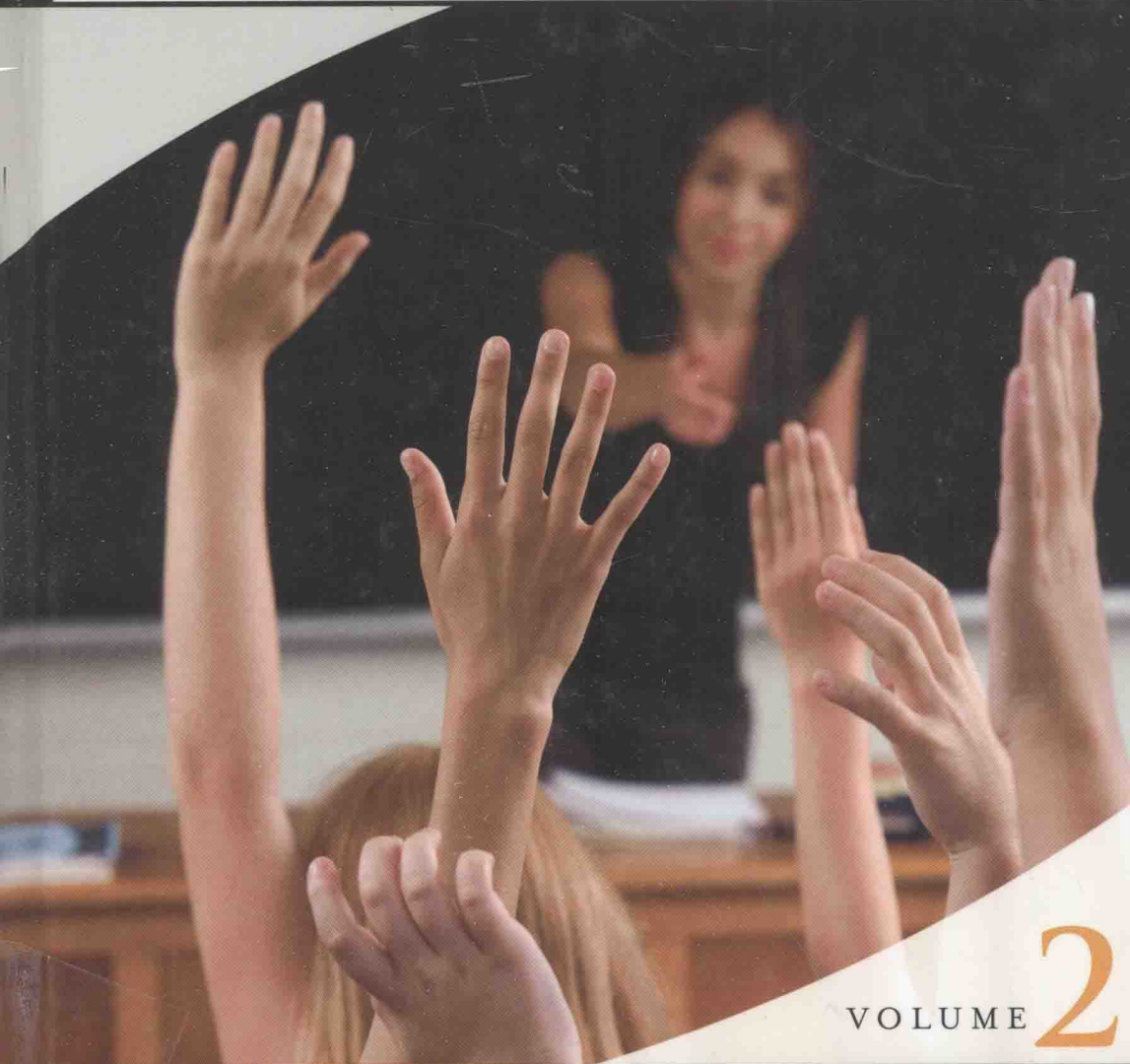


PRAEGER PERSPECTIVES

# SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Past, Present, and Future

Edited by Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MSW, and Judy Kuriansky, PhD



