

**Ka mua, ka muri—Look to the past to  
inform the future**

**ARE WE SCARED TO TALK ABOUT SEX?**

**MAYBE IT'S THE OTHER QUESTION, WE'RE SCARED  
TO TELL OUR CHILDREN THAT IT'S PLEASURABLE.  
WHAT ARE WE SCARED OF?**

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# Introduction

**Ki ora tatou  
Ko Te Poho-o-Tamatea tōku maunga  
Ko Opawaho tōku awa  
Ko Ludemann tōku hapū  
Nō Otautahi ahau  
*Ko Tracy Clelland tōku ingoa***



# The tension surrounding sexuality education

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# What does the media say parents/whanau want?

## Parents Want Control Of Sex Education – Poll



SEX

**78%** would be confident teaching their own children about sex and sexuality issues

**68%** of parents of teens/children agree that they, not the Government, should have the final say on what sex education is provided in schools

*Curia Market Research – Nov 2016*

Media Release 11 January 2017



Almost 4 out of 5 parents are confident of their ability to teach their own children about sex and sexuality issues, and 2/3rds believe that parents should be

# What do the politicians say?

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- The Minister of Education at the time, Hekia Parata, discussed sexuality and consent education and stated it was:

"first and foremost a parental, family and whanau responsibility" (Stuff, April 3, 2017).

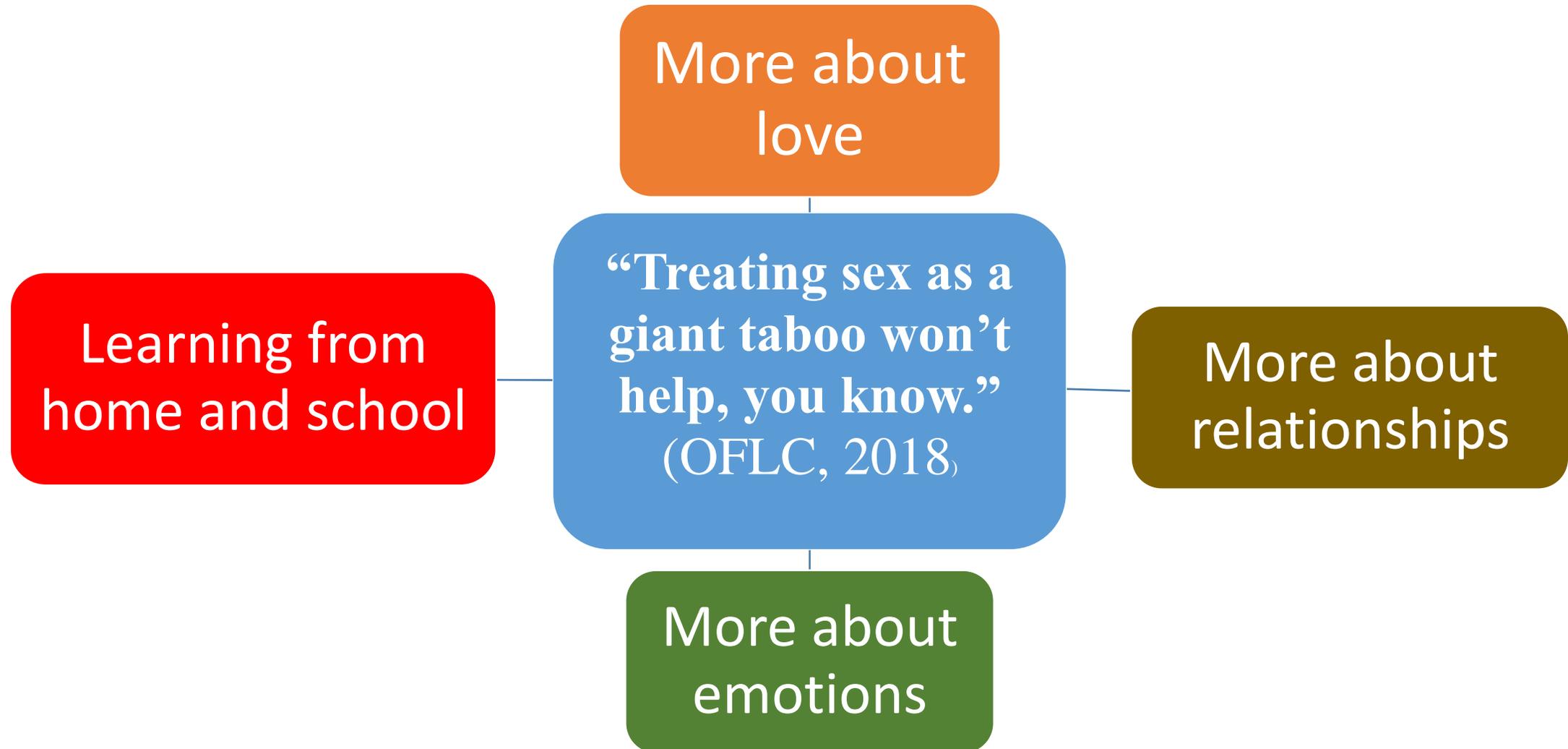
# What does the media say?

