SUPERVISOR/S: Sonja Ellis  
PROJECT TITLE: Heteronormativity in sexual health information on the internet  
FIELD: Social Psychology/Social Sciences  
DIVISION/SCHOOL: DEDU - School of Education  
PROJECT LOCATION: Hamilton

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
For young people, sex and relationship education (SRE) provides the foundation for developing a healthy sense of self in relation to sexuality and the ability to make informed choices about sexual behaviour. Although SRE is provided in school and sometimes by health organisations (e.g. sexual health clinics) research on youth sexual health (e.g. Formby & Donovan, 2020; Jones & Biddlecorn, 2011) overwhelmingly indicates that the main source of information about sex and sexuality for young people today is the internet. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, where SRE occupies a very small part of the school curriculum and where there are few community-based organisations engaged in SRE, online sources providing information about sexual health are a key source of sexual health education for young people here. As Svendsen (2012) highlights, the sexual identities and practices of many young people cannot be accounted for within conventional heterosexual narratives. In a world where sex between people of the same sex has become normalised, young people are increasingly conceptualising sexuality as fluid (Katz-Wise 2015); many identifying as ‘heteroflexible’, ‘bisexual’ or ‘pansexual’ and/or defining gender in diverse ways. Essentially, young people are growing up in a world in which their experience of sexuality, and increasingly gender, falls outside of that of conventional norms (Robertson 2018; Svendsen 2012). One of the problems with SRE – both formal and informal – is that it often does not engage with the lived realities of young people today. It is therefore important to ensure that all young people have access to SRE that reflects this level of diversity and does not assume that all students are heterosexual and cisgender. Furthermore, it is important that even where young people may identify (primarily) as heterosexual that they have access to reliable and accurate information about sexual health that relates to their potentially fluid sexuality and addresses the sexual health implications of a wide range of sexual practices. While there are a number of recent research articles exploring LGBTIQ inclusion in school-based sexuality education (e.g. Ellis & Bentham, 2020; Estes, 2017) to date there is a dearth of work on inclusivity in online sexual health information. Based on the design of other studies that have analysed website content in relation to health topics (e.g. Buhi et al., 2010; Grana & Ling, 2014; Marques et al., 2015) this study will examine the nature, scope, and content of a sample of sexual health websites commonly accessed by young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. The project will involve systematically identifying a sample of websites that provide sexual health information and undertaking a robust thematic or content analysis of the selected websites. The primary research question is to what extent is sexual health information on the internet inclusive of diverse sexualities.

STUDENT SKILLS:
• Previous study in psychology, human development, sociology, community health, or cognate discipline.
• A good grounding in psychological or social science research methods (as evidenced by achievement of B+ or higher in PSYCH211, PSYCH307, SSRES200, EDUCA557 or equivalent).
• A knowledge of qualitative data analysis (e.g. content analysis; thematic analysis) or the willingness and ability to learn this.
• Competence in undertaking systematic searches, and the ability to quickly learn how to use new software applications or tools.
• A demonstrated ability to work systematically, and to exercise good time management.
• An understanding of sexual and gender diversity in contemporary society.

PROJECT TASKS:
• Collaboration with Supervisor in defining the scope of the study, its exact research design, and identifying the keywords/phrases that will be used to undertake the data search.
• Using Google to undertake a systematic, and exhaustive, search for websites providing sexual health information to young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.
• With the help of webtracking tools (e.g. Google Analytics) determine from the websites identified, which are the most popular websites used by young people searching from New Zealand.
• Capture website content (using WinHTTrack or similar) to compile a coherent data set.
• Design and use a protocol to identify what text from each website would be included in the analysis
• Initial Content or thematic analysis of the data (set of selected websites).
• Collaboration in the writing up of the research for submission to a peer-reviewed academic journal (e.g., drafting the Method section; Compiling the reference list; sharing proof-reading and sense-checking the final draft of article; ensuring that article
• Creation of the final research poster.
Use accurate record-keeping of the methodological and analytical processes employed in undertaking the above activities so as to facilitate an accurate write-up of the research.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:
• Student’s Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the Scholarship regulations)
• The summer scholar will have the opportunity to work with an experienced researcher, to apply their research knowledge within a real-life research project through the development of skills in collecting social artefacts to analyse, undertaking a robust qu
• The study will lead to a research article (co-authored by the Summer Scholar) and published in an appropriate peer-reviewed academic journal.
• The project directly relates to the Supervisors’ current research programme around inclusivity in youth sexual health.
• The proposed study is an important component in a set of studies around this research topic, and critical to the coherence of the Superv