the first sample of health education teachers, 67% for the second sample of health education teachers, and 100% for the selected classes of students.[106] The questionnaires were designed with open ended questions to address four specific aspects of the pilot program: first, to ascertain 'people's opinions and feelings in specific areas' such as subject overlap, selection of individuals to teach health education, and so

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105 The response rate was taken to be the number of those returning completed forms expressed as a percentage of the number in the particular group being surveyed.

106 *HEEP* (1977), p. 5 and p. 6.

on;[107] second, 'to canvass comment and suggestions initiated by the respondents'; third, 'to establish which parts of the course were being taught and how effective teachers thought these topics would be';[108] and finally, to discover if there were any 'other areas that required examination by either the evaluation team or project team'.[109]

As can be seen from the above cited figures the response rate was fairly high across the surveyed groups. To that extent the evaluation team was justified in supposing that it had achieved a sufficiently representative cross-section of opinion on which to base its findings and discussion.[110] In broad sweep it found that the pilot program was generally well-received and well-supported by education staff of various types and levels, students and parents. With few exceptions the program was perceived in a positive light by all concerned.[111] This does not mean that the evaluation team ignored potential problems. On the contrary, it identified a range of issues that it felt needed further Departmental

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107 *ibid.*, p. 4.

108 *ibid.*

109 *ibid.*

110 This supposition is not stated directly but it is certainly implied by the evaluation team's discussion of its aims and methodology (see *ibid.*, pp. 3-6 inclusively). The fact that the evaluation team did not itself make any comment about the potential for unreliable responses from the sampled groups coupled with the (generally) high figures for the response rate suggests that the evaluation team took the data to be a reliable base from which to draw firm conclusions.

111 As the evaluation team noted, this was perhaps to be expected in those schools participating in the pilot program. However, it also pointed out that 'it is from the non pilot school responses (and from the number of requests received by the Project team for entry to the pilot scheme) that we can gauge general acceptance', *ibid.*, p. 33.

attention.

Under the specific heading of 'areas of concern' it identified four major areas. These were 'overlap' (largely referring to the duplication of subject content taught elsewhere in the curriculum), 'staff and staff training' (ie status and qualifications of health education teachers, release time for training, status of the subject in terms of promotion prospects and so on), 'timetabling' (primarily relating to the pressures involved in allocating curriculum space in any given school and the academic status of the subject), and 'resistances' (ie opposition to the program in whole or in part due to perceptions of its potentially controversial nature).[112] Significantly, it was the first three 'areas of concern' that turned out to dominate the discussion of the fourth category of 'resistances'. The issue of controversy did not loom as large as the evaluation team had anticipated.[113]

The evaluation team found that the bulk of the

> [r]esistance came in the form of subject/faculty rivalry due to overlap, staff not wanting much to do with the course, and areas already discussed e.g. timetabling.[114]

While it acknowledged that these issues would vary from school to school according to local conditions, it also stressed the need for the Education Department to provide system wide support. Many of the problems experienced at the local level could be (and were) overcome through effective communication and management. But some of the problems such as teacher training (both pre-

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112 *ibid.*, pp. 31-6.

113 *ibid.*, p. 33 and p. 30 for the table of the major problems identified by Principals and Deputy Principals in both the pilot and non-pilot schools.

114 *ibid.*, p. 33.

service and in-service) and the necessary release time, relief teaching staff, adequate numbers of health education advisers, and so forth required resources and support that went beyond the capacities of individual schools. The evaluation team reported that '[w]ithout commitment of this sort at the Departmental level and through to school level, the course will only at best succeed in a few schools'.[115] Thus with adequate support the above three 'areas of concern', particularly as they constituted the major sources of identified 'resistances', could be addressed and largely overcome.

The other important aspect of 'resistance' was that of the potentially controversial nature of particular units within the pilot program, specifically sex education. As noted, the evaluation team had expected this to be a major area of concern. Yet its 'survey reveal[ed] very little resistance to the subject matter by staff, students or parents'.[116] It was acknowledged that there were certainly instances where parental concerns were raised in various schools when the pilot program was introduced. However, the survey revealed that 'after meetings between parents, staff and in most cases project team representatives, or after joint planning committees, misunderstandings were cleared up'.[117] This led the evaluation team to suggest that the processes developed to implement the pilot program 'should serve as a model for solving other apparent conflicts between

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115 *ibid.*, p. 37.

116 *ibid.*, p. 33.

117 *ibid.*, p. 34.

schools and community'.[118]

What the survey did bring to light was the fact that key personnel in the non-pilot schools, namely principals, deputy principals and student counsellors, 'emphasized perceived resistances due to "controversy"'.[119] That is, for such personnel, the dominant perception was that the parent community, by definition, would be 'resistant' or provide serious opposition to the introduction of a health education program. Note that here they were not pointing to actual instances of resistances on the part of parents. Rather, it was their perceptions about possible parent opposition which were being articulated. Since these were the views of key persons from within the non-pilot schools the evaluation team commented that this was what was significant about their responses.[120] A lack of familiarity with the specifics of the health education program, both as to content and methodology, was taken to be the most probable explanation for these perceptions.

There was also quite a bit of agreement among the participants -- even those in the non-pilot schools who had misgivings about the potentially controversial aspects of the program -- as to their perceptions about what they thought 'health education' meant. While individual responses varied, the common thread was that health education encompassed mental, physical, emotional and social well being. In the words of one Principal, regarded by the evaluation team

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118 *ibid.*

119 *ibid.* and the table on p. 30 where 20% of Principals and 17% of Deputy-Principals saw 'controversy' as a major problem.

120 *ibid.*, p. 33.

as generally representative,

> Health education is concerned with the total health of the child, it is strongly attitudinal; it can include traditional notions as 'a sound mind in a sound body' but is more realistic and aware of the innumerable pressures in a child's health.[121]

Similarly, Student Counsellors, Principal Education Officers, and teachers[122] generally agreed that health education went beyond the merely physical to the social, mental and emotional aspects that 'have influence on health'.[123] Student responses focused a little more on 'how the body works' but many still acknowledged 'the concept of care for themselves and others'.[124] In short, there was a dominant perception that health education embraced a significant pastoral component in which students would be enabled 'to become "well adjusted" members of the school and community'.[125]

This sort of perception led the evaluation team to ponder the implications that this might herald for the teaching methodology. The evaluation team noted that those teachers who taught in ways more in keeping with 'the spirit of the course', that is 'in a warmer, sharing way with greater emphasis on personal aspects of Health Education', were more likely to succeed in enabling the students

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121 *ibid.*, p. 11.

122 Of all the teachers surveyed, only two suggested that health education 'was a pseudonym for "sex education"' -- and these were from the sample of teachers not teaching the pilot program, *ibid.*, p. 12.

123 *ibid.*, pp. 11-2.

124 *ibid.*, p. 11.

125 *ibid.*

to appreciate the wider moral and psychological aspects of health issues than those teachers who taught in a more clinical style.[126] It was noted that many teachers reported that they had 'altered the way that they teach' in that they 're-examined their own values both in terms of the subject matter and their approach to teaching'.[127] This led the evaluation team to note that 'facts alone are not enough to encourage healthy behaviour'; rather it was the 'exploring of the "whys" and "hows", being aware of the other pressures on them (e.g. advertising, peer group)' that would be significant in effecting changes in student behaviour.[128] This reinforced the evaluation team's view that the Education Department had to provide appropriate support to enable teachers to be adequately prepared to teach health education. That is, teachers would need to be retrained in a methodology that embodied 'the spirit of the course' so that they taught 'in a warmer, sharing way'. In short, a pastoral approach, in which the teacher was a combination of authoritative guide, mentor and friend, was clearly the approach preferred by the evaluation team.

Finally, the frequency of the units taught within the health program needs to be noted. Of the ten units offered within the program the three most frequently taught, with a frequency rate of about eighty percent, were 'Ourselves and Others', 'Sex and Family Life', and 'Use and Abuse of Drugs'.[129] The next most frequently

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126 *ibid.*, p. 35.

127 *ibid.*

128 *ibid.*

129 *ibid.*, p. 29 and p. 35. In the graph presented on p. 29 of *HEEP* there is no label given for the vertical axis. All that is provided is a scale of ten point

taught unit was 'Disease and Disability' (about seventy per cent of the time) with the other six units taught fifty per cent of the time or less. Of the most frequently taught units 'Sex and Family Life' and 'Ourselves and Others' could clearly be seen as specifically addressing sex education. The rest of the units may or may not have involved any sexual material. Indeed, from the *HEEP* survey there is really no way of knowing what was the specific content of any of the ten units. To some extent this contrasts with the information provided to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships by the HEPT Coordinator. There it was assumed that in the more sex education oriented units the specific topics delineated by the Royal Commission would be covered -- at least for senior high school students. Again, it has to be concluded that, apart from the broad syllabus units specified within the pilot health curriculum, there was no real data as to what was actually taught by teachers. Nonetheless, in responding to the question about what 'they liked best about the Health Education classes' that they attended 'the topic most students mentioned was sex education'.[130]

Thus the *HEEP* survey indicated that the introduction of health education had met with a fairly high degree of acceptance. As has been noted, at least from within the Education Department it was understood and accepted as a positive development -- though more work was needed if the program was to be extended

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gradations ranging from zero to one hundred. This is a little ambiguous. However, given that the graph is meant to represent frequency of unit offerings it has been interpreted as indicating the percentage of respondents teaching particular individual units thereby giving an indication of the frequency of teaching rate.

130 *ibid.*, p. 25

to all schools. Outside of the Education Department the *HEEP* survey indicated that there also appeared to be a broad acceptance by the wider community of sex education in schools. This is not to say that there were not any queries or concerns raised within the community. Rather, that within the parameters of the *HEEP* survey parental opposition did not emerge as a significant issue. On that basis it can at least be concluded that the Education Department's introduction of sex education into the curriculum met with some initial success.

VI

Two inter-related themes can be drawn from the discussion in this chapter. The first theme follows from the Minister's speech and the Director-General's various pronouncements about the introduction of sex education into the curriculum. Both men expressed clear concerns about creating well adjusted responsible future subjects to take their place in the world of adults. In the context of the introduction of a health education program, of which sex education was to be a part, the above aim regarding future adults brought with it some changes of approach to some aspects of teaching practices. Many teachers reported that they had altered their pedagogic approach. Instead of a more clinical, fact oriented approach organised around the teacher's authority as the fount of required knowledge, the emphasis centred increasingly on creating and developing mutual rapport with the students. The pedagogy was one of developing a climate of trust in the class-room based on 'a warmer sharing way' of teaching.[131] In short there

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131 *HEEP* (1977), p. 35.

was a renewed emphasis on a pastoral approach to teaching in which psychology based discourses were deployed to reorganise teaching strategies.[132] This was clearly acknowledged by the *HEEP* discussion in its view that the Education Department should encourage the development of 'suitable methodologies' to inculcate the 'special qualities [that] are desirable for teachers of health'.[133]

The second theme was also connected to concerns about creating well adjusted future adults. But here it was the explicit social relations between the sexes that provided the dynamic. Despite, or perhaps because of, the growing numbers of women in the paid work force and parallel demands for demonstrable social equality of the sexes, the sexing of the subjects became an important problem to be solved. Put bluntly, there emerged a recognition of a renewed need for the maintenance of the discursive relations between the biological and the social. As was discussed in the previous chapter, part of this recognition can be seen in the shift in emphasis from a preoccupation with fears of sexually transmitted diseases (and the consequent reproductive fitness of the population) to concerns about how to impart contraceptive and other information without drawing undue attention to sex.

But it needs to be emphasised that the recognition that there was a problem regarding the maintenance of the boundaries defining the biological (ie.

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132 For general discussion of the sort of shift being referred to here see Ian Hunter, *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, Bureaucracy, Criticism*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994). It needs to be noted, however, that Hunter's overall perspective on schooling leads him to make some sweeping claims about its historical development that rests on what appears to be a very narrow range of evidence.

