

Let's Talk About Sex:  
Discussions with Adolescents on Their Sex Education

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## Introduction

If we consider sexuality to be one of the major proponents in a person's development, then sex education should be regarded with significantly more importance than it is today. It is a common belief that when adolescents engage in sexual activity, it is a sign of problematic and risky behavior. However, research has shown that being sexually active is a method of imitating adult-like behavior; and parents' stern reactions to control or curb that behavior are unsuccessful (Wang, 2008). The unfounded concern remains that children's innocence and purity will be tainted by knowledge of sex, assuming that sex spoils (Frankham, 2006).

Much of the research that explores sex conversations between adolescents and their parents mostly focus on the frequency of those conversations and not on *how* adolescents learn about sex (Afifi et al., 2008), how they perceive it, and also where they received their information (Regnerus, 2005). The amount of information given or communicated may not be as essential as *what* and how the *what* is being communicated (Afifi et al., 2008). Another common assumption is that when parents communicate to their children about sex, it is automatically considered to be sex education (Sprecher, Harris, & Meyer, 2008).

The purpose of this present qualitative research is to explore where adolescents learn about sex and what they learn from their source(s). Though there are many different issues related to sex education that are very important, such as the gendering of sex education and the inclusion of various sexuality topics, this research is narrowed down to specifically exploring what the various sources are of selected adolescents' sex education and also the messages they receive from those sources.

The paper will begin with a review of research on communicating sex knowledge to knowledge, mainly sources such parents and schools. Then the methods of the research and its results will be detailed; and finally, a discussion of the results will be given.

### Literature Review

Parents have a unique position when it comes to sex education because parents are the earliest socialization agents in children's lives (Kim & Ward, 2007). Many parents actually want to teach and talk to their children about sex (Kim & Ward, 2007; Sprecher, et al., 2008), but they often doubt their skills and competency to impart that knowledge (Geasler, et al., 1995; Afifi et al., 2008). It is important to note though parents can influence their children's beliefs and attitudes about sex more than, they may not necessarily pass down specific messages related to sex. (Regnerus, 2005; Afifi et al., 2008)

There are certain positive benefits to parents opening up communication with their children about sex. There are indirect effects on the sexual health of adolescents, such as prompting them to have more open talks with their partners and increasing their knowledge of HIV (McKee & Karasz, 2006), and even reduce the chances of sexually risky behavior (Afifi, Joseph, & Aldeis, 2008; Wyckoff et al., 2008). However, parents' communication is usually centralized on a few topics, such as health, risks, and safety issues, rather than on pleasure, orgasm, etc. (McKee & Karasz, 2006) This is contrasted from Afifi et al.'s (2008) findings based on existing studies of family sex communication, that preventative measures are rarely talked about; and the focus of parental communication is on negative consequences of having sex or is heteronormative (Frankham, 2006).

The results of Regnerus' (2005) study showed that even though parents claim to be communicating to their children about sex and birth control, those topics are usually discussed within the contexts of the moral concerns surrounding sexual activity. In addition, the more frequently the parents attended church, there were fewer discussions on sex and birth control and more discussions on moral issues. In addition, it seems that parents are unable to develop the content of their communication. It seems to be rather difficult for the parents to heighten the maturity level of their conversation as their children become older and more mature. (Regnerus, 2005)

A qualitative study by McKee and Karasz (2006) on urban Hispanic mothers and their daughters revealed insights into how they viewed talking about sex with each other. Overall, the mothers in McKee and Karasz's study all professed that their discussion had a positive effect on their daughters' sexual choices, even though most of the information was about risks. At the same time, some mothers were afraid that giving up too much information to their daughters might be perceived as permission or encouragement to become sexually active (McKee & Karasz, 2006), a concern reported by Geasler, Dannison, and Edlund (1995) as well. In fact, it is a common myth that sex education encourages sexual behavior (Walker & Milton, 2006).

Moreover, parents are generally also shy and embarrassed to talk about such a topic (Afifi et al., 2008). Parents are unsure about the right timing to approach their children with such discussions, and they fear that they may lack adequate knowledge and thus misinform their children (Afifi et al. 2008; Walker & Milton, 2006). However, Frankham (2006) made an interesting point that even when parents do profess to be open about sex communication,

they are reactive rather than proactive, meaning that they will only talk about it when the issues arise or when their children approach them with questions.

