

# LETTERS

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To the Editor:

Having team-taught the Unitarian-Universalist (Beacon Press) "About Your Sexuality" curriculum to young teens over a period of a half a dozen years, I read with great interest the article in your spring issue by Parcel, Finkelstein, Luttmann and Nader: "Sex Concerns of Young Adolescents."

It should be no surprise that the authors discovered the Sex Concerns Checklist to be most useful for identifying topic areas in beginning a course (exactly what it was intended for), but inadequate to the task for which they used it.

The article suggests (without making it explicit) a wide disparity between the results of the research with the Checklist and the confidence which the authors had in their course. How does one reconcile the test results?

It is genuine cause for dismay that at the end of a good course nine people would still be concerned about the meaning of slang terms and would not know where to go to get birth control information; and that, after viewing "explicit audio-visuals," six people would still be concerned about what boys or girls look like naked. One wonders where these teens were (as indeed many a teacher of many a subject wonders)!

Young people do a LOT of thinking, wondering and imagining about sex. It is a major concern for them (and concern means "interest" as well as "worry"). Their minds are often elsewhere—even if, in a sex education class, their minds are on the same subject! It is also true that people typically do not hear what they are not willing to hear or not ready to hear.

Rather than looking for statistically significant change overall in the number of concerns remaining, I wish the authors had correlated the number of "still concerns" with attendance at the course, and had looked for significant correlations between items that were still of concern to individuals at the end of the course. Correlation of other concerns with "finding someone to talk to about sex" might have provided important insight. For eleven students to have experienced ten "frank and open" small-group discussions and still be concerned

about finding someone to talk to about sex suggests that they had not yet attained a level of comfort with the subject sufficient to air their own questions (not to mention their worries or fears).

It would be exceedingly unfortunate if readers gained the impression from the spring Journal article that young people do not gain significant understanding, self-confidence and personal autonomy from a frank and open course in human sexuality structured to their own interests and concerns. They do. Research with the Beacon curriculum revealed significant increase in understanding of human sexuality, ease in discussing it, and comfort with expressions of affection, and significant lessening of a sense of confusion. Twelve weeks was the minimum length of the course. More time helps!

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To the Editor:

I found the Spring 1979 issue of *Birth and the Family Journal* to contain a number of very excellent articles. I would like to comment upon the interrelationship of information contained in various sections of the issue.

Caldeyro-Barcia's paper very strongly supports the conclusion that the upright position is preferable for laboring women. Your editorial comments also discuss the beneficial results of ambulation and refer to the work of several researchers who have studied the use of radiotelemetry during labor. The Abstracts section summarizes a paper by Flynn *et al.* on "Ambulation in Labor"—a British study which utilized radiotelemetry in order to assess the effects of ambulation during first stage labor. A very interesting aspect of Flynn *et al.*'s research was not mentioned in the abstract—namely, that all women participating in the study had their membranes ruptured at 2 cm dilation if spontaneous rupture had not already occurred. Thus in order to study the value of ambulation in labor, the protection afforded the presenting