133 *HEEP* (1977), p. 32.

nature) and the social was rarely made in direct, explicit terms -- at least not by the educators. Rather, this recognition was an unstated presence, a sub-text within the various statements and claims made by those involved in the debates over sex education. On the surface the problem appeared as one of providing a form of education for the responsible transmission of sexual knowledge such that socially acceptable forms of sexual behaviour could be inculcated. Below the surface, however, was the fact that the possibility now existed in reality for heterosexual relationships to be redrawn in quite radical ways. As has been noted on a number of occasions, the impact of the Pill meant that the previously ever-present fear of reproductive consequences of sex could be negated. That is, heterosexual intercourse did not have to lead to pregnancy, marriage and family life. If pregnancy and motherhood were not inevitable then the supposed necessity for marriage, as a social institution, might also be seen as less than self-evident. In turn, this might then lead to a questioning of the presumably natural basis for social existence and relationships, namely the sexual division of labour. The alleged biological imperative for the existing sexualised social relations between women and men was no longer self-evident.

Such fears were partly revealed in the increasing groundswell of opposition to sex discrimination in a wide variety of spheres. As has been noted above, young women in the late 1960s and early 1970s began to raise their voices alongside of (and often in opposition to) other radical voices challenging the established order.[134] Past values, seemingly stable and sacrosanct, began to

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134 See notes 5 and 6, pp. 335-6 *supra*.

appear as either hypocritical or lacking in relevance. This was interpreted by many adults, including some educators, as a diminishing capacity on the part of existing institutions to shape the manners and behaviour, and hence the character, of the young. Traditional authority and the moral values that informed it were being challenged and overturned in the new wave of social permissiveness. In particular, the patriarchal gender order and its ordering of relations between sexed subjects seemed to be losing ground. The social was no longer naturally given.

Into this mix of changing social values a sex education curriculum was developed and implemented. Thus, in summary, it can be seen that the underlying rationale guiding the implementation of sex eduction within a school based curriculum was to ensure greater control over what children learnt about sexual matters; especially on the issue of contraceptive advice.. The aim was to ensure that children gained 'the most objective account of sex biologically and ethically... ...*naturally and without drama*'.[135] In one sense it was a reassertion of the authority of schools in shaping and validating the sexual knowledge deemed suitable and appropriate for children. In another, deeper sense, it was about sexing the subjects in terms of the gendered sexualities of the prevailing patriarchal social order.

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135 'Sex Education in Sweden's Schools: Report by the Director-General of Education', *SAIT Journal*, 28 March 1973, p. 1 (emphasis added).

Chapter 8

'If They Are To Err In Any Way At All Then It Will Certainly Be On The Side Of Caution': Drawing The Line On Sex Education

I

The introduction of sex education into the South Australian curriculum appeared to be a relatively smooth process. There was some opposition and instances of brief public controversy. However, these reactions were nowhere near the level of intensity that many educators (and others in the community) feared would occur. It is apparent from the discussion in previous chapters that the fear of controversy rested less on any empirical basis and more on presumptions about what was acceptable to the public.

The caution exercised by the Education Department in introducing sex education belies the rationalisation that this was somehow a progressive benefit for students. While this might have been true in part, especially for those supporting sex education courses, the reality underlying such claims was somewhat different. Beneath the surface of the discourses of this so-called enlightenment dwelt an epistemic core, in Foucault's sense, organised around ideas and practices constitutive of a heterosexual patriarchal gender order. This claim, developed throughout this thesis, is most explicitly demonstrated by examining some key moments of opposition to the introduction of sex education. In particular, the issue of homosexuality, its discussion and teaching in a sex education context, brings the underlying engendering dynamic to the surface. In an era in which the threat of sexually transmitted diseases, especially Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), caused some rethinking of sexual values

and practices, the *episteme* of sexualised social relations becomes more visible.

This chapter begins by looking at the sorts of concerns expressed in the period (1974-79) when sex education was first introduced and evaluated.[1] Interestingly enough, during this period there was at least one attempt to push the Education Department further than it was prepared to go. The focus of the chapter then shifts to a discussion of the attempts of the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT) to pursue a policy of equal rights for homosexual teachers. This issue saw a significant mobilisation of public opinion resulting in a successful campaign to counter the union's policy initiative. Central to this campaign was a concerted attempt to influence public opinion by representing teaching about homosexuality in a particularly negative light. Finally, the chapter looks at the issue of Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), especially in terms of educating students about 'safe sex'. Indeed, this move recalls the campaigns several decades earlier to combat venereal disease.

II

When sex education was first introduced the opposition was less frequent and less intense than initially anticipated. In a few of the pilot schools, as has already been noted, there were some misgivings but these seemed to have been addressed

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[1] This is not to suggest that expressions of concern about sex education to be discussed below ceased to be made after 1979. The focus here is to examine those objections that emerged largely in connection with the initial implementation of sex education into the curriculum. Since 1979 objections of various sorts have continued to be raised. However, most of these have not been concerned with disputing the need for sex education as such, but rather, have contested particular aspects of, or items offered within, the sex education program.

successfully. In both the popular press and the correspondence files of the Education Department there were some expressions of opposition and concern. A brief look at each of these sources during the first three to four years of the pilot program suggests that the level of opposition was not very pronounced. It should be noted, however, that some caution needs to be exercised in relying on these sources as a basis for definitive conclusions since they might not be entirely representative.

In the case of *The Advertiser* it is possible that letters to the Editor were published selectively to reinforce the paper's own editorial position of support for sex education. However, it seems reasonable to expect that, in the absence of definitive evidence to the contrary, what was published was a representative cross-section of public opinion submitted to *The Advertiser*. The correspondence files of the Education Department are a slightly different matter because they are incomplete. That is, some of the letters have been culled.[2] According to departmental officers within the Registry Section, the basis for the culling was that only those letters raising questions about policy were kept. Those that were removed either addressed issues specific to the letter writer's circumstances and were usually of a personal or school-specific nature, or they raised issues outside the presumed area of relevance.[3] It is impossible to know whether or not this deleted correspondence might have indicated opposition to (or acceptance of) sex

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2 According to the card indexes for the current files eighteen files had been removed. Of these, sixteen covered the period 1972-79.

3 Interviews with various personnel within the Registry Section of the Education Department, 18-20 September 1991.

education either in principle or in its implementation. With the above caveats in mind these two sources still remain useful. Together with the *Health Education Evaluation Program* (*HEEP*) survey, they provide a reasonable basis for drawing conclusions about the degree of community acceptance.

Between 1973-1976 inclusively, *The Advertiser* published nineteen letters dealing specifically with sex education.[4] Of these, fourteen were published in 1973, none in either 1974 or 1975, and five in 1976. In 1973, expressions of support for sex education outnumbered objections two to one (ie eight[5] in favour and four[6] opposed). The other two letters were too ambiguous to be classified as either for or against sex education.[7] Those writing in support agreed, though not

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4 There were other letters dealing with schooling and sex but these were mainly concerned with responses to the news that homosexual groups were considering seeking permission to give talks to students in high schools. See for example the items 'Study of Sex Talks Proposals Sought', *The Advertiser*, 2 November 1973; 'School Talks By Gay Lib. Opposed', *The Advertiser*, 5 November 1973.

5 Kevin Heath, Director , Centre of Personal Encounter, Marriage Guidance Council, 'Parents' Role In Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 18 January 1973; Dr O. Johnston, Chairman Education Sub-Committee, Family Planning Association, 'Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 22 January 1973; George V. Tuthill, 'Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 3 February 1973; Patricia Bockner, 'Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, Council Member, Family Planning Association, 14 June 1973; Anne Levy, 'Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 19 June 1973; M.L. Barclay, 'Sex And Morals', *The Advertiser*, 21 June 1973; Barbara Carver, 'Sex In Schools', *The Advertiser*, 29 June 1973; G.G. Paech, 'Children And Sex', *The Advertiser*, 30 June 1973.

6 Rev W.J. Ham, The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Adelaide, 'Moral Attitudes', *The Advertiser*, 16 June 1973; P.P. Kelly, 'Sweden And Sex', *The Advertiser*, 20 June 1973; Mary Gibbon, 'Right To Tell Children About Sex', *The Advertiser*, 25 June 1973; R.V. Curzon, 'Sex In Schools', *The Advertiser*, 9 July 1973.

7 G.B.H. Saunders, 'Suicides In Sweden', *The Advertiser*, 21 June 1973; Dr A.A. Jessup, 'Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 4 December 1973.

necessarily on every particular, that there was a need for the Education Department to provide dedicated curriculum space for sex education. The main emphasis was on the potential, and in some cases necessity, for schools to complement and support parents in providing sex education for their young. In contrast, those who wrote in opposition argued that this was an unnecessary development. One claimed that the questions of who would teach it and what would be taught could not be adequately dealt with by adopting Sweden's approach. The moral degeneracy of Sweden was (allegedly) self-evident.[8] Another claimed that instead of sex education South Australia 'need[ed] a return to that righteousness which exalts a nation';[9] in short an emphasis on moral purity was needed.

The other two correspondents claimed that teaching children about sex was the right of parents. It was not to be usurped by schools. One pointed out that she wanted her 'children to remain children until they reach the age of discretion'.[10] Teaching about sex at school would remove parents' prerogative to judge when such matters should be raised with their particular children. Similarly, another correspondent wrote that children should 'be allowed to grow up as intended and

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8 P.P. Kelly, 'Sweden And Sex', *The Advertiser*, 20 June 1973. For a response and counter-response see Saunders, 'Suicides In Sweden' and P.P. Kelly, 'Suicide In Sweden', *The Advertiser*, 26 June 1973.

9 Rev W.J. Ham, The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Adelaide, 'Moral Attitudes', *The Advertiser*, 16 June 1973.

10 Mary Gibbon, 'Right To Tell Children About Sex', *The Advertiser*, 25 June 1973.

not to be robbed of their childhood'.[11] In both of these letters is a clearly articulated view that childhood was a time of a-sexual existence; an absence of any knowledge of sexual matters. Moreover, this was understood to be a fact of nature (ie. children should be 'allowed to grow up as intended'). It was not for schools to change the natural order of things by encouraging teachers 'to think that they are better equipped to bring up other people's children than the parents'.[12] Fundamentally, for these correspondents, sex education was understood to be an 'invasion of the rights or parents and children alike'.[13] Here it needs to be noted just how commonplace and ordinary the idea of childhood innocence had become in everyday discourse. As was discussed in Chapter 3 above, a specific idea of childhood innocence emerged in the late nineteenth century to be deployed in the discursive construction of the modern (bourgeois) child. Childhood innocence provided a convenient discursive means both to construct a particular conception of 'the child' (in terms of their presumed natures) and to justify the state sanctioned intervention to protect this construction. In the 1970s, as can be seen from these newspaper letters, it was childhood innocence, the state of being a child, was still seen as needing protection. However, for these correspondents, the state was no longer a protector but disruptor of children's innocence..

One further item that needs to be noted here was a brief newspaper report on a recently established group, the Festival of Light, that indicated some degree

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11 R.V. Curzon, 'Sex In Schools', *The Advertiser*, 9 July 1973.

12 *ibid.*

13 *ibid.*

of qualified support for the fact (as distinct from the specific content) of sex education. The Festival of Light claimed to be providing 'a rallying point for the 85% of the community that is concerned' with the possibility that the trend towards permissiveness would 'lead to a complete breakdown of social values'.[14] Without actually stating that it supported sex education it nonetheless appeared to accept it as part of the school curriculum.[15] However, it stressed that the 'Sex and Family Life' unit of the health education program should emphasise above all else family life and the values of chastity and fidelity. To achieve this the Festival of Light spokesperson explained that it was essential that 'only experienced teachers', that is teachers of some longevity in the profession, should be allowed to teach sex education.[16] More importantly, such teachers should have 'demonstrably stable and happy marriages' and, ideally, should themselves have children of their own.[17] Presumably this would ensure that the social and moral values upheld by the Festival of Light would be taught.

This particular approach was common to many who wrote seeking clarification from the Education Department. For example, a letter signed by several parents echoed these sentiments with very similar wording to that used by

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14 'Festival of Light People Have Big Plans', *The Advertiser*, 29 October 1973.

15 Similarly, in an anti-sex education letter bearing six signatures, written three years later, the opposition was not so much to sex education but to what was alleged to have been taught. See Roslyn Phillips, 'Values Ignored', *The Advertiser*, 23 August 1976.

16 'Private Counselling Call In School Sex Courses', *The Advertiser*, 12 March 1974.

