

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Building Children's Ethical Relationship Skills with Parents and Educators

Associate Professor Kerry Robinson and Professor Moira Carmody from the Centre for Educational Research and Dr Suzanne Dyson from La Trobe University are exploring how parents, children and teachers learn the skills to build ethical and respectful sexual relationships. This research is funded by the Australian Research Council Discovery Projects grant scheme.

'In recent years there have been a number of critical and controversial incidents associated with the perceived sexualisation of childhood in advertising and popular culture,' says Associate Professor Robinson. 'The increased incidence of sexually transmitted infections among young people, and the enculturation of violence perpetrated against women and girls has also been exposed by, and debated in, the Australian media. This highlights the need for greater community education around children's sexuality, sexual ethics and respectful relationships. There is evidence that views among young people that condone violence against women start early in life. This research project seeks to understand what kind of education and other strategies would be useful to children, parents and educators to successfully intervene in this situation.'

The research team will use interviews, focus groups, surveys and document analysis to critically examine children's, parents' and educators' views and experiences of sexuality education and its delivery in schools; communication mechanisms between parents and children; and their understanding of what constitutes a respectful relationship.



This research hopes to move the debate around sexuality and sexual relationships away from being viewed as problematic for young people to that of building a culture of ethical and respectful relationships in early life. This will provide a strong foundation for carrying these values through to adulthood and parenthood, thus preventing sexual violence and developing an inclusive community for future generations.

Project Title: The tensions for parents, educators and children in building a sustainable culture of ethical and respectful relationships early in life
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