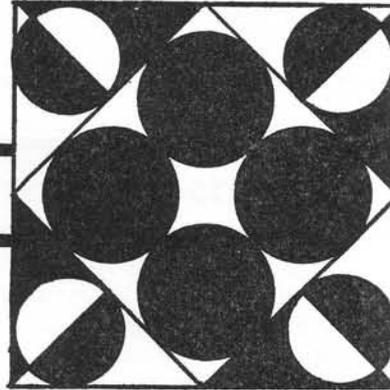


Idea Corner



“Sex education should be taught at home.” Such is the comment often heard when you begin **Youth Sources of Sex Information**

to plan programs for youth on dating, sex, or marriage. Cries of protest come forth from many parents and other well-meaning adults. They assume that sex education of the young is the prerogative of the home and should, therefore, not be taught in any youth-serving organization. But, where in fact do young people actually gain the majority of their sexual facts? Is it from their parents? Or, do young people seek out other sources?

To determine the chief sources of sex knowledge from a sample of “real, live young people,” a study was conducted among a group of senior high youth leaders attending a summer conference sponsored by the North Carolina Conference United Methodist Board of Education. The majority of the youth were presidents of their local church youth organization or held some

other high position of leadership. Of the 301 attending the conference, 280 completed valid questionnaires.

The youth were asked three questions about their sources of sexual information:

1. From what source did you first receive information about the “facts of life”? (first sexual information)
2. From whom (or what) do you most frequently seek information about sex? (continued sex information)
3. From whom (or what) do you most frequently seek information about dating behavior?

A table isn’t included for the source of *first information*, but 42 percent indicated mother as the most frequent source and 28 percent, friends. None of the females indicated that their fathers were the first to supply information about the “facts of life.” Nearly 60 percent of the males cited “friends” to be their first source of information, with fathers ranking second at 10 percent.

As shown in the following table, on a *continuing basis* the mother remained the most frequent source of sex information for the

females, while the males preferred books. You'll notice that no males or females went to their fathers for sexual information in this category.

Table 1. Responses of church youth leaders regarding most frequent source of sex information on a continuing basis.

Source of Information	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mother	3	4	60	28	63	23
Father	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brother	0	0	1	1	1	0
Sister	0	0	6	2	6	2
Friends	22	32	55	26	77	28
Teacher	0	0	4	2	4	1
Doctor	0	0	1	1	1	0
Minister	1	2	0	0	1	0
Church teacher or counselor	3	4	2	1	5	2
Books	27	39	57	27	84	30
Other adults	3	4	4	2	7	3
Movies	2	3	2	1	4	1
Other sources	7	10	17	8	24	9
Nonrespondent	1	2	2	1	3	1
Total	69	100	211	100	280	100

The females most frequently approached friends (38 percent) and mother (33 percent) for *dating information*. For the males, friends were the number one source of dating information, as 45 percent indicated, and an "other source"—self—was the second most popular source (16 percent).

The study seemed to show that the three most frequent sources of sex information for the church

youth leaders were mother, friends, and books. It was also concluded that parents weren't the most frequent source of sexual information for the majority of the youth. This was true for the total group and for both sexes, whether the concern was first sexual information, continued sexual information, or information about dating. In most instances, a third or less of the youth indicated that their parents (actu-

ally their mothers) were the chief suppliers of their sexual information. The father played a small role as a sex educator.

The subjects of this study were church young people; therefore, the findings can't be generalized to 4-H youth. Yet, this study does raise the question of whether similar results might be found among 4-Hers. Where do 4-H youth get their sexual information? Are parents primary sources of sex knowledge? A research project involving 4-H clientele would be helpful in providing data for youth agents to program in this area.