From the adolescents' point of view, discussing about sex is what they would avoid the most when it is related to their parents. Embarrassment is a factor for them as well, and so is feeling uncomfortable and unwilling to taint their parents' image of them (Afifi et al., 2008) or have them think that they are sexually active (Walker & Milton, 2006). Paradoxically, adolescents, at the same, desire more sex communication with their parents. (Afifi et al., 2008)

Further investigation into how adolescents reacted during certain styles of communication revealed that adolescents become avoidant and anxious when parents used fear, used restrictive and moralistic behaviors, to pressure adolescents to remain abstinent. However, if parents would create an environment for communication where adolescents are welcomed to present their views and opinions without being judged, then more disclosure and thus more communication would take place between adolescents and their parents. (Afifi et al., 2008)

Afifi et al.'s (2008) research also covered religion's role in sex communication. Interestingly, religious parents and adolescents were more comfortable talking about sex than nonreligious families. On the other hand, adolescents in the study said that they were comfortable because there was nothing to talk about (Afifi et al.). This is quite parallel with what Southern Baptists mothers talked about in Baier and Wampler's (2008) study. As the researchers explored that the mothers did not have frequent "sex talk" with their daughters, the mothers said that sex was not an interest for their daughters; and therefore, it was not a matter for discussions (Wang, 2008).

Much of the existing research on sex communication does not include Asian Americans in the study samples. In light of that fact, Kim and Ward (2007) found that their sample of Asian American parents focused mostly on the negative consequences of sex; and according to some adolescents, sex was a taboo topic in their families. In families where sex was discussed, boys received more information about STDs and safer sex practices, whereas girls were simply told to avoid men and situations that may be sexually tempting (Kim & Ward, 2007).

Since sex education is rarely received from parents, adolescents look to other sources for knowledge. According to Sprecher et al. (2008), adolescents learn more about sex from peers, specifically dating partners and same-sex friends, than from any other sources (Allen, 2005). In a 16-year longitudinal study on university students' perception of their sources of sex education, Sprecher et al. (2008) observed that overall, young people received sex information from peers, professionals, and the media. In addition, throughout the years, youth increasingly communicated more with professionals (Sprecher et al., 2008). Siblings, though often overlooked, are also important sex knowledge communicators (Walker & Milton, 2006).

The media is a powerful agent in sex education. When it comes to media messages about sex, they can be either inaccurate, thus harmful, or can be informative and educational (Sprecher et al., 2008). One media form that is becoming increasingly popular among adolescents for information is Internet websites (Bay-Cheng, 2001). That sector is still largely an unexplored and unresearched source of sex education. The Internet appeals to adolescents because it is accessible, affordable, and anonymous. (Bay-Cheng, 2001)

With a school-based sex education curriculum that is comprehensive and goes beyond teachings of abstinence, research has found a correlation that adolescents delay the age of initial sexual activity, are more likely to practice safer sex methods, and also have fewer partners (Walker & Milton, 2006; Kirby, 2002a, 2002b).

The controversy of sex education in schools should no longer be about whether or not it should be provided, but rather on the specific topics to be taught and emphasized (Kirby, 2002b). Unfortunately, in many cases, adolescents do not receive sex education until after they have engaged in risky behaviors (Wyckoff et al., 2008).

The sex education that is provided in schools focuses too much on the dangers and risks of having sex without ever discussing the positive aspects; it is also heteronormative and highly gendered (Bay-Cheng, 2001). Walker and Milton (2006) made a distinction between sex education and sexuality education. Sex education focuses primarily on the biology of sex, whereas sexuality education covers topics as emotions/relationships and pleasure/desire (Walker & Milton, 2006).

Bay-Cheng (2001) outlined three different types of sex education that are provided in schools. They are abstinence-only, abstinence-plus, and comprehensive. Abstinence-only type of sex education emphasizes remaining abstinent until marriage; contraception and safer sex tools are discussed in the context of their failures. While abstinence-plus encourages abstinence, it also includes discussions of other options. With a comprehensive sex education, a full review is given to all the safer sex methods; and the teacher encourages students to develop sexual values and ethics without imposing a particular set of values (Bay-Cheng).

## Methods

### *Participants*

Five discussions were carried out with adolescents. Two were individual conversations, and three were group discussions. Two adolescent girls were interviewed separately and were contacted through friendly connections. Permission was granted by the parent/guardian before any discussion took place. Both Erin and Angela (nicknames) were 14 years old. After having a conversation with them, their parent/guardian was also briefly interviewed about their perception of the girls' sex education.