VOLUME **2**

What People Want to Know

# **SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

**Past, Present, and Future**

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What People Want to Know**

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*Praeger Perspectives*

Sex, Love, and Psychology

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# **Sexuality Education**

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*To my 6-year-old son, Matthew, my heart and my inspiration. I love  
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*For all the people in the world who deserve sexually healthy  
and happy lives, and to my mom, who taught me unconditional love, and  
my dad, who inspired me to “follow—and fulfill—your dreams.”*

*—Judy Kuriansky*

## FOREWORD

For more than two generations, sexuality educators have been championing the cause for understanding the importance of healthy sexuality and sexual expression in human development. It has been a rocky road, still under construction, filled with numerous detours, challenges and fraught with significant controversy due to powerful social and political forces. The continuation of this effort is essential as recent data at this writing, especially about young people, is extraordinarily alarming:

- 100 young people become pregnant every hour of every day in America;
- 50 young people give birth every hour of every day in America;
- 25 young people have a pregnancy termination every hour of every day in America;
- 425 young people contract a sexually transmitted infection every hour of every day in America;
- 2 young people become infected with HIV every hour of every day in America.

So as you can see, this is not some vague social problem floating around in our culture. What kind of society allows this to occur? Shouldn't we question ourselves? Shouldn't this make us tremble? Shockingly, our best thinking and our best doing in this great country of ours got us where we are today. We simply must do better. For these reasons I am grateful for the opportunity to write this foreword for *Sexuality Education: Past, Present, and Future*. This is a formidable set of volumes and will provide essential tools in meeting the enormous challenges facing us as we move through the twenty-first century.

As I began to write the foreword for this important set of books, I was encouraged by the possibility of change. The United States has elected a new president and congressional leadership on the promise of change. Specific to the themes in this four book set, our new president Barack Obama is the first candidate in our lifetime who has openly supported comprehensive sexuality education throughout his campaign. He has consistently embraced research and reason and has resisted strong conservative attempts to restrain scientific public discourse on sexuality issues through the life cycle. While the extent to which the new administration will support comprehensive sexuality education is yet to be seen, dialogue about this critical issue has already begun at important senior levels of government. I believe this essential dialogue will be informed by this rich and vital resource of books with contributions from national leaders in the sexuality field.

*Sexuality Education: Past, Present, and Future* covers a vast range of issues of great value to educators, student's, policymakers, researchers, and the general public. All of these groups now have access to a unique overview that has never before been presented together in this fashion, from tracing the early development of the field to bringing it forward toward the most progressive possibilities for the future. I am honored that my own work of 25 years on adolescent pregnancy prevention with the Children's Aid Society in New York is discussed in various chapters in this series. No other resource I have seen has made a more thorough and intensive examination of the evolution of sexuality education—allowing us to see what has existed, what has changed or remains the same, and what holds promise for the future. This deep and rich four volume set also addresses the invaluable yet often overlooked need for educational intervention which is evident in the voices of learners themselves. Whether we reach people through a formal classroom setting, or teach eager persons in a remote rural areas willing to walk miles and sit on a dirt floor to learn about these topics, or educate individuals through one-on-one interventions via the Internet or over the air waves—a key component is understanding what learners *need* and also *want*—to know about sexuality.