17 *ibid.*

the Festival of Light activists in suggesting that teachers of sex education should be of 'mature years and proven matrimonial stability'.[18] It was also suggested that parents should 'be involved in these sex education lessons for children so that the whole family share in the discussion'.[19] In his reply to this particular letter, the Minister pointed out that the Education Department was in basic agreement over the principles of maturity and stability.[20] The difficulty for the Department was in deciding on appropriate criteria for determining 'proven matrimonial stability'. He suggested that what was looked for was 'stability in the personality of the individual' teacher.[21] While this really begged the question as to the criteria for 'stability' it did enable the Education Department to reassert its autonomy in terms of upholding the standing of teachers as professional educators. For twelve months earlier, the Minister had informed another correspondent that the qualities looked for in those wishing to teach in this area were 'their teaching experience, maturity, sensitivity, background knowledge, and above all, their ability to be able to form relationships with their students and to be able to communicate effectively with them'.[22] In addition, appropriate training courses were being introduced to two of the teacher training colleges. The teachers would thus be 'properly selected

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18 J.F. Blades, T. Woodger, M. Davey, D.J. Kay, & J. Boswarva to Minister of Education, 11 April 1975, *SAED*: 14/16/27.

19 *ibid.*

20 Minister of Education to J.F. Blades *et al*, 30 May 1975, *SAED*: 14/16/27.

21 *ibid.*

22 Minister of Education to Mr P.D. Blacker, M.P., 9 May 1974. *SAED*: 14/16/24.

and adequately trained'.[23] Almost by definition then a teacher would be presumed to be a stable individual.

On the other main issue raised by this group of parents in 1975, namely that of parents being present in the classroom, the Minister pointed out that there were some difficulties in adopting this approach. The most prominent of these was the general indifference of many parents to invitations to find out more about the health education program, especially its sex education aspect. The pilot schools, in particular, had had little success in attracting parents to share in the project. However, the Minister stressed that while parents were not involved in the classroom, they were certainly involved in the sex education of their children. This was, explained the Minister, because parents 'are the most influential sources for attitudes and values to sexuality in their children's lives'.[24] This was a fact clearly accepted by, and central to, the approach adopted by the Education Department in supporting parents' right to withdraw their children if they so desired. To reassure these parents the Minister stressed that

> principals and teachers are very much aware of their responsibilities to parents and students in relation to sex and family education, and *if they are to err in any way at all it will be on the side of caution.*[25]

This reveals not just the cautious, even conservative, nature of the approach of the Education Department. It also indicated its sensitivity to even the smallest level of criticism.

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23 *ibid.*

24 Minister of Education to J.F. Blades *et al*, 30 may 1975. *SAED*: 14/16/27.

25 *ibid.*, (emphasis added).

On another occasion the Minister received a letter suggesting that 'some aspects of the course' were causing concern.[26] For this correspondent, the Education Department appeared to be proceeding too rapidly in terms of the content and timing of the information made available to students. In particular, information given to thirteen year olds about methods of contraception and the examination of that knowledge was considered by this parent to be both inappropriate and unnatural. In her view, sex education should be taught, ideally, in the home where it 'is best taught naturally and when the child is of sufficient age to cope with the information given'.[27] What was most important was the need to consider 'the maturity of the student' so as to avoid stirring up unnecessary curiosity in the area. Such curiosity and its satisfaction 'should be allowed to develop naturally'.[28] In her view, matriculation biology provided 'plenty of room for discussion and learning on sex while looking at the whole functioning of man'.[29] Presumably matriculation students would be at an appropriate level of maturity. The Minister of Education began by noting his sympathy with her concerns. He indicated that 'a thorough investigation' as well as discussions with 'the Principal and teachers concerned in the school' were taking place. He also advised her that any future concerns should be raised 'in

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26 Mrs J.C. Lonsdale to Minister of Education, 22 September 1976. *SAED* 14/16/34.

27 *ibid.*

28 *ibid.*

29 *ibid.*

the first instance' with the school Principal.[30]

The significance of this exchange is twofold. First, it underlined the concern over who has access to contraceptive knowledge, at what age such knowledge becomes available, and for what purposes. For this correspondent there was a naturally given age at which such knowledge was deemed appropriate. The second point of significance was that there was a natural trajectory to be followed in teaching about sex. That is, that learning about sex and related matters was linked to nature in such a way that cognitive development was dictated by biological development. Put otherwise, that the social was informed, defined by and dependent on the biological. This was a point with which the Education Department appeared to be in agreement. For the Education Department was also concerned that the information given to students should be 'safe' in the twin senses that it was age-appropriate and that it had received curriculum approval from the Health Project Team.[31] The choice of the word 'safe' further underscores the underlying sense of caution.

It was precisely this emphasis on caution that only a few months earlier had prompted the Young Labor Association (YLA) to attempt to push the Education Department a bit further. It persuaded the State Council of the ALP to adopt a motion on sex education to forward to the Minister of Education. The text of the motion read:

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30 Minister of Education to Mrs J.C. Lonsdale, 27 October 1976. *SAED* 14/16/34.

31 Co-ordinator, Health Education Project to Deputy Director General Education (Schools), 20 October 1976. *SAED* 14/16/34.

> That the State PLP investigate ways of broadening the subject of sex education being taught in schools. That sex education be broadened to include contraception and the problems and responsibilities of raising children. This subject to be taught to students by their early teens (12 years old and onwards).[32]

The initial departmental advice to the Minister emphasised that the YLA motion seemed to be a 'crisis-oriented approach' that would do little to win the confidence of adolescents. This was because the motion assumed that sex education was taught as an isolated subject rather than as an integral part of the health program; the latter approach being described as 'fundamental to the philosophy of health and sex education in our program'.[33] The Minister was not happy with this advice as he thought that its characterisation of the motion as a 'crisis-oriented approach' missed the point.[34]

On further investigation Wadrop reported that the spirit of the YLA's motion was for sex education programs to be compulsory for all students in the sense that sex education should be taught 'as an integral part of the normal school program (and hence there would be no provision for parents to "opt" their children out of lessons)'.[35] Wadrop also reported that the ALP official with whom

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32 H.H. O'Neill, State Secretary ALP, to Minister of Education, 23 March 1976. *SAED*: 14/16/31.

33 N. Wadrop, Coordinator, Health Education Project Staff to K. Barter, Deputy Director-General, 6 April 1976. *SAED*: 14/16/31.

34 Minister of Education to K. Barter, Deputy Director-General, 8 April 1976. *SAED*: 14/16/31.

35 N. Wadrop to K. Barter, Deputy Director-General, 3 May 1976. *SAED*: 14/16/31.

he spoke, namely the Acting State Secretary, C. Schacht, was of the view that most of those present at the State Council meeting had an incomplete picture of what was actually going on in schools. Few exhibited any knowledge of either the health education program or of 'the approach to Sex Education and Family Education within' it.[36] Wadrop then advised his superiors that, after his discussions with the Acting State Secretary,

> The spirit of the motion does in fact call for the establishment of Sex Education in schools, but in doing so, does not take into account what is already under way in the schools and what is planned for the immediate future. It would appear that the "Sex and Family Life" unit of the Health Education course more than adequately provides what the YLA is asking for and provides it within a framework which is acceptable to parents generally.[37]

Wadrop reasserted his earlier view that the motion need not bother the Education Department because the existing program met the YLA's concerns. He also suggested that the YLA might like to invite one of the members of the Health Education Project Team, Lynn Arnold, who also happened to be Secretary of the Salisbury branch of the ALP, to speak at one of its meetings.[38] Wadrop's comments were endorsed by the Director-General, John Steinle,[39] and forwarded

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36 *ibid.*

37 *ibid.*

38 *ibid.*

39 *ibid.* The Director-General's comments appeared as handwritten marginal notes to Wadrop's advice and were made on 10 May 1976. He noted, quite explicitly, his agreement with Wadrop's advice and pointed out that 'It appears to me that those who have drafted the motion lack a clear understanding of the aims and contents of the courses'. He also endorsed Wadrop's suggestion that the Minister 'invite the Association to consider discussing the matter with Arnold'.

to the Minister. The Minister subsequently wrote to the ALP State Secretary in terms of the views put to him by his departmental officers.[40]

Two points are of interest here. First, the Minister no longer felt that the advice that he was being given missed the nub of the motion. No reason was stated but it appears likely that his initial objection was due to an inkling that Wadrop had not bothered to find out what was actually being debated (and why) within the ALP State Council meeting. Presented with more details of how the advice had been arrived at the Minister, as a member of the political party concerned, was then politically more able to act on his officers' advice and ignore the advice from State Council. The second, more important point, was the way in which the intent of the YLA's motion was reinterpreted to be other than it was. While it may have been true that the framers of the motion 'lack[ed] a clear understanding' of what was actually being done in schools with respect to sex education, this was irrelevant to the spirit underlying their motion. For the YLA, as Wadrop discovered, the point was for sex education to be treated like any other school subject. The choice to opt out, to have parents withdraw their children from it, would simply not be available.

However, this was not an issue that was negotiable for the Education Department. As has been acknowledged throughout this thesis, the right for parents to withdraw their children had been a longstanding policy for much of

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Recall also that Steinle was the Chairperson of the original Health Education Committee set up in early 1973.

40 Minister of Education to H.H. O'Neill, State Secretary ALP, 18 May 1976. *SAED*: 14/16/31.

the twentieth century. In May 1974 the Minister reiterated this -- although he did so in a way that implied that his government could take the credit for it.[41] Nonetheless, in that letter he made the point on two separate occasions. He stressed that '[t]he policy situation is quite clear. ...parents have a right to opt out on behalf of their children. ... the rights of parents to withdraw their children are fully protected'.[42] It was also 'support[ed] in full' by the Minister. In many ways this policy underpinned the strategy of implementing a sex education curriculum. As has been demonstrated, the dominant perception was that sex education was so controversial that parent opposition was inevitable. By allowing parents the right to withdraw their children, a (presumably) ready-made point of mobilisation was removed. Thus the spirit of the YLA motion, had it been allowed to find favour within the Education Department, would have involved more than just a distinct shift from the existing, longstanding policy. In the eyes of those involved in implementing the policy, it might well have destabilised the entire health program.[43]

As can be seen from the range of criticisms noted above, there were those in the community who had reservations about sex education. There were also some who wanted the Education Department to go further, to place sex education

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41 Minister of Education to Mr P.D. Blacker, M.P., 9 May 1974 where he stated that the right for parents to withdraw their children from sex education classes was 'a consequence of a Government decision which I support in full'.

42 *ibid.*

43 Recall that this was before the Education Department had undertaken in 1976 its own evaluation of its initiatives. See the earlier discussion of *HEEP* (1977), pp. 364-72 *supra*.

on the same footing as other subjects by removing the opting out clause. However, there was little organised expression of public concern. The cautious approach of the Education Department met with general public acceptance. The long-standing allegiance of the Education Department to the ideology of home and family organised around patriarchal norms remained undisturbed. Women continued to be understood as carers and nurturers -- physically, emotionally, and sexually -- who responded to rather than initiated sexual activity; moreover, such activity was itself defined as part of a marital relationship where 'primitive desires' could be properly expressed and controlled.[44] Sex education, whatever form it took, had to be consistent with the prevailing gendered sexualities of women and men.

III

The emphasis on upholding gendered sexuality was firmly underlined in 1985 when what appeared to be a mass mobilisation of public opinion erupted over what was represented as an issue of teaching homosexuality in schools. The Education Department faced a situation in which issues of health and sex education, schooling, and homosexuality became fused (indeed con-fused). Concerns about what was normal and what was deviant, what should be permitted and what should not, emerged in sharply delineated terms. The trigger

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44 See for example, Bernard Boucher, 'Sex Talk to 16-Year-Olds Well Handled', *The Advertiser*, 17 August 1973; 'Stemming Freer Habits 'Not Schools' Job', *The Advertiser*, 8 June 1973; Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia 1969-1970, (Peter Karmel Chairman), *Education in South Australia*, (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, February 1971).

for this controversy was a draft industrial policy formulated by the teachers' union to address discrimination against teachers on the grounds of sexuality or perceived sexual preference. One part of this policy, Section 5, focused on sex education with the explicit demand that any discussion of homosexuality in the classroom should be free from prejudice. That is,

> Any teacher-directed presentation or discussion of homosexuality in a class situation should aim to be positive in approach within an understanding of the implications of sexuality.[45]

It was also proposed that the sexual preferences of teachers should be irrelevant 'in determining which teachers are able to teach sex education'.[46] Students should also be 'educated as to the rights and support group mechanisms' that might be available in case of work-place discrimination on the basis of sexuality.[47] Consequently, transition education teachers and careers counsellors would need to be given 'appropriate in-service' training to assist them to become 'fully familiar with the rights and support mechanisms for lesbian and homosexual students and workers'.[48]

The core issue for the union turned on eliminating discriminatory practices involving a teacher's sexuality. Its strategy was essentially two-fold: industrial and educational. The first focused on changing working conditions so that

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45 *SAIT Draft Policy on Lesbian Women and Homosexual Men*, Clause 5.2.c. *SAED*: 14/16/22B.

