

Natalie Fiennes. *Behind Closed Doors: Sex Education Transformed*. London: Pluto Press, 2019. Pp 152. Paper. \$15.

Natalie Fiennes, a sex educator and journalist for the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, surveys society's misconceptions sex and sex education. She argues that they developed from social, political, and religious influences as far back as 1695 to the MeToo movement of 2017. Fiennes shows how misguided assumptions developed over time in order to collectively phase them out. She argues that we are currently experiencing an important transformation.

She addresses biological development, gender identity, masculinity, body image, sexual consent, contraceptives, virginity, sex work, and relationships. Fiennes presents the issues from different points of view and makes them understandable for laypersons. Every chapter is clearly organized with a captivating anecdote and an analysis of the theme's progression to its influence on current events and perceptions. Her writing style makes this book easy to follow.

While she primarily focuses on the UK, she does include case studies from around the world. For example, the biological development chapter highlights Caster Semenya, the South African 2016 Olympic Gold medalist who was subjected to sex testing. The chapter on gender identity is covered from a social and legal standpoint stemming from the changing room incidents, and the section dealing with masculinity begins with Donald Trump's infamous locker room talk that made toxic masculinity part of the national conversation. Using culturally notable examples helps relate these issues to readers.

Each chapter also includes an analysis of legal guidelines. For example, the chapter of consent demonstrates the shortcomings of existing laws in actually protecting victims. She also defines virginity from scientific and cultural perspectives to illustrate its complexity, especially in a globalized world where regional definitions are more likely to clash. The chapter on sexual violence and harassment delineates the different situations and acts that fall under that category.

The book covers twelve different complex topics across only 148 pages, which is enough to get the points across but hinders the

ability to delve deeply into any one subject. The fact that the author is not a trained historian becomes evident in the citation methods, particularly with the use of sources. Online articles make up the bulk of the citations and are used for their news reports or data, like the chapter on consent providing numbers on unreported cases and the accusations that lead to convictions. A small number of psychological and sociological books are occasionally referenced to support a point. Regrettably, the book does not contain a bibliography. Every chapter concludes with quotations related to the chapter that give personal insights by individuals affected by the specific topic. Their anonymity was used for their protection and privacy. Therefore their stories are also impossible to corroborate.

The general population is not familiar with the nuances of these topics and issues. Fiennes approach is not to delve too deeply into any one subject but rather to provide a starting point for people interested in a range of topics concerning sexuality and the straightforward organization makes the content easy to digest. It would be easy to interpret the title as a new guidebook for sex education but that does not appear to be its purpose. The intention is to get to a point where we can have an open conversation in order to eliminate the taboo nature of sex education across all levels, not just in school. The easy flowing writing style and the broad subjects appear to intentionally target someone that is interested in learning more about these controversial topics. These new readers will be equipped with the means to contribute change against the detrimental ways that societies have understood sex education. Fiennes successfully argues the convolution of these issues do not need to be accepted without question and, while the book does not transform sex education, it can be used as a starting point.

*Jerman Vasquez*