Volume 1 sets the stage for the issues and context of this valuable process. Volume 2 is an invaluable resource for all sexuality educators, researchers, health professionals, policymakers and legislators, as it offers diverse and provocative reports of what different populations in the United States—and around the world—seek to learn about sexuality and sexual expression and how they face similar issues about access to acquiring such life-enhancing education. Equally important are the contributions that help us distinguish differences in approach for diverse cultural populations, and knowing what is appropriate to teach learners of different ages in such groups. Volume 3 of this resource addresses this issue by describing programs with children and unique approaches with adolescents engaged in peer education efforts, while also

highlighting the need for parents to receive support in their roles as sexuality educators of their own children. Also included in this volume is the recognition that age is not the only issue about which sexuality education initiatives must remain cognizant. Diversity, including learning style, age, developmental level, sexual orientation, and gender and relationship status, all affect the way in which sexuality information is conveyed and heard. Accordingly, this volume provides invaluable perspectives on the best practices to effectively reach the many diverse audiences sexuality educators serve.

What does the future of sexuality education hold? Answers will reveal themselves over time, but volume 4 presents readers with cutting edge information, programs, approaches, techniques, and resources that enable us to think about best practices and how sexuality education can—and should—take place. My own view on this is that orthodoxy has failed, so we must continue to develop nontraditional ways of teaching about sexuality, and to push through the resistance that attempts to censor the public discussion of sexuality and sexual expression. Only then will we truly consider nontraditional topics or relationships and make a difference in the way all people, young and older, learn about their sexuality—which is an essential and not well understood fiber in the fabric of their wholeness. Volume 4 thoroughly captures these notions.

In my book, *Lessons for Lifeguards*, I suggest that “effective programs do not happen by spontaneous combustion; someone has got to light the fire. Be incendiary in your efforts.” I believe this four-volume set provides the fuel and other combustible materials to enable you to make a difference in your role as a sexuality educator, however you may define that role and with whomever you engage. As of this writing, I have worked 50 years with young people and their families. These extraordinary volumes reinforce why I continue to try to press ahead in our field.

*Dr. Michael A. Carrera*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Thank you, thank you. Appreciation is the thing to do. Thank him, thank her. For all the things you do for me, thank you.”

These words came to Judy in the middle of yet another all-nighter while working on the Herculean task of putting together this set of books, and they represent the feelings of both of us. The phrase formed the basis of a song that Judy and her co-lyricist and fellow composer, Russell Daisey, wrote and then performed at peace charity concerts in Japan. The spirit of appreciation that inspired the song was so appropriate for the Japanese tradition of honoring—but also very appropriately inspired the process of putting together this set of volumes.

To say that putting together this four-volume set was tantamount to giving birth to quadruplets is an unbelievable understatement. True, it wasn't as painful, but the labor took a long time, many people contributed to and supported us throughout the process, and we are very proud of the outcome.

So, now, at this time of completion of this four-volume set with over 60 chapters and more than 100 authors, we are moved to recall that spirit of appreciation that was captured in Judy's song:

- Our appreciation goes to all the contributors to these volumes, some of whom are dear friends as well as colleagues. We honor the individuals they are and the work they are doing, which is contributing so much to others. Their hard work and commitment to educating professionals and the public about the need for sexuality education, and the wide range of what can be considered sexuality education, have been invaluable. Thank you so much.
- Our appreciation also extends to all those written about in these pages; may they be comforted and inspired by their contributions to the caring and hard work

reflected in these chapters, to ease—and prevent—sexually related problems and contribute to sexually well-educated and healthy lives for all.

- We are also deeply grateful to Praeger Publishing's Debbie Carvalko, Praeger Senior Acquisitions Editor, psychology and health, who championed this project and was always available with wise counsel, vision, and encouragement. We're also grateful to Elizabeth Potenza, Praeger Development Editor, and Apex CoVantage's Project Manager, Mary Cotofan, for their kindness, attention, and hard work, whom we e-mailed over the course of this project more, even on Sundays, than some members of our own families. We thank them all for their valued guidance, patience, and support throughout this project. We also extend gratitude to all the staff at Praeger and Apex CoVantage, who worked so diligently on this project.