46 *ibid.*, Clause 5.2.h. *SAED*: 14/16/22B.

47 *ibid.*, Clause 4.1.b. *SAED*: 14/16/22B.

48 *ibid.*, Clauses 4.2.2 and 4.3. *SAED*: 14/16/22B.

homosexual teachers were no longer treated unfavourably; the second was intended to effect a wider change in attitudes to homosexuality through educating union members and society in general. The union's emphasis on sex education, though forming only a part of its proposed policy, was foregrounded in that it became the focal point for the mobilisation of opposition.

For opponents of SAIT's proposals, the key issue turned on the representation of sexuality, or more precisely, on the perceived challenge to heterosexual norms. The dominance of heterosexuality, its presumed normality and naturalness, was perceived to be at risk. Hegemonic conceptions of masculinity and femininity had to be reasserted in the face of a challenge from what were represented as deviant sexualities. The campaign that formed to counter SAIT's presumed influence pursued a number of strategies of which the cultivation of a strong media presence was decisive. Added texture was given to the campaign by the growing fears over the presence and spread of (AIDS) -- which was often portrayed as an exclusively homosexual disease.[49] In the public furore that ensued, the union's concern with discrimination was displaced by its opponents' representation of the issues as about predatory homosexual teachers abusing their position of trust (as teachers) to proselytise a deviant lifestyle. This controversy was an instance of the deployment of a 'deviant' sexuality to concentrate and mobilise public opinion to uphold the dominant one of heterosexuality.

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[49] See for example A. Barron, 'The Spread of AIDS', *The Advertiser*, 22 March 1985, who made the claim that 'It [homosexuality] is, in Australia, solely responsible for the transmission of AIDS'.

Important here is the fact that SAIT had been concerned about discrimination against homosexual teachers for some time before 1985.[50] It had developed an 'Anti-Discrimination Policy' in October 1979 which was ratified the following year.[51] This policy drew upon and supported the recommendations of the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity that the Sex Discrimination Act, 1975, should be amended to cover discrimination based on sexual proclivity.[52] Such recommendations finally came to fruition with the *Equal Opportunity Act, 1984*.[53] Included within its ambit were provisions rendering unlawful discrimination based on sexuality in areas such as employment and the provision of goods and services (including education). The *Act* defined 'sexuality' to mean 'heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality or transexuality'.[54] The industrial protection being sought by SAIT in its 'Anti-Discrimination Policy' of 1980 would appear to have been met.

However, by 1984, when the Act was passed though not proclaimed, a

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50 The sacking in 1977 of a homosexual teacher, Greg Weir, in Queensland prompted expressions of support from teachers' unions around the country. In South Australia, a Defend Greg Weir Committee was formed (*SAIT Journal* 9 (4) 6 April 1977) and the following year emerged a Gay Teachers Group to pursue some of these issues (*SAIT Journal* 10 (11) 2 August 1978).

51 'Anti-Discrimination Policy Adopted by SAIT Council', *SAIT Journal* 12 (12) 20 August 1980, p. 4.

52 *First Report of the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity*, Adelaide, 1977.

53 This Act repealed and replaced the *Sex Discrimination Act, 1975*, *The Handicapped Persons Equal Opportunity Act, 1981*, and the *Racial Discrimination Act, 1976*. See *Equal Opportunity Act, 1984* Sect 3 (1), (2) and (3).

54 *Equal Opportunity Act, 1984*, Sect 5 (1).

draft proposal emerged that if adopted as a formal policy would go much further than what had been envisaged in the earlier 'Anti-Discrimination Policy'. This was because of its emphasis on an educational strategy to counter homophobic stereotypes. The origin of this draft policy was the 1984 Annual Conference of the Australian Teachers' Federation, which had recommended specific actions to be taken by its affiliates in relation to the rights of homosexual members.[55] These recommendations formed the basis for SAIT's 'Draft Policy on Lesbian Women and Homosexual Male Members'. The intent was clearly to try to effect favourable attitudinal change with respect to homosexual women and men. Both the Director-General and the Minister of Education were made aware of the draft and its origin.[56] However, no immediate action was envisaged beyond indicating that any enquiries be referred to the Minister's office. Until SAIT chose to put its policy to the Education Department for consideration, even in draft form, the document had no formal status. This was the Minister's view as late as March 1985, though he also noted that SAIT's 'role does not extend to responsibility for school curriculum'.[57] Five days later the Minister announced a ban on the teaching of homosexuality.[58]

This announcement occurred just five and a half weeks after the first

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55 'Policy on Lesbian Women and Homosexual Male Teachers', *Australian Teachers' Federation Annual Conference*, January 1984. *SAED*: 14/16/22.

56 Wendy Bruce, A/Equal Opportunities Officer to Director-General of Education, 7 December 1984. *SAED*: 14/16/22.

57 'Sex Education Draft Attacked', *The Advertiser*, 29 March 1985.

58 'Arnold Puts Ban On Gay Lessons', *The Advertiser*, 3 April 1985.

newspaper report about the draft policy had appeared in the *Advertiser*. The decision revealed just how finely poised was the Education Department's (and the Labor government's)[59] sensitivity to controversial issues. The decision was represented as a ban on teaching homosexuality, as is clear from the headline and the opening sentence of the story.[60] It appeared as if the Minister was abolishing an already existing area of teaching. Yet homosexuality had never been a subject area in its own right -- as the Minister had already made clear only five days earlier. Nor had there been any sanction to discuss homosexuality except within a limited context in subject areas such as literature or biology. Teachers had been directed, in the past, to be wary of proselytising controversial areas.[61] Their professional freedom as educators to teach as they saw fit was always constrained at least by curriculum guidelines and the Department's sensitivity to controversial issues.

The net effect of the Minister's decision was to circumscribe the educational thrust of the intended policy. For whatever the result of SAIT's deliberations on the draft policy, its emphasis on attitudinal change would remain limited to its members.[62] While the Minister supported protecting the industrial

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59 *ibid.*, where the Minister expressed his concern 'that the community may confuse Government policy with the Institute of teachers proposed policy'.

60 *ibid.* The opening sentence read: 'Homosexuality will not be taught in SA Government schools'.

61 Education Department Circular 69: 'Contentious Issues in Schools', *SAEG*, 3 (38), 19 November 1975. In this circular, homosexuality was named specifically as a subject area that teachers were warned against proselytising.

62 As the President of the Primary Principals Association, A.M. Talbot put it: 'Effectively SAIT's draft policy is dead'; reported in 'Arnold Puts Ban On Gay

rights of SAIT's members, the government would not support any proposal 'that there be a unit (of study) called homosexuality' because '[s]exuality is a private business...not to be talked about or flaunted within the classroom'.[63] The Minister explained that his decision was necessary to reassure parents as well as to provide firm educational leadership given that SAIT had voted to defer the issue for at least three months with a view to a possible subsequent union wide plebescite being held.[64] He also pointed out that he and his colleagues had been inundated by 'a flood of representations and enquiries' expressing concerns about SAIT's proposals.[65]

There is no doubting that the expressions of concern were genuine. Yet there is plenty of room for doubting the basis from which such concerns were generated. This owed little to accurate presentations of SAIT's draft policy. In a very real sense, it can best be described as an instance of manufactured spontaneity. That is, the public protests or expressions of concern urging specific courses of action to be adopted had the appearance of being spontaneous expressions of outraged protest; more specifically, that the protests were not coordinated or manipulated by any one group in particular. However, a close examination of these protests reveals that beneath the appearance of spontaneity

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Lessons', *The Advertiser*, 3 April 1985.

63 'Education: Now More Than Just Teaching The Three Rs', *The Advertiser*, 4 April 1985.

64 *ibid.* See also the item 'SAIT Leader Backs Homosexuality Vote', *The Advertiser*, 4 April 1985 where the Minister's view was also reported.

65 'Education: Now More Than Just Teaching The Three Rs', *The Advertiser*, 4 April 1985.

was a very strategically organised campaign aimed at mobilising public opinion in opposition to SAIT's draft proposals.

The principal force behind the campaign was the Festival of Light. The campaign involved a number of strategies such as letter writing, circulating petitions, lobbying politicians, educators and School Councils, and maintaining a media presence. Members of School Councils were telephoned and informed about SAIT's plans.[66] Rarely were the specific policy proposals presented in a context that indicated it was an item of union business. The issues were presented in terms of a conspiracy to subject children to the indoctrination of homosexual ideas and values. Claims were made in terms of the supposedly self-evident truths about the evils of homosexuality and the risks that would befall children if they were to be taught by homosexual teachers. In essence, the telephone campaign exhibited all the characteristics of the politics of fear.[67] Parent Council members

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66 The material that follows regarding the telephone campaign was gained from my time as a Chairperson of a Primary School Council (1984-88) at an Adelaide metropolitan state school. During March 1985, I received eleven telephone calls in the space of two weeks demanding that School Council do something about the draft policy being considered by SAIT. Of these eleven callers, it turned out that only one had children enrolled at the school. That person had not seen the SAIT draft but had been telephoned by 'a friend' and given 'a rundown' on its contents. As for the other callers, each described themselves, when pressed, simply as 'concerned members of the community'. The School Council determined that the draft document was an internal SAIT matter and that it would not be appropriate for the Council to comment until such time as an actual policy document was made public.

67 A clear example of the politics of fear tactic is exemplified by Geoffrey Partington, *The Treatment of Sex in South Australian Education*, (Adelaide: Malvern Press, 1985). This pamphlet appeared in the bookshops with a cover design featuring a very large red 'R' enclosed within in a diamond-shaped border. The aim of this 35 page pamphlet (excluding footnote pages) was to 'examine the treatment of a few aspects of sexuality within educational institutions in South Australia, from university to the early years of schooling' (p. 1). However, the

were urged to inform other parents, write to politicians, circulate petitions, and have their Council write to the Minister and Director-General In many cases the response was overwhelming. The sheer bulk of petitions received by the Education Department amounted to a pile in excess of two feet in height.[68] A dominant concern of a number of those writing in protest to the Education Department was that they had only supported the health education programme on the understanding that it was guaranteed that homosexuality would not be taught.[69]

A good deal of the petitioners' worries was certainly due to the networking campaign of those opposed to SAIT's draft proposals. However, these worries also needed reinforcement of a more public nature in the sense of being validated as shared by others in the community. The presentation of the issues and key views by the *The Advertiser* contributed to this reinforcement. Its coverage did little to dispel misconceptions or misleading information. This occurred in several

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first 13 pages provided a lurid description of articles on homosexuality published in the student newspaper at Flinders University. No discussion was offered about what was actually taught within an educational context of accredited courses and assessment. Next came a discussion of what was happening in secondary and primary schools. The focus here was on the SAIT draft policy (p. 13-14), a critique of values clarification (one of the methodologies used to encourage children to think about values and how to evaluate them) and reference books suggested for use by teachers (pp. 15-24). Finally, came a critique of educational strategies designed to address child abuse under the broad heading of 'The New Assault on the Family' (pp. 25-33). He concluded by suggesting that while '[t]here is much to repair in our society', a start can be made taking 'some firm steps in the right direction' such as (1) 'Combat[ing] Homosexual Activism', (2) 'Reform[ing] Sex Education Programs' and (3) 'Stop[ping] the Suspect Your Parents' Campaign' (pp. 34-5). Little of what was in the pamphlet dealt with the educational aspects of sex education.