Erin was interviewed at home, and then her mother was interviewed as well. In Angela's case, her guardian was her sister. In fact, Angela claimed that she had spent more time under her sister's care than under her parents' care. Angela's situation was also unique because she is currently in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade; she had skipped 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. She was also the only participant in the study enrolled in a private school. Angela was interviewed at a Starbucks. Then, Angela's sister was interviewed over the phone.

Through another friendly connection, there was an opportunity to have group discussions with students in a high school setting, permission granted by the assistant principal of that high school. Three groups (one group of 9 senior girls and two groups of junior boys, 16 and 15 boys) of high school students participated in the discussion during one of their advisory periods. The purpose of the advisory is to provide a school-based "parent" for the students. The meetings are sex-segregated, and the students meet four days a week for half an hour, to discuss school and other issues in their lives with an advisor.

### *Interview Questions*

Before each interview started, the participants were assured of confidentiality. A personal introduction of the interviewer was given (for group discussions only) and the purpose of the interview was explained before the discussions began. Discussions with high school students were voice recorded. The answers in the two individual interviews were noted down.

There were nine standard questions asked in every conversation. However, during the course of each conversation, additional context-relevant questions were also asked as the discussion went along. The standard questions are the following:

1. When was the first time you heard about sex or knew about it? From whom or what?
2. When was the first “formal” sex education you received? (Meaning, when was the first time you learned it from school or someone sat you down and had a discussion with you about it?)
3. What was it about?
4. Did you ever talk to your parents about it?
5. What did those conversations cover?
6. What was your most effective source of sex education?
7. Did you get anything from siblings?
8. What is your ideal source of sex education?
9. What do you think about the sex education you got from school?

The questions that were asked of Erin’s mother and Angela’s sister depended on the content of the conversations with the girls. Erin’s mother was asked the following:

1. When was the first time you talked to Erin about sex?
2. What did you talk to her about?
3. What do you think is the ideal learning setting for her?

The questions for Angela’s sister were the following:

1. What did you talk about when you talk about sex with Angela?
2. What do you think her school should be teaching her?

Though there were much fewer questions for the parent/guardian, the answers they provided were insightful and sufficient to present their perception of sex education.

## Results

### Individual Interviews

#### *Erin:*

The first time that Erin heard about sex was when she was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, in health class. She remembered that her mom had a slight reaction to it because her mom was concerned that it may be a little early. The subject was on the basics of reproduction, and Erin remembered her teacher complimenting the class for behaving maturely.

Erin had what she considered a comprehensive sex education class in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The class covered reproduction issues and processes. She also had a health class in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and it was mostly focused on the topic of sexually transmitted diseases. Abstinence was a topic that was part of the curriculum, and when she was asked whether it was abstinence until marriage or abstinence until readiness, Erin said that her school taught to remain abstinent until they were ready.

Erin also learned about sex through conversations with her peers and friends, although she did not talk much about that. When asked about communication from parents, she said that her parents have briefly mentioned it but oftentimes in the context of, "You'll learn about it later on." The few experiences she had with communicating about sex with her parents were "not too bad", she recounted. Ideally, though, she would rather learn about sex from school and friends.

#### *Erin's Mother:*

The first time that Erin's mother tried to talk to her about sex was when Erin was 10 years old. Mother felt that Erin was too embarrassed by it and refused to talk about it. Even when she had a talk with Erin about menstruation, Erin displayed impatient and avoidant

behavior. However, in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Erin's biology/health class opened up doors for more communication, as Mother would read the class materials to be in touch with what Erin was learning.

She also thought that ideally the classroom setting was the best place for Erin to be learning about sex. When it came to sex communication home, Mother said that she would handle the issues when opportunities arose, seizing moments as they come up in conversations, through Erin's questions, TV commercials, and also pets were good examples. She felt that it was awkward to initiate sex communication unless Erin had a boyfriend.

Her efforts in sex education for Erin are targeted towards Erin learning about the proper relationships, about respect and being ready, especially emotionally ready. She also thought it was important that Erin should learn about her value as a person and not to use sex as a means to achieve anything; and that sex is the dessert of the relationship and not the relationship itself.

*Angela:*

Angela first heard about sex from her friends when she was 6 years old. She had a very vague idea of what it was at that time; in fact, as Angela remembers, her friends themselves were not sure what it was. They expressed their little knowledge with finger gestures and mimicking sounds. The first time that Angela was given proper sex communication was when she was 7 or 8 years old from her older sister/guardian. Angela was curious and asking questions, and so her sister explained the process of reproduction to Angela.

