

A ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATION

Are We Taking the Pleasure out of Sex?

WHAT A COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAM SHOULD LOOK LIKE

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IN APRIL 2009, CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE CONVENED A ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATION on comprehensive sexuality education. An edited transcript follows.

JON O'BRIEN: In the United States, there is a lot of talk about preventing the need for abortion or reducing unplanned pregnancy. The solution many people look to is sexuality education. What evidence is there that comprehensive sexuality education either prevents unplanned pregnancy or reduces the need for abortion?

SARAH BROWN: This is well-tilled turf in the US—and in Western Europe to some extent as well. We now have a pretty robust body of evidence that shows that a variety of curricula in schools and communities can reduce teen pregnancy, either by delaying sexual debut or increasing the use of contraception.

There are, however, very few curricula that have been proven to reduce teen pregnancy because you have to sample so

many thousands of people to do that. What we often see is that a curriculum will encourage young people to postpone first sex by a few months or a year or two and to be better users of contraception when they do become sexually active.

So, we have a number of very well done studies that show how some good sex education curricula—many of which were developed to reduced HIV and AIDS and not just unintended pregnancy—do help. They are not the solution. They reduce risk. They help but they do not eliminate the problem.

JON O'BRIEN: Bill, when you're on Capitol Hill and people discuss promoting abstinence-only education, what do you say about the effectiveness of that type of sex education?

WILLIAM SMITH: My top-line message in promoting a more comprehensive approach over the abstinence-only approach is pretty simple: The evidence that we have shows that a more comprehensive approach actually does a better job of helping young people delay sex and be abstinent than do abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. If the real goal here is helping young people delay sex and be abstinent as long as they can, we know how to do that and it's through a more comprehensive approach.

It seems to me that this is the message that is really taking hold across the country when states and school districts are turning down abstinence-only-until-marriage money or outright rejecting these programs. It is also taking hold as Congress and the president move away from the



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Indian school girls look at plastic models of a man and a woman at India's sex museum in Bombay. Children from various schools in the city go to the museum for sex education.

abstinence-only-until-marriage approach toward a more comprehensive one.

JON O'BRIEN: And what studies would you cite to demonstrate that sex education does reduce unintended pregnancy?

WILLIAM SMITH: Most notably, the work that Doug Kirby has done for the National Campaign is pivotal. The work of John S. Santelli from Columbia University has been really wonderful as well as the work of a number of other researchers. On the HIV side, the work of David Holtgrave from Johns Hopkins demonstrates how advancing evidence-based prevention reduces the risk behavior that leads to young people becoming infected with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) or HIV or an unplanned pregnancy. These studies

have been crucial contributions to our understanding of just how important behavioral interventions can be.

JON O'BRIEN: Roger, the UK has supported sex education for a number of years. At the same time, the UK has seen a rise in teen pregnancies and STIs. Why, in a situation where governments have committed to sex education and it is widely available, do these problems still exist to such an alarming degree that the government is discussing special strategies to deal with it?

ROGER INGHAM: Sex education is not compulsory. For many years, sex education has been a part of the science national curriculum which only has to cover reproduction and STI transmission. All other aspects relating to relationships, compe-

tency skills, assertiveness, self-esteem and so on are voluntary. To say that we've had sex education is true in this narrow sense; however, many aspects of what would be a comprehensive sexuality education have been voluntary.

The first question to look at is: what have we had? In my view, we haven't actually had what we should have had.

A target was set in 1999 to reduce the under-18 conception rate and, as a result of that target, the teen pregnancy rates have been coming down since 1998. While the conception rate has come down, the abortion proportion has increased. So, the actual number of babies born to girls under 18 has come down about 23 percent and we think that's quite a success. Now, there has been an increase in STIs but that's another issue.

In addition, at the end of last year, the government announced that sex and relationships education will now be part of the statutory curriculum starting in 2010 or 2011, so matters should improve further.

