Area of Study 4
Discourses in Sexuality Education

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The self and others

Technologies of the self

(Leunig)
Technologies of the self

Knowledge, power, subjects

How do we practice freedom?

(Schindler 2009)
Technologies of the self

- Those 'procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of mastery or self knowledge'.

(Foucault 2000)
Technologies of the self

• 'What should one do with oneself? What work should be carried out on the self? How should one 'govern oneself' by performing actions in which one is oneself the objective of those actions, the domain in which they are brought to bear, the instrument they employ, and the subject that acts?'

(Foucault 2000)
Michel Foucault: Technologies of the self

• How individuals are made into subjects
• Subjects?
  – The mad
  – The school child
  – The teacher
  – The mother
  – The good/bad girl/boy
• … and the normal, the appropriate, the abnormal, the delinquent and deviant that are dimensions of all subject positions

(Macmillan 2011)
Michel Foucault: 'Normal / Abnormal'

• For a female child born today list the sorts of expectations – in terms of behaviours, attitudes, development, relationships – that would identify her as 'normal' in the following periods of her life
  – 0-5 years
  – 10-15 years

• Where do these expectations come from?

• What are some of the most important sources?

(Al Arabia News 2010; Bill Bachman 2010)
Michel Foucault: Technologies of the self

- History of Sexuality (3 volumes)
- 3 axes of analysis – Knowledge/Power/Subjects

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<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
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<td>'the formation of sciences (saviors) that refer to it'</td>
<td>'the systems of power that regulate its practice'</td>
<td>The forms within which individuals are able, are obliged, to recognize themselves as subjects of this sexuality</td>
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(Foucault 1984)
Michel Foucault: Knowledge/Power/Subjects

Knowledges

- Discourses: Regularised ways of thinking, talking, discussing, acting – most apparent in the academic disciplines, but also in everyday life.
- What Foucault called the human sciences – where 'man' became the object of a vast array of knowledges.

Discourses of intensive mothering

- What's normal? What's abnormal?
- What's true? What isn't?
- Who can speak/act? Who can't?
- How should a woman imagine herself as a mother?

(Fox Searchlight Pictures 2007)
Fat kids? Fat food? Fat families? Fat schools? Fat advertising?

- It is claimed that the 'problem' of obesity for children and young people is significant in affluent countries such as Australia. Identify different aspects of the Knowledge, Power, Subject axes in relation to the problem (your sources might be your knowledge of advice columns in magazines, government campaigns, education materials, advertising for products).

**Knowledge**
How is the problem made known? What types of knowledge make the problem knowable as a problem?

**Power**
How is the management, or regulation of the problem to be accomplished? What authorities are responsible?

**Subjects**
How are persons meant to recognise their behaviour and dispositions in relation to the problem?
Michel Foucault: Knowledge/Power/Subjects

- Power and power relations – a difference between relationships of domination and power relationships between active, 'free' subjects
  - 'I mean that in human relationships, whether they involve verbal communication such as we are engaged in at this moment, or amorous, institutional, or economic relationships, power is always present'
  - 'these power relations are mobile, they can be modified, they are not fixed once and for all'
  - 'power relations are possible only in so far as the subjects are free'
- If we can act and think otherwise – how do we choose to practice our freedom?

(Foucault 1984)
• This is why I emphasize practices of freedom over liberation ...

• This is precisely the problem I encountered with regard to sexuality: does it make any sense to say, 'Let's liberate our sexuality'?

• Isn't the problem rather that of defining the practices of freedom by which one could define what is sexual pleasure and erotic, amorous and passionate relationships with others? (p. 283)

(Robinson 1999; Anderson 2010)
Human beings are born male and female, but become men and women through a process of social construction

(Elliott 2001)
References

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Elliott, Patricia 2001, Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 'A Psychoanalytic Reading of Transsexual Embodiment', Volume 2, Issue 4, Pg 103


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