68 In 1991 the petitions were held under *SAED*: 14/16/22C.

69 See the various letters held under *SAED*: 14/16/22C.

ways. One of these was simply the headlines used to anchor articles informing readers of what was at issue. Of the six articles dealing with the SAIT draft proposals that appeared between 2 March and 3 April, five had inflammatory or misleading headlines.[70] The other article purported to present an account of SAIT's proposals and carried a headline more closely representative of the content.[71] By the time this article appeared there had been two items hostile to SAIT's proposals,[72] a further article condemning sexual promiscuity,[73] and three anti-homosexual letters to the Editor.[74] Even an editorial that urged compassion for AIDS sufferers contained obliquely negative remarks about homosexuality;[75] certainly those already disposed to a hostile view of homosexuality would have found little to disabuse them of their preconceptions.

A second way in which media representation contributed to the success of

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70 Specifically: 'FOL Slams Idea That 'Gay' Is OK' (2 March 1985); 'Libs Against 'Positive' Lesbian Policy: Wilson' (11 March 1985); 'Sex Education Draft Attacked', with a smaller headline appearing above it, 'Promotion of Homosexuality 'Offensive"' (29 March 1985); 'Sex Policy Debate May Be Postponed' (30 March 1985); 'Arnold Bans Gay Lessons' (3 April 1985). The article of 2 March 1985 was the first item published on the matter by *The Advertiser*.

71 'Controversy Over 'Positive' Policy On Homosexuality', *The Advertiser*, 27 March 1985.

72 'FOL Slams Idea That 'Gay' Is OK', *The Advertiser*, 2 March 1985; 'Libs Against 'Positive' Lesbian Policy', *The Advertiser*, 12 March 1985.

73 Fr John Fleming, 'The Disastrous Results of Sexual Self-Indulgence', *The Advertiser*, 11 March 1985.

74 R.L. Ivett, 'Sex Education', *The Advertiser*, 8 March 1985; Margaret Rowett, 'Equality At Primary School', *The Advertiser*, 20 March 1985; A. Barron, 'The Spread Of AIDS', *The Advertiser*, 22 March 1985.

75 Editorial, 'No Man Is An Island', *The Advertiser*, 23 March 1985.

the Festival of Light's campaign was the continual slippage between the terms 'draft policy' and 'policy'. Spokespersons for the Festival of Light, or its sympathisers, continually referred to the proposals as SAIT policy -- as did *The Advertiser* on at least one occasion.[76] Indeed, that very point was not lost on the President of SAIT, Bob Jackson. Despite his lack of enthusiasm for the policy proposals, he thought that 'it was "unfortunate" that what was basically a discussion paper had suddenly and incorrectly achieved the status of a firm institute policy'.[77] This slippage might seem a trivial point, especially given the possibility that it might have been due to loose reporting, but seen as a rhetorical strategy, the discursive effect was to mislead the reader regarding the document's status.

To illustrate this rhetorical strategy, the first article published by *The Advertiser* purporting to inform the public will be analysed in detail. The brief article of six one-sentence paragraphs carried the headline, 'FOL Slams Idea That 'Gay' Is OK', of which the full text was:

> The Festival of Light has condemned an SA Institute of Teachers' draft policy on teaching "positive" aspects of homosexuality in schools as being "totally irresponsible and reprehensible".
>
> The policy recommends establishing a Committee which would "pursue the rights of all members to influence curricula in ways that will enhance understanding of lesbian women and homosexual men".
>
> It says comprehensive sex education to all primary and secondary students, and any class discussion of homosexuality should aim to be "positive in

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76 'Sex Policy Debate May Be Postponed', *The Advertiser*, 30 March 1985.

77 'SAIT Leader Backs Homosexuality Vote', *The Advertiser*, 4 April 1985.

> approach" within an understanding of the implications of sexuality.
>
> The FOL executive officer, Mr Alan Barron, said the FOL was totally opposed to the policy and called on concerned parents to act through their school Councils to have the policy rejected.
>
> "Homosexuality is a deviant lifestyle and there are so many bad social ramifications", he said. "For example, 70 p.c. of venereal disease is transmitted by homosexuals".
>
> The President of the SA Institute of Teachers, Mr R.W. Jackson, said the policy did not promote homosexuality or sexuality to students.[78]

Thus the first paragraph introduced FOL concerns and the news that a draft policy existed. The second and third paragraphs referred to specific aspects of the draft proposals. The next two paragraphs gave the direct comments of the FOL spokesperson, Barron; and the final paragraph presented a brief statement from the Institute president. On the surface the appearance of balance is maintained. But interrogating the rhetorical representation reveals a quite different picture.

In terms of content no attempt was made to give any more detail than necessary to enable sense to be made of the FOL's comments. That is, it provided a contextual frame for their views. No elaboration was given of the complete proposals or their context, nor was there any discussion of why SAIT thought it an appropriate policy issue. The two policy items cited by the FOL (namely the positive representation of homosexuality through sex education and 'the rights of all members to influence curricula' to improve understanding of homosexuality)[79]

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78 'FOL Slams The Idea That 'Gay' Is OK', *The Advertiser*, 2 March 1985.

79 *ibid.*

became the focal points for readers' attention. Readers were positioned to consider the views of the FOL in the context of these two points. At the same time readers were also positioned to see SAIT's draft policy in terms of these two items as if that was all that SAIT was concerned about. For the FOL, opposition to SAIT's proposals could be justified and should be maintained because of the self-evident deviancy, the un-naturalness, of homosexuality. This position was reinforced by claims about links between homosexuals and the transmission of sexual diseases. The un-naturalness of homosexual activity, when not declared explicitly through terms like deviancy, was represented implicitly through the claims about disease. The intent, at least of the FOL, was to ensure that readers approached the issues from the basis of homosexuality being un-natural, a deviation from the norm.

These concerns of the FOL became the recurrent theme for all of the letters and articles that opposed SAIT's proposals. All emphasised the non-normalness of homosexuality and the need to ensure that children were not enticed from the path of normal development. For example, homosexuals were portrayed as promoting the view that 'homosexuality is just another sexual preference...[to]...be accepted equally with heterosexuality';[80] the '"so-called positive approach" would undermine family values';[81] SAIT was 'advocating

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80 Fr John Fleming, 'The Disastrous Results of Sexual Self-Indulgence', *The Advertiser*, 11 March 1985.

81 'Libs Against 'Positive' Lesbian Policy : Wilson', *The Advertiser*, 11 March 1985.

homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle';[82] 'the suggestion that homosexuality is an equally valid alternative is offensive';[83] homosexuality was 'deviant and aberrant behaviour' that 'was unfit for presentation to children in their formative years';[84] homosexuality should not be promoted 'as "normal" behaviour to our children';[85] homosexuality 'is something dirty and sinful' and 'should never be taught as necessary to their education'.[86] Even *The Advertiser*'s editorial, ostensibly providing the detached, balanced guidance for its readership, noted that there were 'grounds for community concern' about SAIT's proposals for sex education.[87] If there was to be classroom presentation and discussion of homosexuality then it should be neither positive nor negative, but rather it 'should be neutral'.[88]

Clearly, the debate was structured and promoted to reinforce the view that homosexuality and heterosexuality were un-natural and natural respectively. The terms of the debate were thus circumscribed within a discursive dichotomy of 'un-natural' and 'natural'. This discursive limitation also served to constrain the FOL's opponents. None of the correspondents challenging the FOL views dealt with SAIT's actual draft proposals. All were concerned with countering the FOL

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82 A. Barron, 'The Spread Of AIDS', *The Advertiser*, 22 March 1985.

83 'Sex Education Draft Attacked', *The Advertiser*, 29 March 1985.

84 'Sex Policy Debate May Be Postponed', *The Advertiser*, 30 March 1985.

85 V. Lucan, 'Letter to Editor', *The Advertiser*, 2 April 1985.

86 A. Galvin, 'Letter to Editor', *The Advertiser*, 6 April 1985.

87 Editorial, 'Teaching and Prejudice', *The Advertiser*, 19 March 1985.

88 *ibid.*

view of homosexuality as 'unnatural'.[89] The only article in *The Advertiser* that analysed the draft policy as a whole appeared just three days before the SAIT Council meeting (of 30 March) where the proposals were to be debated.[90] However, by then the controversy had been raging for nearly four weeks. As was suggested earlier, this article was unlikely to have had much impact on the course of the controversy as the views of many had already been set. The petitions had begun circulating well before that article appeared. And as has already been indicated the sheer volume of the petitions was cited by the Minister in justifying his decision to ban the 'teaching of homosexuality'.

The theme of this section has been to establish that the idea of homosexuality served as a boundary marker for drawing the line on sex education. The furore over the Draft Policy of the Institute of Teachers clearly reveals that this was the case. For opponents of the Draft Policy, discussions of homosexuality were not really what was at issue -- though there were certainly some of whom it could be said that they probably would have only been happy with a clear ban on even mentioning that such things existed.[91] As long as

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89 See for example, Dr Roger Knight, 'The Fight Against AIDS', *The Advertiser*, 23 March 1985; Michael Hall, 'A 'Natural' Sexual Variation?', *The Advertiser*, 30 March 1985; Mark Green, 'It's High Time Parents Faced Facts', *The Advertiser*, 2 April 1985; Quentin Iskov, 'Letter to Editor', *The Advertiser*, 2 April 1985; Donald Clarkson, 'Young People Want To Be Informed', *The Advertiser*, 3 April 1985.

90 'Controversy Over 'Positive' Policy On Homosexuality', *The Advertiser*, 27 March 1985.

91 This was clearly revealed in the letters of some who wrote to the Education Department who protested that they had only supported school-based health education (and by extension sex education) on the understanding that they had been guaranteed that homosexuality would not be taught. See Fn 69 *supra*.

homosexuality was placed within a context of a deviation from a presumed norm of heterosexuality its presence as a topic for discussion within the class-room generated very little public comment. Even those who emerged in 1985 to voice opposition to SAIT's Draft Policy had at other times pointed out that there was nothing intrinsically reprehensible about discussing homosexuality in the class-room in appropriate contexts. The pivotal point was to guard against the possibility that homosexuality might be presented as a legitimate alternative to heterosexuality; that the presumed natural-ness of the latter would be displaced. Ensuring that this did not happen was the key motivation of those campaigning against SAIT's Draft Policy. The strong opposition that emerged aimed to ensure that sex education maintained the hegemonic sway of heterosexuality. This opposition served to reinforce the Education Department's emphasis on caution in relation to sex education.

IV

Given the scale of opposition in 1985, it seems remarkable that within five years the health curriculum had been expanded to accommodate AIDS education. This did not signify a departure from its basic cautious approach to sex education. Rather it was a continuation of its emphasis on preparing children to make responsible decisions about their sexual conduct. As will be shown below there remained some dispute as to what constituted 'responsible directions' within discussions over AIDS education. However, the general contours of sex education, as they emerged in the 1970s, continued to shape subsequent

innovations to the health curriculum. Students were to be encouraged to understand sexual conduct from within a human relations context which was itself articulated as definitive of a heterosexual gender order.

This was the norm that remained, paradoxically, both beyond and in question. It was beyond question in that it was asserted repeatedly as the norm. It was in question to the extent that the existence of other forms of sexual behaviour could be managed and positioned on the margins of what was deemed to be central and normal. The problem of AIDS necessitated a change in approach. Since one of the main modes of transmission of the disease was sexual this meant that sex education needed to address it some way. By the end of 1987 the South Australian Education Department had committed itself to 'a minimum of five hours AIDS education'.[92]

The development of an AIDS education component of its health curriculum has to be set within a wider socio-political context. Three important determinants helped to shape the Education Department's initiatives. First, by the mid-1980s there was a strong public perception of AIDS as some form of new plague with no known cure.[93] This was reinforced by the announcement in 1983 that the Australian Red Cross had recommended that blood no longer be collected

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92 Director-General of Education, Ken Boston, 'Circular To All Principals: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Guidelines and Procedures', 7 August 1989, p. 1. *SAED*: 3/18/326A.