In addition, from Judy:

I have deep appreciation for my wonderful and wise, creative and caring, friend and musical collaborator Russell, who was constantly there for me through so many all-nighters while I was writing my own chapters and editing others. He is truly an angel and a shining example of a consummate talent, great listener and sage advisor rolled into one. The same wisdom and championing is true of my mom, Sylvia, whom I cherish and to whom I owe so much for her constant love and devotion. She is also truly an angel. No words can ever express the depth of my appreciation and affection for her, but *her* words, "one thing at a time," were such good counsel for her daughter who is compelled to multitask 10 things at once. Yet her confidence, "I know you will get it all done," was also reassuring. Equally inspiring is her profound respect for sexuality education, especially—as she'll even describe in her sweet way—having grown up in a generation less open about such things. And then, just when the work was reaching a fevered pitch, two other angels appeared in the form of my Smith College interns—Amanda Calvo and Jennifer Arias—with their warm hearts, devotion, trustworthiness, enthusiastic spirit, varied talents, and brilliance beyond their years, not to mention their keen editing skills and willingness to try any format for a table or look up any detail on the Internet. The chapters they each contributed to are favorites, as every word is infused with their love, hard work, and good humor, like when reminding me to sleep or eat. I adore them and I am filled with pride for who they are and for the professionals they will become.

Another angel was there from the start, my coeditor, Elizabeth Schroeder, who is indeed a dream come true as a colleague and friend with whom to share such a task. Her excellent judgment, steadfast reliability, warm heart, terrific good-humor and great team spirit—not to mention her brilliantly written e-mails, which always served to uplift and amuse—set a new standard for a collaborator with such a broad "skill set" in a woman with such a pleasant personality mixed with a smart and organized brain. I am very blessed—and

now very spoiled—to have worked with her on this project and look forward to many more in the future.

And from Elizabeth:

I would not have been a part of this project had it not been for Bill Taverner, director of education at Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern New Jersey's Center for Family Life Education. You are a most generous, wonderful colleague, Bill, and I value you immensely.

I also wish to thank Nora Gelperin, director of education and training at Answer, who provided instrumental research assistance for the series. Nora, you are a consummate professional, colleague, and friend who I can also now refer to as my coworker. I am so lucky to know you.

I was also fortunate to have had a wonderful graduate student from Montclair State University, Holly Den Bleyker, helping me with obtaining permissions, inputting edits, and lending her keen eye to a good number of the chapters. Holly, I will miss being able to avail myself of your amazing work!

Above all, I need to thank Dr. Judy Kuriansky. Readers should know that Judy originally had a supervisory role as the series editor but became so excited by and committed to the project that she joined as an equal coeditor, both generating her own content and securing much of it as well. This four book set honestly would not have happened without her, and her contributions—as an author of so many compelling, eye-opening chapters; as an editor with a creative, analytical eye; and as a brilliant thinker and brainstormer whose humor and collegiality really kept me going throughout this project—truly made the set the unique resource it is. Judy, I am honored to have worked with you on this and to now be able to call you friend. So what's our next project?

Finally, we both want to thank all the sexuality educators in the field—those who have done the work in the past, those who are doing the work today, and those who will do the work in the future. Whatever your role—university professor, school teacher or administrator, community-based educator, researcher, advocate, therapist or clinician, parent or other adult with children or young people in your life, or anyone else who knows how vital it is to learn about sexuality in its broadest definition throughout the life cycle—know that you are so important. Thank you for reading this set about sexuality education and for all you do for individuals, communities, society, and the world.

*Judy Kuriansky and Elizabeth Schroeder*



# INTRODUCTION

*Elizabeth Schroeder*

There is something I don't know that I am supposed to know.  
I don't know what it is I don't know, and yet am supposed to know,  
and I feel I look stupid if I seem both not to know it and not know  
what it is I don't know.

Therefore I pretend I know it.

This is nerve-racking since I don't know what I must pretend to  
know.

Therefore I pretend to know everything. I feel you know what I am  
supposed to know but you can't tell me what it is because you don't  
know that I don't know what it is.