Angela's first sex education from school was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, which covered reproductive issues. She did not have sex education in her 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The only class that she considered comprehensive was a health class that was for seniors, which she took earlier to avoid it later on. In that health class, the curriculum covered reproduction, protection methods, health/nutrition, etc. Angela also said that her current biology class will cover sex/reproduction later in the school year.

Her overall perception of sex education at her school is that it is inadequate and insufficient. She believes the curriculum is weak because the school assumes that the students already have adequate knowledge. Ideally, she would want her school to teach more about abstinence, that they are too young to be having sex, about protection, and about STD's.

Angela's parents have never been socializing agents in her sex education. They have never talked about it with her or even mentioned it. Angela acknowledges her sister as her primary sex educator; and her sister is also becoming increasingly detailed. They live in a neighborhood where many of the teenage girls are pregnant or are mothers, and so Angela perceives that this is a motivation for her sister to teach her not just about the processes of reproduction but also why abstinence is important.

Angela does not discuss sex with her peers and friends. There may have been a few times when she joked with her friends about it, such as the time when one of her friends talked about her boyfriend sleeping over at her place, and Angela, along with other girls, commented that they must have had sex if they had a sleepover. In Angela's opinion, her peers do not know enough. When asked what she meant by that, she answered that her

peers, especially the boys, need to learn specifically why and how to say no because certain situations could be very tempting and hard to resist.

*Angela's Sister:*

Angela's sister's approach to imparting sex knowledge to is to be realistic by giving facts and not "sugar-coating" any information. At the same time, she does not want to shock Angela; all that she tells Angela is so that Angela stays informed. In addition, she does not intend to persuade Angela to think in any particular way. Because Angela had gone to a conservative Christian school prior to high school for a few years, Angela carried over the values she acquired at the Christian school.

In the sister's opinion, Angela's school should be teaching more than they are now; in her opinion, basically nothing (about sex) is being taught. There are "so much confusion and assumption from teens...about adults. They are too shy to ask and so they form their own assumptions." Also, the sister thought the school should address those myths held by adolescents and also create an environment comfortable for children to approach adults with questions. In turn, those questions should be answered realistically.

Group Discussions

Senior Girls

The earliest messages some of the girls heard about sex was that it was all "good, good, good, good." Their first formal sex education in school ranged from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, although they said that they knew about it much earlier from friends. They also talked to their siblings about it, although they never go into detail.

When it came to sex talk from their parents, a few girls said how their mothers did not want them to be sexually active before marriage. For a few girls, that was all the sex

communication provided by the mother. One girl said, "My mother doesn't even call it sex. She calls it the 'hanky panky'."

Interviewer: What else does your mother say to you about sex?

Girl: My mom just says "Don't have sex. Don't have sex." I'm allowed to ask questions but not allowed to have sex.

Interviewer: Does she talk about protection?

Girl: No, just don't have sex.

Another girl said that even though she had a close relationship with her mother, it is still a topic that both of them would rather not be talked about.

"My mom...there's nothing to talk about. You should not even be thinking about it."

When asked about sex talk from their fathers, they laughed and said, "Even worse."

One girl, however, said that she is best friends with her father and therefore is very open with him.

"My mom is my heart, but my dad is my dad. I'm his little girl. I can talk to him about *anything*." Nevertheless, she does not go into details with her father either, and he talks to her about sex to "stay on top of things."

The sex education that the girls learned from school taught them about birth control, diseases, and remaining abstinent. Ideally, the girls preferred to learn about sex from school; and a few felt that learning from parents would be very uncomfortable. When asked why, one girl said, "Cause it's my mom! I wouldn't..." However, the girl who talked about being close to her father insisted that her mother is the one person to go to with questions, although no details about sex lives would be discussed.

The girls' conversations about sex with their friends usually centered on how pleasurable and "how long" their experiences were. They also had a "go-to" girl who was

very experienced and very informative. They said that discussions with boys were insightful as well, as they learn what boys do like and do not like.

The girls were asked whether the school's sex education curriculum ever taught positive messages about sex. To explain that question, an example was given that pictures of infected body parts are sometimes shown as a method to encourage abstinence. One girl answered, "We all learn the same thing, all the bad stuff." Another one said, "Last year in health class, I saw those pictures, and I thought, 'I'm never having sex.'"