93 In the first few years of reporting about AIDS this was the dominant approach taken by the media even the so-called mainstream serious newspapers. For some analysis of this see Rosalie Aroni, 'Looking at the Media' in *AIDS in Australia*, ed Eric Timewell, Victor Minichiello, & David Plummer, (Sydney: Prentice Hall, 1992), pp. 124-41.

from 'sexually active homosexual or bisexual men with multiple partners, from intravenous drug-users or from their partners'.[94] Once a reliable test for the AIDS virus was available in mid-1985, all blood donations could be screened.[95] Second, and possibly in response to the Red Cross 1983 announcement,[96] the federal Labor government (elected in March 1983) committed itself to a national strategy to deal with AIDS. This involved the setting up of national task forces and the provision of funding for newly-emerging AIDS Councils in the various Australian states. In particular, the emphasis was on raising public awareness through education in the wider sense. Third, the fact that AIDS was no longer restricted to homosexual men, intravenous drug-users and prostitutes, shifted official perceptions as to how the threat of AIDS should be handled. No longer was it possible to dismiss AIDS as 'the gay plague', the disease of 'deviants'.[97] Everybody was seen to be at risk. A sense of urgency combined with a willingness on the part of the federal government to become actively involved, especially in terms of providing funds and other resources, at least initially, encouraged state-based initiatives to be undertaken.

In October 1985 the South Australian Education Department announced

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94 Dennis Altman, 'The Most Political of Diseases', in *AIDS in Australia*, ed Eric Timewell, Victor Minichiello, & David Plummer, (Sydney: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 56.

95 *ibid.*, p. 57.

96 *ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

97 See Rosalie Aroni (1992).

its first policy concerning children and teachers with AIDS.[98] Entitled 'Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Policy and Procedures' the policy gave details about the disease and its symptoms and specified the 'procedures to be followed by schools dealing with infected students and staff'.[99] It noted that students (and indeed teachers) were not obliged to tell the school if they had the AIDS virus. In the event that they did make that information known to the school, principals were advised that they were obliged to respect the confidentiality of parents and students. Moreover, such students were not to be 'excluded from or isolated within the school'.[100] In advising school principals of their obligations the policy also sought to dispel some of the misinformation thought to be circulating about AIDS. It pointed out that there was no evidence to suggest that 'normal social conduct such as that found in the classroom and the playground' should be feared as a likely area for the transmission of AIDS.[101] However, it reiterated both existing guidelines about the handling of infectious diseases as well as specifying appropriate hygiene procedures so that the possible risk from exposure to a student carrying the AIDS virus could be minimised.[102] Thus the emphasis of the policy was on clarifying the Education Department's approach to dealing with AIDS in a school context rather than on providing

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98 'Victims of AIDS 'Not Obliged' to Tell Schools', *The Advertiser*, 14 October 1985.

99 *ibid.*

100 *ibid.*

101 *ibid.*

102 *ibid.*

school based education for students about AIDS. It was to be a further eighteen months before an AIDS education kit was approved for use in South Australian high schools.

This kit had its origins in a proposal from the AIDS Council of South Australia that South Australian schools adopt the Victorian Information Kit.[103] The proposal for the development of something similar in South Australia was received favourably by the Minister of Education, Greg Crafter. It was Crafter's view that 'correct and up-to-date information should be made available to children at an early age'. He went on to note 'that much of the misinformation which children receive affects the capacity to respond to correct information'.[104] The Minister clearly saw a role for schools in providing correct and up-to-date information. The Minister's Office advised the Director-General of the Minister's support for the AIDS Council proposal and that the Minister of Education was also enlisting the support of the Minister of Health, Dr John Cornwall, for a combined and co-ordinated approach. In addition, the Director-General was asked for an evaluation by his Departmental officers of the Victorian Information Kit recommended by the SA Aids Council.[105] At this stage the Minister's office

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103 Phillip Herbert, Project Officer, AIDS Council of South Australia to John Steinlee [*sic*], Director-General of Education, 20 September 1986. *SAED*: 3/18/326A.

104 Greg Crafter, Minister of Education to Minister of Health, 20 November 1986. *SAED*: 3/18/326A.

105 M.J. Pederson, Executive Officer to Director-General of Education, 24 November 1986. *SAED*: 3/18/326. It should also be noted the the Minister's Executive Officer also advised that the Kit be previewed by: (1) Rod Janetzki, Adviser, Student Counsellors), (2) the State Council of Students, (3) High School Principals Association, (4) High School Councils Association, and (5) South

considered that this initiative should be limited to secondary schools.[106]

The Director of Studies, Jim Giles, regarded the proposal from the Minister's office favourably. He was concerned to ensure that the Education Department retained control over the teaching methodology and 'the ways of inservicing teachers'.[107] He was also concerned that such innovations be 'handled sensitively'. In Giles' view,

> the issue of AIDS cannot be dealt with in isolation, in a one off way. Sex education policy would require that a wider base is established. In a school context it is not desirable to consider factual information about AIDS without discussions of relationships, values and behaviours in a more general way. The Education Department Health Education guidelines provides for work in Alternative Lifestyles, Human Sexuality. The teaching of controversial issues must be undertaken in a sensitive unbiased way.[108]

Clearly Giles was attempting to ensure that the new initiatives would be consistent with the ethos of the already existing sex education program. To that end Giles made a number of recommendations. First, that a joint committee drawn from the Health Education Committee, the Health Promotion Unit and AIDS Council of SA be established to develop appropriate guidelines. This committee would be responsible for '[a]ll liaisons and programmes of inservice'.

Australian Institute of Teachers. While this reflected a concern by theMinister's Office that wide consultation needed to be undertaken it was also based on advice given by the Director of Studies.

106 *ibid.*

107 Jim Giles, Director of Studies to John Pederson, Office of the Minister of Education, 10 November 1986. *SAED*: 3/18/326A.

108 *ibid.*

Second, that the Health Education Project Officer of the Education Department should be responsible for the Education Department's AIDS resource base. Third, that the Victorian Information Kit should be accepted in principle. Fourth, that Principals and School Councils (Secondary Schools) be asked to evaluate its appropriateness for secondary schools. Finally, he suggested that the introduction of such a kit should be negotiated with school principals.[109] On this basis the Education Department proceeded to develop a second AIDS education policy -- one focused on incorporating information about AIDs into its already existing health and sex education curriculum.

A committee similar to that recommended by Giles was set up in February 1987. It had representatives from the Health Commission, Child, Adolescent and Family Health Service (CAFHS), Family Planning Association, AIDS Council and the Education Department. This committee began preparing curriculum proposals and intiating preliminary consultations with parent and community groups. The Director-General, John Steinle, stressed to the Director of Studies that he 'establish consultative machinery with SAASSO, SAASPC, SAIT and the HSPA, and SAPPA if necessary, and ensure that they are fully informed before any action is taken'.[110] A major consultative process was held at Wattle Park Teachers' Centre in April which produced a recommendation that secondary students should receive appropriate education in sensitive matters such as AIDS.

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109 *ibid.*

110 Director-General of Education, Ken Boston, 'Circular To All Principals: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Guidelines and Procedures', 7 August 1989, p. 1. *SAED*: 3/18/326A.

In June and July further consultation with parent, church and community groups was undertaken. Feedback was also received on a first draft of curriculum material. By September a second draft of curriculum documents was available and on 11 September 1987 the AIDS curriculum was officially launched by the Director-General at Marryatville High School. In the meantime, appropriate inservicing arrangements had begun. By the end of 1987 there had been held 55 inservice workshops involving 1,816 teachers, and 65 parent meeting involving 2,730 parents.[111]

Towards the end of 1987 an Education About AIDS questionnaire was sent to 150 secondary schools to obtain feedback about the implementation of the new health education initiative.[112] The questionnaire sought information about teaching arrangements for AIDS education, integration into existing programs, student withdrawals, parent meetings and responses, student responses, and appropriateness of teaching methodology and materials. Replies were received from 116 secondary schools, indicating a response rate of nearly 80%. Overall there was favourable and strong support for the AIDS education initiatives. The dominant response of teachers was to ensure that future inservicing continued and that the Education Department continued to provide adequate resources to ensure that up-to-date material was available. Parental response was regarded as

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111 *ibid.*, p. 2. Note that the figures for the parent meetings refer to those conducted by Area Teams and do not include those meetings held solely by schools.

112 *ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

'favourable, supportive and enthusiastic'.[113] Given that three schools had to cancel proposed parent meetings due to a lack of parent response it would seem that the Education Department's approach had created little controversy. In half of the schools no students had been withdrawn from the health education program. In the remaining 58 schools 324 students opted out. It needs to be noted, however, that 94 of these were year 12 students whose final year study demands took priority.[114]

During 1988 proposals for the extension of AIDS education to primary schools were pursued. A similar process of development and consultation to that used for secondary schools was adopted. Those groups primarily involved in this process included AIDS Education Project Officers (Wattle Park Teachers Centre), Health Education Team, Child, Adolescent Family Health Service (CAFHS), Family Planning Association, Family Life Movement, and Health Education Curriculum Committee. Conferences and inservicing programs were also held, so that specific primary school methodologies and experiential based learning could be taken into account. This process continued into 1989 such that by the end of the year an R-12 AIDS education policy and practice was in place.[115] For all intents and purposes sex education had been expanded successfully to address the problem of AIDS.

The above account covers the general contours of the Education

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113 *ibid.*, p. 4.

114 *ibid.*, p. 4.

115 *ibid.*, Appendix 3, p. 1.

Department's initiatives. These were generally well received and occasioned little public controversy. This was due, in large part, to the climate of opinion that prevailed during much of 1987, especially at just that time when the Education Department initiatives were being formulated. When the Minister of Education annnounced that the Education Department, in conjunction with the Health Department, was to develop appropriate curriuclum materials public opinion already appeared to be receptive. A survey by the National Advisory Committee on AIDS had just been released which indicated that '93% of people questioned supported the inclusion of AIDS education in the school curriculum'.[116] In the weeks that followed the Minister's announcement, *The Advertiser* published no letters addressing this initiative though there were letters complaining about other AIDS related matters. Significantly, the Labor government's political opponents also voiced support for the initiatives with the proviso that 'school councils and parents are consulted fully before the program is introduced'.[117]

Importantly, during April of 1987 there was a concerted public awareness campaign launched in which *The Advertiser* played a key role. It had dubbed this campaign 'the war against AIDS'. This phrase opened *The Advertiser*'s editorial comment on what was needed and it also formed an ongoing banner headline under which its reports on AIDS were grouped.[118] The public was kept aware of

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116 'AIDS Education For SA Schools', *The Advertiser*, 20 March 1987.

117 'Schools Next Target for National AIDS Drive', *The Advertiser*, 8 April 1987.

118 Editorial, 'Plain Speaking Necessary', *The Advertiser*, 2 April 1987. In the week between 7 April and 14 April 1987 there appeared nine stories on AIDS. Seven of these carried the ongoing heading of 'The War On AIDS'.

the latest developments with what amounted to almost daily bulletins from the front-line. This underscored a very graphic campaign launched on 5 April on national television that became known as the 'Grim Reaper campaign'.[119] This campaign drew a good deal of public comment and the bulk of the letters commenting on AIDS published by *The Advertiser* were directed to that and related topics such as condom commercials.[120] The level of awareness and sense of urgency combined in such a way as to make the initiatives being pursued by the Education Department appear to be both timely and responsible.

However, there were some occasional moments of controversy during which concerns were expressed about the Education Department's initiaitves. For example, the announcement by the Minister of Education in late 1985 that an AIDS policy would be distributed to schools brought forth an immediate response from the President of the Primary Principals' Association, Alec Talbot. The gist of Talbot's complaint was that '[o]nce again principals of schools learn about' a

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119 'Shock Tactic to Avert AIDS Crisis', *The Advertiser*, 6 April 1987.

120 See Ms L.A. Holmes, 'AIDS Prejudice', A.J. and S.J. Jenkin, 'Shock Tactic', *The Advertiser*, 9 April 1987; Mrs V. Mazey, 'Condom Commercials', *The Advertiser*, 11 April 1987; Beryl M. Dancer, 'Grim Reaper'; Barry Craig, 'Grim Reaper', Mrs D. Singh, 'Grim Reaper', *The Advertiser*, 14 April 1987; Richard Harvie, 'Safe Sex', *The Advertiser*, 15 April 1987; Alex Jonal, 'AIDS Campaign', *The Advertiser*, 18 April 1987; Ann Flint (& seven other signatories), 'AIDS Campaign', R.B. Crockart, 'AIDS Campaign', *The Advertiser*, 20 April 1987; Kylie Mosey, 'AIDS Campaign', Fred Wilson, 'AIDS Campaign', *The Advertiser*, 23 April 1987; J.C. Harding, 'AIDS Awareness', *The Advertiser*, 4 May 1987. Of these letters only two (Jenkin, Flint *et al*) voiced direct opposition. Two others (Mazey, Singh) pointed out that the condom commercials should be directed at men rather than representing women as having the responsibility for thinking about condoms.

policy initiative from 'a ministerial media release'.[121] He urged that the Minister and his Department 'engage in the same processes of consultation and participation which they advocate for everyone else' because in his view principals were 'more likely to be supportive if they have been involved in the process in a representative way'.[122] This comment had the desired effect. As has been shown above, throughout the development and implementation of a policy on AIDS education curriculum, consultation and negotiation were continually stressed and acted upon.