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## Stuff articles

- Teenagers and sex: where parents go wrong'
  - **'Condoms given out at school'**
  - **'We need to talk about porn in sex ed classes'**
  - **'Sex Ed's an issue for families, not schools'**
  - **'Pleasure should be taught in New Zealand sexual education classes'**
  - **'Principals happy sex ed sidesteps pleasure'**
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- ***Makes me feel inadequate*" (Steph, fg6)**

# What do the young people say?



# What were your experience's of sexuality education? Home? School? Other?

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*“I have one more thing, not getting that education and being super funny about that stuff meant that I have been funny about all of it, including my health care. I’ve only had one pap smear in my life. I think it has actually put me in danger.”*

*And I think that has impacted me on, like, talking to my son about, about like, you’re just saying, it’s actually kind of guarded me, I think. (Rose)*

# Feelings of inadequacy as a parent

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**Talia:** I think for me just finding that information would make me feel just *incompetent*. Maybe it will make me pressured to follow through on it. It's just *awkward*.

**Steph:** Yeah I relate to that. One thing you hear is about other parents and all the things that they do. Like top in the gymnastics class. (Carries on). Makes me feel *inadequate* and I have a really full on job that I drop the ball in things, not doing the stuff I need to do that I am doing. Then there's the discussion about sexuality stuff also comes into it.

**Talia:** And for some reason I *think we think we should know* what to say [about sexuality]?

**Elise:** And I don't know why because we had to learn to change a nappy etc. So I don't know what we think we should know what to say.[group laughter]

# What is missing from sexuality education?

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- **Eden**: Yes, factually, you know, very factual. But what I never got taught about is what it was actually like to be horny. Like, what the fuck is going on here, what is this feeling? **(group laugh)**!
- I thought I was a **freak**. Because I didn't know what actual, physical attraction felt like.

# The discourse of desire

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Hannah: I would have loved more information about that [pleasure].

Zoe: I don't know if it's a little bit like talking about it, and if you tell them that it's going to feel good then they might be, you **know, it might encourage them.***[uncertain]*

Hannah: It's that thing again, yeah. People do, I think, that thinking, my parents definitely did, they were like, "Oh, we won't tell you anything about any good stuff about that. We'll just **want to terrify you, and you mustn't go there.**"

It would have really helped me with those bad decisions, I think, I would have been like, "Yeah, actually this isn't supposed to hurt. This is supposed to be nice." **Because I, and I didn't talk about it with anyone, so I didn't have anyone telling me, actually it's not supposed to be like that.** If I'd had that information. But it is a tricky one, yeah.

# Shame

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Emily: But I mean, my parents, my father especially, he was so strict that anything to do with sex or anything was like forbidden and, you know, like, terrible. So I've never really been comfortable about sex and, yeah.

And like, I mean like I get undressed in front of my kids and I'll be in the shower and stuff like that but, **you know, I am embarrassed about my body, and that's just because of that, you know, I was always taught that it, don't know, was wrong.**

# Innocence vs Knowing

Tania: No. And he said, “What’s a sixty-niner?” And she sort of went aghh

Issy: “Let’s look it up on the Internet!”

Tania: But then he said, he said, “No, it’s okay, I’ve actually just looked it up but I just thought I’d ask you.”. And when he said that she was just like, “Shit! What did he see when he looked it up?”

TC: What age was he? Do you know?

Tania: Thirteen, you know, I think parents are just, they’re a bit slow to arrive at the party.

Young people are not innocent but they are vulnerable

# Key themes of the research

1. **SE is not individualistic**-Sexuality education needs to be based within a social and moral domain. Frame SE on a socio-ecological model (Self, others, society)
2. **History informs the present**- parents need to explore their own feelings about sex and sexuality. Feelings of shame, inadequacy, gender, etc.
3. **Risk and pleasure**- To talk about the risk we must also include the joy.
4. **Sexuality education needs to be framed as holistic**- Physical ,mental emotional , social and spiritual. It cannot be talked about from a physical dimension only. This leaves young people vulnerable and often with life-long feelings of guilt and shame.
5. **Silence**- What is not said about sexuality is as powerful as words.

# Key themes of the research

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6. **Young people are sexual beings**, and capable of working things out for themselves. Strategies must draw on lived experiences.
7. **Young people want communication** from parents BUT not in the form of lectures, innuendoes.
8. The **digital world** is being used by young people and adults to learn about everything. Develop critical thinking and decision making skills.
9. **Parents supported school sexuality education** but had limited understanding of what was being taught. There is room for schools and whanau to work together.

*“I would have thought they teach masturbation in schools?” (Leah, fg6)*

# Strategies for parental engagement

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1. Talk often and draw on real life experiences.
2. Teach young people how to navigate conflicts and make decisions.
3. Make the young person the expert- ask them their opinion.
4. Minimise parental judgement and control.
5. Be aware of the underlying messages and silences around sexuality.
6. Young people who perceive their parents as more open and non-judgmental have been found to have a more positive sense of self and their body.

# Strategies for parental engagement

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- Conceptualise sexuality as an adventure.
- Explore social and cultural dimensions- some people believe, others....
- Use books, TV, magazines, as starters for conversations
- Always ask the young person's opinion.
- Use open questions- What do you think about? Why? How?
- Don't worry if they don't want to talk, what they remember is the underlying tone.

(Clelland, 2018, Fine 1988,  
Allen, 2012, Cense, 2018)