In response to what their ideal sex education would be, the girls said they wished the school would create a comfortable environment for them to ask questions and also show the positive aspects of sexuality as well. At the moment, the girls said that they have to balance out the negative messages from school with the positive messages they get from peers and the media. They also said that they learn about the "good stuff" on their own, through love songs, about being in love and making love, from friends, television, etc. They also said that their personal experiences are their main source of sex education.

"It'll be nice if school would balance for us. Gotta have both sides of it. They always say that it's bad, bad, bad; but you do it too. So what's so bad about it? Cause we're learning and growing, so it's going to happen."

#### *Junior Boys 1*

In answer to the question of the initial knowledge about sex, one boy answered learning about sex from the movie "American Pie" around 11 years old. Other boys said that their dads told them about sex. One boy recounted that when he was 13, his father told him to protect himself and to protect his sister. Overall, the age range of initial knowledge was 7-11 years old.

When asked if they preferred sex conversations with their mothers or fathers, some said fathers; and some said that it was uncomfortable with either of them. One boy said that his parents try to use fear to keep him abstinent by reminding him of the possible STDs he may get.

One boy's parents had told him not to be like his brother, who had a child at age 16. Another boy said that his father reminds him to use a condom, and another boy said his mother had told him that she knew what he was doing – meaning that being sexually responsible and thus that he was sexually active. Overall, their parents did not want to talk to them about sex. Interestingly, one boy said that when his parents do try to talk to him about sex, he had already heard about it from his friends.

As for school-based sex education, the boys had various sources. Some of them had health classes; others learned about it from their advisor through their advisory program. Their previous advisor had taught them about the different reproductive body parts, diseases, the menstrual cycle/fertility, about protection during oral sex, and interestingly enough, that only 3 inches are required to please a girl.

Some learned about sex and preventative measures from a health counselor who goes to their school on Fridays to distribute condoms and talk to students about their concerns and questions. One boy even said that he “just knew” and that he had “put two and two together.”

The ideal source of sex education for the boys was almost unanimously the Internet or television. Some boys mentioned friends or siblings. When asked why the Internet, one boy answered, “Because it has everything!” Also, because the Internet is a private and

anonymous space where they can look for their answers. Accessibility was also a benefit because they did not need to wait until they could speak to a teacher or advisor.

Overall, they learn from personal experiences, friends, the media, some from after-school programs, and many say “the lady downstairs” (the health counselor). Their friends are a powerful source because their friends’ experiences legitimize what they share. If they had a sex education class, the boys would prefer to learn about how to initiate sex and about techniques. As a couple of boys put it, “Not to pressure her but how to pleasure her.”

### *Junior Boys 2*

In response to the question of when and from whom/what they got they heard about sex, some boys said parents, from cable television (adult channels), and one boy said that he learned from his sister and parents after he started questioning where his sister’s children came from. As for sex education in school, the range was from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 10<sup>th</sup> grade in health class, where they learned about reproduction, the female menstrual cycle/fertility cycle, and STDs.

The sex communication they got from their parents was varied. Some said that it was “weird” because it felt strange to hear their parents explain certain sexual things; and one also did not want his mother to start thinking and questioning him about having sex. Some had parents who told them to use a condom and to “go have fun.” There were also messages to warn them not to get a girl pregnant and not to get STDs.

The media was apparently a very powerful and influential agent. Several boys talked about learning from cable television and also porn websites. One boy said that he watches a show on MTV called “Sex with Mom and Dad.” The show was about a doctor constructing a comfortable and honest setting for parents and adolescents to talk about sex. When asked

whether their parents are concerned about what they view on television, they all said no. Television was part of their education and part of their experiences of becoming “better.”

“School tells you about the diseases, but on TV, they tell you about the positions.”

Conversations with friends about sex were an everyday activity. Those discussions usually involved comparisons of the girls they have been sexually involved with.

“We just talk about nasty shit, not educational, just not cool.”

These boys also talked about talking to the “lady downstairs” for answers, and their teachers/advisors are effective at answering their questions about STDs and precautions. However, they had one advisor in the previous year who told them that orange juice could cure AIDS and in fact, everything. The advisor was consequently fired.

## Discussion

### *Erin*

From the conversation with Erin, it is apparent that what Erin considered to be “good” and comprehensive sex education was merely a class that discussed reproduction extensively. As for Erin’s mother, she had a desire to make sure that Erin developed the right values before having sex; and at the same time, she did not want to create awkward moments for Erin by initiating sex communication. Her approach is what Frankham (2006) had called reactive rather than proactive.