A slightly different kind of controversy erupted following an interview with the Director-General of Education on the ABC television program, *The 7.30 Report*. The foreshadowed plans to develop the health curriculum to include education about AIDS provided the focus for the interview. While this did not gain any coverage in *The Advertiser*,[123] it did prompt letters to the ABC complaining of the treatment meted out to Steinle. In particular, the President of the South Australian Association of State School Organisations (SAASSO), Ian S. Wilson, wrote to the Minister of Education, the Director-General, and the Manager of the ABC.[124] Wilson objected to what he thought was a deliberate

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121 A.M. Talbot to J.R. Steinle, Director-General of Education, 17 October 1985. *SAED*: 3/18/326.

122 *ibid.*

123 At least one letter was sent to *The Advertiser*, but not published. A copy was also sent to the ABC and the Education Department (held in *SAED*: 3/18/326B).

124 Ian S. Wilson, President of SAASSO to Minister of Education, 8 April 1987; Ian S. Wilson, President of SAASSO to Manager, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 8 April 1987; Ian S. Wilson, President of SAASSO to Director-

attempt to skew the debate such that education was represented as the primary 'preventative measure for halting the spread of the disease' and that such education was 'the responsibility of the Education Department'.[125] On the second issue, he regarded sex education generally, and education about AIDS in particular, as primarily the responsibility of parents. As he informed the Minister of Education, 'the home is the place where this education should be taken now, and supported later by well prepared, factual and effective curriuclum materials presented in the schools, when such material is available'.[126] This was largely in keeping with the Education Department's broad-based approach positioning parents as the primary educators of their children, especially in relation to sex education. On the other, first-mentioned issue, Wilson suggested that the most effective approach was not education about how to cope with AIDS in a permissive society but rather education in those moral values that would negate the potential for AIDS to have any impact. In his view, the interviewer, by her questioning and approach, presented 'nowhere near enough opportunity ...[to be]... given for putting the only safe, and reliable way to deal with the problem of AIDS -- a chaste lifestyle'.[127] Wilson reiterated the theme of 'chastity before

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General of Education, 8 April 1987. *SAED*: 3/18/326B.

125 Ian S. Wilson, President of SAASSO to Manager, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 8 April 1987, p. 1.

126 Ian S. Wilson, President of SAASSO to Minister of Education, 8 April 1987.

127 Ian S. Wilson, President of SAASSO to Manager, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 8 April 1987, p. 2.

marriage, fidelity after marriage' on a number of occasions.[128] Nonetheless, he still accepted there was a role for schools to play and that the health curriculum was the appropriate 'place for education of our children on AIDS' provided that the materials had the approval of the Director-General and school councils.[129]

Another brief controversial incident happened in late April when the seminar at Wattle Park was announced. This seminar was a major aspect of the consultation process and was the opportunity for various interested parties, such as parents' groups, youth agencies, teachers and the SA Health Commission, to 'review the department's proposed AIDS curriculum package'.[130] In commenting on the proposed meeting, the Director of Studies, Jim Giles, suggested that 'the AIDS epidemic may have reached a stage' where it might be necessary at some time in the future to reassess the parental prerogative of withdrawing their children from sex education classes.[131] This suggestion did not pass unnoticed. On the same day that Giles' comments were reported, *The Advertiser* published an editorial the headline of which appeared to uphold that right.[132] The editorial comment was in fact referring to consultation with parents over 'what should be taught' within the AIDS component of the health curriculum. That is, 'when it

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128 'Fiery Speech on AIDS Startles a Low-Key Seminar', *The Advertiser*, 1 May 1987; Ian S. Wilson, 'So Fear Is Becoming Fashionable Again!', *School Post: Journal of the South Australian Association of State School Organisations Inc.*, 16 (4), May/June 1987, p. 6.

129 *ibid.*

130 'Parental Veto on Sex Education May Go', *The Advertiser*, 27 April 1987.

131 *ibid.*

132 Editorial, 'Parents Must Be Asked', *The Advertiser*, 27 April 1987.

comes to deciding what we should teach our children about AIDS there should be no question of the need for maximum consultation with parents'.[133] This was also acknowledged as the current view shared by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health. In an oblique reference to the comments of the Director of Studies that had been reported some fifteen pages earlier, the editorial intoned that '[s]uggestions to the contrary are mischievous'.[134] The core question for *The Advertiser* was not whether it should be taught but what should be taught. Indeed, for *The Advertiser* the issue was one of ensuring that what needed to be taught was in fact taught, as is revealed in the editorial's concluding paragraph.

> But young people have a right to know about precautions they can take without their morality's being measured against that of a particular religious or social group. Alerting them to the realities of AIDS and what they can do to avoid it is not encouraging promiscuity. The key is to present sensitively, the facts and to offer rational alternatives without imposing moral imperatives.[135]

This meant achieving full parental support and cooperation through proper and effective consultation.

The Leader of the Liberal Party, John Olsen, put Giles' comments in a slightly more sinister perspective. He was reported as suggesting that the Government 'may take over the role of educating children about sex, if necessary against parental wishes'.[136] Since he would have been well aware of the two key

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133 *ibid.*

134 *ibid.*

135 *ibid.*

136 'Teachers Will Seek Funds for AIDS Courses', *The Advertiser*, 28 April 1987.

Ministers' views, his comments amounted to little more than an instance of political point-scoring. Moreover, the Director-general had reiterated the Education Department's long-standing position not three weeks earlier on *The 7.30 Report*. Olsen's statement might have reflected the views of some in the community[137] but it is doubtful that such views could be said to have been indicative of a groundswell of negative public reaction. Indeed, most of the indicators seemed to suggest that the initiatives being foreshadowed were in step with public opinion,[138] even if in some quarters they were viewed as having been brought about by the Department's own inability to implement fully and extend the Department's own health education policy.[139] This latter problem might have

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137 Only one letter (Mrs Natalie Priest, 'Parental Rights', *The Advertiser*, 30 April 1987) appeared in the correspondence columns protesting the alleged usurping of parental rights. In June a letter from the Booborowie School Council sought clarification of the Education Department's approach. The Council was advised that 'any materials developed will be produced in the spirit of complete collaboration and coopoeration with parents' groups ...[and that]... the rights of parents to withdraw their children ...[from sex education classes]... will continue, as has been the case in the past'. (Booborowie School Council to Mr Jim Giles, Minister of Education [*sic*], I June 1987, *SAED*: 3/18/326). Nearly two and a half months later the Education Department received four letters from individuals and one from the Bethsheda Christian Centre bearing a petition of fifty-five signatures opposing moves for education about AIDS. These letters were prompted by an article published in the Festival of Light newsletter (*Focus*, June 1987) condemning AIDS education. See *SAED*: 3/18/326.

138 A nation-wide survey conducted by the National Advisory Committee on AIDS (NACAIDS) revealed that '93% of people questioned supported the inclusion of AIDS education in the school curriculum', 'AIDS Education for SA Schools', *The Advertiser*, 20 March 1987. More importantly, as will be noted in a moment, when the Education Department lauched its new curriculum packages, not one adverse news story or hostile letter appeared in the subsequent weeks.

139 This was the view of SAIT Field Officer, Helen O'Connor, as reported in 'AIDS Education in SA Schools', *SAIT Journal*, 19 (6), 22 May 1987, p. 12 in which it was expressed that the apparent panic and embarrassment in the Education Department' could have been avoided 'if the existing Health Education

been due to bureaucratic inertia or lack of funds or even a consequence of 'err[ing] ... on the side of caution'.[140]

Whatever the cause of the problem identified by the SAIT Field Officer, the actual launching of the curriculum packages occasioned no public criticism either on the day or in the weeks that followed.[141] In part, the successful expansion of the health education curriculum could be said to have been due precisely to the caution that characterised the Education Department's handling of the issues. However, a more important reason for its success was the existence of a concerted public health campaign to contain and, if posssible, negate the threat of AIDS. It is doubtful that, on its own, the Education Department could or would have expanded its health curriculum to include education about AIDS. The extra impetus given by the 'war on AIDS' campaign shifted considerably public receptiveness to such an initiative.

The approach of the Education Department was anything but radical. It was undepinned by an ethos encouraging chastity before marriage and, where that was not possible, providing adequate guidance for responsible sexual behaviour. As the Coordinator of the Program, Barry Stanton, emphasised, '[t]he general direction is that children should not be involved in sexual activity and should

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Curriculum were being fully implemented in SA schools'. This criticism highlights the caution that characterised the Department's implementation of sex education.

140 See Fn 24 *supra*.

141 'AIDS Education In Most SA High Schools', *The Advertiser*, 12 September 1987. A search of the paper from 12 September until early October revealed no criticism of the new policy or its announcement.

defer such activity'.[142] Nonetheless, the Education Department recognised that this was not always going to happen. Students often failed to 'defer such activity'. Consequently, 'the educator's role should be to guide and facilitate discussion and provide information about how to cope with relationships'.[143] An emphasis on safe and responsible sexual practices took precedence over moralising, notwithstanding the fact that the values of the latter remained implicit. In this respect, the approach of AIDS education in schools took its lead from the wider anti-AIDS campaign, especially in promoting the use of condoms.[144] This would suggest that despite the comments about chastity the idea of 'safe sex' indicated an important shift in approach where pre- or non-marital sexual activity is taken for granted. Preventing the further spreading of disease rather than discouraging such sexual activity became the focus of sex education.

It is indeed ironic that at the end of the 1980s the discussion of homosexuality had found a place within sex education. Contrary to the efforts of various people only a few years earlier, discussion of homosexuality was now within the bounds of sex education. The issue of AIDS had swept previous fears aside. New, more pressing fears had emerged. However, it remained the case that it was not for its own sake that homosexuality could be discussed. Rather, it was for the sake of public health and renewed emphasis on safe heterosexual relations.

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142 *ibid.*

143 *ibid.*

144 One of the stickers presented in school based AIDS packages read 'Tell him if it's not on, it's not on'.

It needs to be reiterated here that the emphasis on 'safe sex' operated from a largely gendered perspective. The advocacy of condoms as a means of minimising the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS, exemplified this. First, it focused attention on penetrative sex thereby, implicitly at least, signalling that heterosexual intercourse was the defining meaning to be attributed to sex. Additionally, such a focus meant that lesbian sexuality was largely, if not completely, ignored. Furthermore, the emphasis on women talking about condoms in the anti-AIDS commercials seemed to position women as the ones who should be responsible for 'policing' sexual behaviour. The slogan of, for example, 'Tell *him* if it's not on, it's not on', clearly demonstrates this.[145] This dimension was not lost on those who wrote to *The Advertiser* expressing their views about the television commericals for condoms in 1987. They objected to these commercials presenting 'a woman telling people to wear condoms' since 'it is the male who wears these';[146] they 'put the onus on the woman to depend on her partner to use a condom'.[147] Both letter-writers wanted to know if they were likely 'to see on the screens a clean-cut Aussie male informing us that he too is taking some responsibility'.[148] Note also that the use of the word 'depend' by the above cited letter writer reinforces the idea that the meaning of 'sex' is to be defined as penetrative sex.

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145 As was noted in the previous footnote. (Emphasis added).