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Personal Development Programming for Older Youth

"How do we agents and leaders communicate with the older 4-Her?" "Do we communicate at all?" "How do we motivate and challenge them?" "How should I relate to older youth?" "Do we really understand ourselves or them?" "How can we bridge the generation gap?" These were some of the concerns of county agents, district program leaders, and state youth specialists at a program planning session. These concerns were the basis for an experimental program that would bring together youth, leaders, agents, and specialists.

A "personal development laboratory" was designed to include a few sample counties (four), and involved six youth, two leaders, and one agent from each county. These people comprised a team that would be able to then assist the agent in developing and conducting similar programs in their county.

The objectives of the lab were to: (1) use this lab as a model for future program planning and/or a training session for agents, leaders, and youth; (2) provide a non-threatening situation where everyone could share with each other things important to each; (3) closely examine personal and social concerns of youth and adults; (4) try ways of communicating across the "gap"; and (5) discover and examine ways to implement meaningful youth programs.

The lab was held in a small rural community where meals were catered and lodging provided to maximize participant interaction and attention to the lab content.

To help realize the laboratory objectives, the activities were based on and built around the concepts of personal values and interpersonal communication.

It's important for adolescents to spend the necessary amount of time thinking about, learning, and discussing with others those things they think are important to them.

During the first evening of the laboratory, after the group dinner, mixer-type activities were conducted to get everyone acquainted and at ease. Some role playing was con-

ducted in which a youth took the role of a parent and an adult took the role of a teenager in a contrived, yet realistic, situation where attitudes, values, and behavior were different for parent and youth. This activity engendered a great deal of discussion that was lively, intense, and productive. Following this discussion, the entire group enthusiastically participated in square dancing.

The next morning the idea of values was again presented for an hour and a half. A film on values was shown and an enlightening discussion ensued during which additional ideas about values were brought out and explored; for example, the nature of values, how they're formed, their function, how they change during one's life, and their influence on behavior.

The second half of the morning session was devoted to the topic of interpersonal communication. The discussion focused on the factors that influence communication and these factors were illustrated by group members and activities; for example, language, time, color, space, silence, age, health, and the fact meanings are in people, not words. Some short exercises were conducted that demonstrate some of the basic elements of good interpersonal communication.

Part of the afternoon session focused on a group-dynamics type of exercise in which the participants identified and shared with others their personal values. During the second half of the afternoon

session, each small group created and presented an event to the larger group that illustrated all of the values of that small group.

During the evening session the entire group participated in playing a structured game that illustrated the effect of stress on values. This was an activity designed to help them more clearly see the major needs of their communities and to help them think of possible solutions as well as program ideas that would lead to solutions.

Following this activity, the various county groups assembled for a short time and tried to identify county needs and potential programs aimed at meeting such needs.

The last event of the laboratory was an evaluation session. During this short time, an evaluation sheet was completed and the personal and critical comments of the participants recorded. Results indicate that it was worthwhile, rewarding, helpful, and something they'd like to do again.

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Youth and Establishment Working Together

Can the "establishment" and youth work together? We, in the Kansas City metropolitan area, have proven it can be done.

A metropolitan ecology educational program, called S.T.E.P. I (Save The Environment Please, Phase I), was developed through the cooperation of five youth organizations in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The program was developed so members of the organizations could learn about ecology and become involved in action-type projects suitable for their age.

S.T.E.P. I grew out of meetings with a University of Missouri Extension area youth specialist, an environmental health specialist, and Campfire Girls professional staff members and volunteer leaders. These people met in December, 1970, to discuss developing an ecology project for the Campfire Girls. It was then suggested that the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, 4-H youth, and Y-Teens from Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas, and Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties in Missouri be invited to the next meeting. This meeting — the beginning of S.T.E.P. I — was held in January, 1971.

Representatives from the youth organizations, both professionals and volunteers, formed an Ecology Steering Committee. The aim of S.T.E.P. I, they decided, was to "educate the people of the Kansas City metropolitan area about the process of recycling and to get them to participate in the recycling of glass and metal containers and newspapers to effect a life style change in the residents living in the metropolitan area." This was to be

done by providing educational and action-type projects for members and adult volunteers of the participating youth organizations.