### *Angela*

It can be inferred from talking with Angela that she seemed to believe that “abstinence-plus” was the ideal sex education. Abstinence was important because she had stressed a few times about being “too young” to have sex. This is an interesting phenomenon because though Angela is only 14 years old, she interacts with 17-year-olds on

a daily basis and does not seem to be having problems interacting with older adolescents. Also, contrary to what research has shown, Angela does not find peers as an adequate source or even a source at all for sex education. Her sibling/guardian was her primary educator. Combining her past education at a conservative Christian school and with the openness of her sister's communication, Angela believes that her school has failed to provide sufficient sex education and abstinence teachings.

### *Senior Girls*

Overall, the girls did not talk to their parents about sex. There was one girl who claimed that she could talk about anything with her parents. However, even then, no details would be discussed; and her parents would not initiate the conversations. The general consensus among the girls was that their mother would rather not talk to them about sex because the assumption was that they should not even be interested in that subject.

Their sex education in school heavily emphasized negative consequences of having sex, such as contracting STDs; and they relied heavily on the influence of the media and their peers for the sex information that they need.

### *Junior Boys 1 and 2*

The boys were much more graphic than the girls in their answers. Overall, for both groups of boys, it was apparent that even though they received precautionary messages from their parents, the boys still had more encouragement to be sexually active than the girls. Though their sex education in school was limited and focused on negative consequences, as it was for the girls, they also had other resources in school, which the girls never mentioned. The boys cited their advisors and the "lady downstairs", neither of which was ever talked about by the girls.

Both girls and boys said that they hear positive messages through the media. The difference within this major source is the specific form of media that is influencing girls and boys. For the girls, they mentioned that they hear about love and the good parts of sex from songs. The boys mentioned several times about cable television, specifically adult channels, and also porn websites.

When the girls and boys talk about sex with their friends, the girls talk about the pleasure of sex, whereas the boys make comparisons. The discrepancy observed between the groups of girls and boys in their school-based sex education is a mystery. However, it may be safe to say that it is a representation of gendered sexual messages, which permit boys to be sexual (yet careful) and girls to not even be thinking about the issue.

Overall, for all the participants involved, the content of the conversations did reflect existing research data on sex communication between adolescents and parents. Parents are rarely the sex educators, and when they do impart sex messages, they are usually in the context of negative consequences. The next step along this topic of research would be to explore the gendering of sex education and how it reflects hegemonic gender roles and heteronormativity.

### *Limitations*

The sample used for this research was not picked at random. The two individual girls were selected from friendly contacts, and the groups were selected within one high school. Therefore, their experiences may not be representative of other adolescents' experiences of sex education, at least in New York City.

Oftentimes, when it was apparent that the adolescent(s) did not know how to answer the question or did not understand the question fully, examples were prompted to clarify the questions, which may have biased their answers.

It was also at times challenging to facilitate a discussion with the adolescent boys because there would be so many disruptions with jokes and laughter. Oftentimes, the advisor was almost the second interviewer because he was familiar with the boys and knew how to retain their attention.

Also, even though the number of students in the group discussions was relatively large for a small study, only a few students in all groups stood out in terms of answering questions and participating in the discussions. Therefore, the sample only consisted of no more than 4 senior girls and 8-10 junior boys.

### Conclusion

Adolescents are extremely curious about sex and sexuality. Since schools and parents are not providing them the knowledge they seek, they seek information from various alternative sources. In fact, sources such as the media are giving them a certain kind of education whether they want it or not. The reason why this could be problematic is that they have no way to determine the legitimacy or accuracy of the information they receive. Reliance on experimentation and the media may not lead them to optimal sexual health.

As one of the senior girls said, it would be beneficial for adolescents if school-based sex education was more balanced by also covering positive topics of sex. Many of the kids talked about how it was uncomfortable to talk about sex with their parents. However, the question remains whether that discomfort exists because of the attitudes that parents hold

about sex. If children can sense that their parents do not welcome sex communication, then naturally, they might be uneasily talking and learning about sex with their parents.

Therefore, it is part of a larger institutional endeavor to make school-based sex education curriculum more comprehensive and open to adolescents' curiosity and need to know more. It is then the individual family's endeavor to create a comfortable environment where adolescents will want to talk their parents about sex, even if details are included. With the combined efforts from school and parents, it is a step closer to a more comprehensive sex education for adolescents.

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