146 Mrs V. Mazey, 'Condom Commercials', *The Advertiser*, 11 April 1987.

147 Mrs D. Singh, 'Grim Reaper', *The Advertiser*, 14 April 1987.

148 *ibid.*

In this context homosexuality served as something of a boundary marker that both defines and reveals the content and scope of school based sex education. That is to say that the association of homosexuality and AIDS with disease and possible death provided a means of reaffirming the centrality, even desirability, of heterosexual relations. The focus on 'safe sex', while having something to say about homosexual sexual practices, was largely organised around the central preoccupation with the implications for heterosexual sexual practices. This became the central focus of the 'war on AIDS'. It was a process of reaffirming heterosexuality at a time of sexual uncertainty. And as was noted above, it was a particular kind of heterosexuality that was being affirmed, namely man-defined (penetrative) sex.[149] And in so doing, the question of homosexuality reveals that heterosexual social relations do not simply emerge as self-evident norms. To the contrary, they are actively promoted to be represented as the most natural of social relations, the self-evident basis for and justification of the sexualised gender order of the wider society.

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149 See for example R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), especially Chs 6 and 8. The latter chapter discussed what Connell called 'hegemonic masculinity and emphasized feminity'. For some discussion of the discursive construction of heterosexuality as both 'an exemplar of normality' and the polar opposite of homosexuality see Ned Katz, 'The Invention of Heterosexuality', *Socialist Review*, 90 (1), 1990, pp. 7-34. For a wider discussion of "polarisation" of the sexes in a heterosexual context, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1992).

Conclusion

This thesis has charted various efforts in the twentieth century to persuade the South Australian Education Department to expand its school curriculum to include teaching about sex. Behind the diverse debates over sex education, it has been argued, lay the idea of sexing the subject. A central theme of the thesis has been to demonstrate the discursive presence of this idea at different historical moments.

At first glance, the often disparate concerns raised in the individual debates about sex education might prompt the conclusion that they were discrete, singular events. However, identifying the theme of sexing the subject enables a discursive thread to be distinguished that establishes a sense of historical continuity. This does not mean that the people involved in these debates necessarily articulated the idea of sexing the subject in any self-conscious fashion. Some certainly did, but others did not. The argument of this thesis has been that underlying the various discourses of sex education this century was the idea of sexing the subject; that is, engendering subjectivities, shaping sexed subjectivities. This is the key to understanding the history and politics of sex education in state schools.

As the analysis of the foundations of the educational state in South Australia showed, management of the population in terms of maintaining a particular social order, was centrally important. This was especially so in terms of managing class relations. In various ways, nineteenth century (and later) educational initiatives developed power-knowledge regimes 'to civilise the working class'; to transform those children who had 'tast[ed] the fatal

liberty of the streets'.[1] Just as important as this class inflection within educational discourse, was the idea of a sexual division of labour. This idea provided a baseline for ongoing debates about the organisation of schooling, the curriculum, and educational knowledge in general. Few people, especially within the state education system, thought that it was appropriate for girls to be educated beyond what was needed to manage a household (and raise children) whereas for boys education was necessary for them to take their place as members of the paid workforce and breadwinners. Furthermore, as was shown in the discussion of the health education text used early in the twentieth century, educators were quite prepared to make class-specific pronouncements about what constituted proper standards of hygiene for the person and the household. This was not seen as encroaching on the rights of parents. Rather, it was accepted as necessary for uplifting the working class, for acculturating them to an ideology of home and hearth, thereby raising them to standards deemed acceptable to middle class reformers.

But ideas about a sexual division of labour enabled more than the above beliefs about sex-specific roles to be accepted. Assumptions about a sexual division of labour operated at an even more subterranean level, from which ideas were derived about women's and men's sexual natures, needs, and identities. This was a significant discursive context for educational practice in general, and for debates over sex education in particular. As was pointed out

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[1] Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 23 and p. 33 respectively.

in the Introduction, sex education was unique in that by its very subject matter it positioned the differences between the sexes as the centrally obvious 'fact' of sexual knowledge. Presumptions about gendered sexuality, the sexual identities and natures of male and female humans, have been taken to be the self-evident starting points for framing sexual knowledge. The positing of gendered sexualities as a naturally given dichotomy of sexual difference was rarely questioned. Yet this dichotomy is no more natural than the modern institution of schooling itself.

Ideas about the sexuality of women and men, of femininity and masculinity, have been (and continue to be) contested. Even when particular ideas of men's and women's sexuality have appeared to cohere and sustain a hegemonic presence across generations, their very coherence and hegemony has been a matter of discursive contention. Their dominance has to be continuously reasserted and negotiated; and that is the key point. Quintessentially, the idea of sexing the subject -- of engendering sexuality -- bounded the conditions of possibility for the various debates over sex education.

However, it needs to be stressed that there was no homogeneity of views about why sex education was necessary or about what the participants thought sex education could achieve. Diverse aims drawn from often conflicting ideas and social objectives characterised the politics of the debates over sex education. Advocates of social purity, for example, were mainly preoccupied with raising the moral standards of society. The scourge of

venereal disease was particularly important in prompting calls for sex education. Such concerns were especially prominent early in the twentieth century and later during the 1939-45 world war. Insofar as venereal disease was understood to affect the quality of populations there was some common cause to be made with eugenicists and advocates of social hygiene who saw sex education as a means to improve the quality of the population. Education about sex might change the reproductive habits of working and middle class women through providing appropriate contraceptive advice, such that working class women would have smaller families while middle class women could be encouraged to have larger families.

By the middle of the century, educators, especially educational psychologists, regarded sex education as integral to character formation. The 1940s saw renewed concerns over venereal disease and seemingly freer sexual habits of young men and women caught up in the uncertainty of the war. Renewed calls for sex education attempted to address these issues. Here the emphasis was on teaching self-restraint, the 'regulation of primitive desires' as the Director of Education put it in the 1940s.[2] Here 'sex' was likened to 'hunger' as a naturally occurring desire. Just as satisfying the latter could be managed through teaching good judgement and self-discipline so too could the former. From this perspective advocates of sex education argued not just that young people should be taught about the physiology of sex, conception, and

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[2] Charles Fenner, 'Sex Problerms in Schools', *Education Gazette*, Vol. XLI, 15 February 1945, p. 60.

childbirth. As important was the issue of the emotions and how to deal with them. Developing strong character was seen as the answer. Although sex education was regarded by some influential educators as 'one important element ... in the crucible of character formation',[3] parents rather than schools were expected to deal with that 'element'.

This approach to sex education, emphasising both the emotions and physiology, gathered momentum in the 1960s culminating in the development in the early 1970s of a health curriculum within which sex education was an important part. Similar concerns about sexual conduct and perceived promiscuity were again raised. But there were several significant differences that enabled calls for sex education to succeed. First, the population boom of the post-war period created a demographic bulge that saw unprecedented numbers of students seeking a secondary education. Second, this meant that the vast majority of adolescent boys and girls were brought together in close proximity at a time when problems of puberty were most likely to be heightened. Third, and largely a consequence of the first development, was the rise of a youth culture as a significant part of a modern industrial consumer society. This meant that young people, potentially more affluent and independent (as a result of full employment) than any of their historical counterparts, were able to shrug off (or at least distance themselves from) many of the social controls that had previously bound their parents and grandparents. Fourth, was the development of the contraceptive pill that

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3 *ibid.*

enabled the seemingly natural link between sex and procreation to be broken. No longer could marriage been seen as the inevitable outcome of, or site for, sexual activity. Not just the link between sex and procreation, but the link between marriage and nature was largely severed. That is, the sexual division of labour as the organisational principle for relations between the sexes, including marriage, was no longer a self-evident fact of 'nature'. And this was linked to the fifth reason, the sexual revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s in which emerged quite dramatic changes to sexual mores and practices. Men's and women's sexualities, their supposed sexual natures, could no longer be taken for granted. This was the broad context in which calls for the Education Department to teach sex education eventually succeeded.

Parallelling these changing material conditions were also significant discursive shifts in the framing of demands for sex education. At the turn of the century, the advocates of social purity and, to a certain extent, eugenicists, operated within a strongly moral discourse that looked to the state to enforce or police the desired moral conduct. However, to the extent that concerns about venereal disease raised health questions, sex education came to be seen as a health issue as much as a moral issue. This saw the gradual emergence of a medico-moral discourse that placed great emphasis on 'the absolute polarization of male and female sexuality'.[4] While Mort may have overemphasised the absoluteness of this polarisation, the analysis of the

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[4] Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 189.

deliberations of the Ryan Commission revealed the extent to which a naturally given sexual dichotomy was simply assumed. However, at the time, this emerging discourse was not of itself a part of the professional domain of teachers. Sex education was seen as a private matter best left to parents to deal with. Teachers, or rather the School Medical Inspector, could advise parents if and when needed. This was the basis of an emerging medico-moral discourse for understanding sex education.

By the 1940s this medico-moral approach began to exhibit a decidedly psychological cast. This was clearly brought out in the emphasis that various educators and medical authorities (mainly psychologists) within the Education Department placed on the development of character. Self-control and self-discipline rather than externally imposed threats of moral retribution or punishment were the ideals spoken about. Furthermore, this psycho-moral approach, as distinct from a medico-moral approach, emphasised the centrality of sexuality to one's character, to one's mental well being. But as has been shown, the notion of sexuality was nonetheless gendered. Neither these various debates over sex education in the 1940s nor the discursive shift to a psycho-moral discourse led to any significant change in the Education Department's official position (as established some thirty years earlier).

However, the psycho-moral emphasis on character formation did not disappear. It was to find a renewed lease of life in the 1970s within a human relations framework. An emphasis on the psychological well being of students, of pastoral care or management, came to the fore as part of thinking

about sex education. This emphasis became the pedagogic basis upon which a new health curriculum was created and implemented. The teacher was to be a combination of authoritative guide, mentor, and friend. Placed within a broader context such as health education, sex education could be seen as just another part of the professional domain of teachers. In this context, the 'who will teach it' question largely dissolved.

Even so, the prerogative of parents to have their children excluded from sex education was retained. This continued the longstanding practice dating back to the recommendation of the Ryan Commission in 1913. The question of why such a decision was made in the first place now needs some brief comment in the light of subsequent developments. It was explicitly recognised by the Ryan Commission that parents rarely gave their children any significant advice about sexual matters. But this was not seen as a sufficient reason to provide a school based alternative. In this particular area the rights of parents were posited as beyond the reach of the school even though, as Davey pointed out in relation to the *Education Act of 1915*,[5] almost every other domain of parent-child (or family) relations was being increasingly mediated by the social institution of schooling.

The problem was not just one of who should teach it if the schools were to take up the task. This was a problem that could have been (and eventually was) overcome. Rather, the unstated but central issue was really one of social

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[5] Ian Davey, 'Growing Up in South Australia' in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, ed Eric Richards, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 396.

class. The problem was how to reach those parents who were assumed to be most in need of assistance without infringing on the prerogatives of parents who could be assumed to deal with it themselves. That is, in a context in which the working class was understood to be sexually licentious and profligate, and the middle class was generally seen as more abstemious and morally responsible, it was the latter whose prerogatives were really being upheld. But this could not be achieved without doing the same for working class parents. Hence the strategy supported by the Ryan Commission was for the School Medical Inspector to assist those parents who might need appropriate advice. In this way, middle class privacy and decorum could be protected. At the same time the issues could be safely cordoned off and addressed, if necessary, within a medico-moral framework. In consequence, however, the idea of a parental prerogative became discursively entrenched within sex education debates as a seemingly insurmountable obstacle.

Once the decision to create a curriculum space for sex education was eventually taken, this 'obstacle' proved more chimerical than real. The only time that serious opposition emerged was not over any Education Department initiative but rather one contemplated by the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT). As was discussed in Chapter 8, the remote possibility that homosexuality might be discussed as a form of sexuality in its own right saw a massive mobilisation of public opinion to prevent SAIT's draft policy from developing any further. The controversy was enough to force the Minister of Education to close the door on any curriculum development of sex education in

that direction. This incident underlined the heterosexual focus of sex education and its implicit endorsement of hegemonic forms of masculinity and 'emphasized femininity'.

Thus the idea of sexing the subject was the discursive *episteme* around which various discourses emerged to constitute their particular objects of knowledge and concomitant social agendas for sex education. Participants in debates over sex education took for granted certain supposed differences between the sexes, positing such differences as facts of nature. These differences were discursively constructed as bio-political 'facts', on the basis of which gendered social relations were constituted and upheld. The underlying common thread was the active endorsement or promotion of gendered heterosexual norms as the most natural of social relations. This thesis has shown how such norms permeated the debates and thereby shaped the politics of sex education in state schools in twentieth century South Australia.

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