You may know what I don't know, but not that I don't know it, and  
I can't tell you.

So you will have to tell me everything.

from *Knots*, by R. D. Laing

This poem, widely used by educators, summarizes so well the experience of a learner. It was written with an adolescent in mind but can refer to a learner of any age who is embarking on the journey of understanding a particular topic area. It also applies quite well to learning about sexuality, a topic about which far too many assumptions are made. Adolescents and teens use sexualized language and are assumed to all be having sex, when research shows that they clearly are not. Adults assume that other adults are knowledgeable about sexuality just by virtue of their age—and assume that they themselves should know more than they do.

Yet the vast majority of adults today did not receive quality sexuality education when they were growing up. Depending on the location, children, adolescents, and teens are faring no better. The bottom line—and the focus of this volume—is that everyone has questions. Regardless of age, experience, or anything else, there will always be sexuality-related questions to which people would like to know the answers.

Just about every adult can recall a time when they were required to take a class at school that held no interest for them. Alternatively, in some cases they may have been pleasantly surprised that a topic they had not thought would be interesting actually was. Trying to learn about a topic that does not hold one's attention can be challenging.

Sexuality educators are often fortunate to find that adolescents, teens, and young adults who take our classes are usually filled with anticipation over what will be discussed. Yet, the reception of parents, adults, and adult professionals to this subject are often mixed. There are also differences among teachers. For example, teachers who want to teach their students about sexuality are much more likely open to and excited about learning about the topic, when compared with teachers who have not been teaching about sexuality and are informed that they must teach sexuality (sometimes by their principal on Friday afternoon for the following Monday). Haphazard assignments of individuals to teach such an important topic is as unfair to the learner as it is to the instructor.

Adults who seek information and education about sexuality are a unique audience, whether they are end-users of the information, or adult professionals who will be conveying the information to others. They may assume that, just because they are adults, they should know certain sexuality-related information—yet there is so much more to learn than one learns through life experience or by taking one undergraduate course at the college level.

How does an educator know what to teach a particular audience about sexuality? Sometimes, it is based on content standards developed by a state's department of education. Other times, the content has been pre-determined by historical approaches—or, if involved in a research project, required by the study's design. Yet, sexuality is a unique topic in that the culture's values, beliefs, and messages are changing so rapidly, that learners' needs can often change just as rapidly. As a result, it is best to combine (a) what educational experts know from their vast experience, (b) what the research in sexuality education tells us, and (c) the input of learners as to what they think they want or need to know.

Certainly, sexuality education cannot be based exclusively on (c) above; that is, what learners say they are interested in learning; people need to know about sexually transmitted infections, even if it isn't the "sexiest" topic or creates anxiety. At the same time, however, asking for input from learners—a

mini “needs assessment”—can help to create a much more learner-centered environment, with learners who are attentive and motivated.

Volume 2 explores the wide range of sexuality information that individuals—both adolescents and adults—reveal that they are interested in knowing about. These interests become evident in the chapters in this volume and have been identified through a diversity of venues, including school-based interventions, live lectures, radio call-in shows, and the Internet. In some cases, this information has been collected anonymously, a wonderful technique for ensuring that individuals can be honest in expressing their question and revealing their knowledge level. Questions in this volume are presented from a variety of sources, from the public to professionals; from middle school age through adults. Through presenting questions from a variety of people, chapters in this volume also examine attitudes, values, and beliefs of various learners. In our increasing global world, we also examine questions from public and professionals outside of the United States, to reveal the informational needs of learners around the world, showing differences and similarities.

From this intensive examination of questions people want to know, it is clear: information is invaluable, and the accuracy and situationally appropriateness of the content is imperative. All sexuality educators must ensure that they have a working knowledge of their populations in order to teach them valuable sexuality information. But we also have much to learn from and share with colleagues around the world.

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