After establishing its aim, the Steering Committee appointed four special committees: Action Committee, Publicity Committee, Education Committee, and Legislative Committee. Each committee was assigned specific responsibilities for developing and promoting the ecology program. The Publicity Committee came up with the idea of calling the program S.T.E.P. I.

Three area youth specialists were advisors to the Steering Committee and liaison to the University of Missouri. They, along with an area environmental health specialist, helped develop an educational program that established action projects for the members of the youth organizations. They also helped the Action Committee set up requirements for completion of the program.

In addition to working with the Steering Committee, the Extension professionals provided resource personnel from the University of Missouri to help develop a slide-tape presentation to use in promoting the program and to begin the program.

An area youth specialist worked with the Education Committee to set up the entire educational program. This committee provided the slide-tape presentation to the participating agencies for use by volunteer leaders to show to youth members of the organizations.

It also developed educational training programs and a training packet that was to be used to train youth members and adult volunteers, who in turn were to educate members and leaders of their organizations and others, in church groups, civic organizations, and local government officials.

The Publicity Committee received help from another youth specialist. He worked with volunteer leaders from 4-H and other youth organizations to inform the public in the area about the program. This committee wrote spot announcements, news articles, and editorials for radio, television, and newspapers. Also, the committee arranged for Extension personnel, Girl Scout professionals, and volunteer leaders to appear on television.

The Steering Committee appointed a youth specialist to serve as general chairman for the program. He worked with the group providing leadership to the overall program effort.

After publicity of the program was aired, the Kansas City Soft Drink Bottlers Association contacted the Steering Committee and offered its support. A representative from the association began meeting with the Steering Committee.

After establishing action projects for youth members, the Steering Committee discussed the possibility of mass clean-up campaigns and recycling the glass and metal containers and newspapers collected. The problem: where and how could it be done? The Bottlers Associa-

tion came up with a solution — they donated a “Whomper” recycling machine.

As a result of this cooperative work, S.T.E.P., Inc., Reclamation Center was born. The center site was set up in Kansas City, Missouri, and the building for the center was donated by Hallmark Cards, Inc. An added surprise was the donation of \$1,500 by the Kansas City Beer Wholesalers Association. In July, a “Stomper” paper baling machine was loaned to the center.

The youth of the Kansas City metropolitan area now had not only S.T.E.P. I, an educational program, but S.T.E.P., Inc., a reclamation center, where they could assume responsibility in helping solve a part of the ecological problem facing this country.

With the establishment of an educational program and a recycling center, the Steering Committee began to make plans for the first mass area-wide recycling pickup of glass and metal containers and newspapers. The group decided to hold the pickup and open the reclamation center in conjunction with Earth Day activities scheduled for April 22, 23, and 24, 1971. The center officially opened April 22, 1971, and has been a big success.

A mass area-wide pickup day was held again in June. These organizations were responsible for conducting the pickup of glass and metal containers and newspapers. They worked with the Citizens' Environmental Council of Greater Kansas City.

The center is run entirely by volunteer youth and leaders from youth organizations. The chairman of Adult Volunteers has worked with the youth to establish safety rules, operational rules, and work shifts.

Junior leaders and members of 4-H have responded by working at the recycling center, taking the S.T.E.P. I project as part of their 4-H work, and informing other people about S.T.E.P., Inc., and the need for recycling.

What began as an ecology project for a group of Campfire Girls has grown to the most dynamic and exciting thing in Kansas City.

Thousands of youth and adults are involved in this educational and action program. The involvement grows as the citizens of the area become more aware of the problems of our environment and are willing to do something about it.

Given the opportunity to do something that has meaning and responsibility, youth and adult will respond. They'll make a commitment.

Yes, youth and the "establishment" can work together.

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