JON O'BRIEN: Doortje, what are some differences that you see in what people regard as appropriate sex education in your home country, the Netherlands, and in your work throughout the world, especially in Africa and Asia?

DOORTJE BRAEKEN: In many countries, sex education is a total no go. They'd rather have no sex education than any sex education. And if there is any sex education it's only on reproduction.

SARAH BROWN: This is a very important observation. The way some people might frame it is: Why do we always focus on the problem, whether it's adolescent pregnancy or diseases and so forth? Why aren't we talking about total life development, behavior and relationships?

One of the reasons a number of people focus on problems is that it's something most people can understand and agree on. For example, most people agree that teen pregnancy is not in the best interest of the individuals involved, particularly the children. Most people want lower levels of STIS and HIV/AIDS. However, when the larger picture is developing a better sense of one's sexual self and behavior and so forth, people disagree about that.

to fund this kind of intervention are provided with the intention of providing some accountability for effectiveness. The measurement for that, at present, is not, "how do you feel about your sexual self?" or "what is your relationship like?" or "what is your knowledge base like?" and so on. It is much more directly geared towards preventing STIS, behavior modification and teen pregnancy prevention.

If we want to move away from that model, we are going to have to come up with new measurements and a new narrative of what we think effectiveness means. SIECUS supports the notion of teaching sex education for personal development to advance human rights, to promote gender equity, and so on. However, until we come up with new measurements and

Why do we always focus on the problem, whether it's adolescent pregnancy or diseases and so forth? Why aren't we talking about total life development, behavior and relationships?

The way it has been introduced in other countries has been a lesson in focusing on teenage pregnancy, which has not been very helpful where other issues like life skills or gender issues would have been much more helpful. I think we have really pushed too much on the issue of teenage pregnancy, often forgetting the other areas.

JON O'BRIEN: Let's expand on that question a little bit more. In some sense sexuality education around behavior is often based on and sold on a fear that young people will have sex in ways that puts them at risk of sexual disease or unplanned pregnancy.

Sarah, your organization is focused around unplanned pregnancy rather than around the idea of sexuality education as a means to develop one's self. What do you think about the fact that sexuality education is often regarded as solving a problem rather than personal development?

So, partly, it's practical. When people are focused on a problem, progress can be measured and it can be related to public policy. When it's something more personal and hard to define, it opens the door for the kinds of arguments I think we all see. That's a practical reason for why some of this work is defined by problems rather than the larger vision of where we want to go as individuals in our sexual lives.

JON O'BRIEN: Bill, you are often on Capitol Hill trying to sell the idea that sex education works and we need to have a greater political and social commitment to providing comprehensive sexuality education. What do you think about it being sold as a way of solving what society perceives to be the problem of teenage pregnancy as opposed to the idea of it being about social and personal development?

WILLIAM SMITH: This is a tension that has existed for some time; but, the bottom line, particularly in the US, is that the dollars

convince policymakers that those measurements are worth investing in, we will still be dealing with the problem.

This is also part of a global tension, particularly when we're talking about the vast amount of resources going towards HIV/AIDS. There are billions of dollars being spent to eliminate HIV/AIDS and the international discourse on that is around problem prevention. Broader human rights declarations and commitments from countries may take into account the utility of sex education and HIV prevention in advancing some of these other aspects, but at the end of the day those dollars are being allocated to deal with a problem.

DOORTJE BRAEKEN: I agree. It has been very much a "push me, pull you" between sexuality education and HIV prevention. Many countries think that HIV prevention education is the same as sexuality education. And we see that it doesn't work.

In Africa, for instance, there is absolutely no evidence that these behavioral change



Jon O'Brien

programs which focus on the prevention of HIV are helpful. So, everybody is rethinking it and also rethinking what we are actually measuring and what we want to get out of the sex education programs.

To be honest, we are working in many different countries with the government, ministries of education and development agencies to rethink curricula, and they are much more open to reviewing them than I myself have been. They are also struggling to find out whether HIV prevention is really working.

I agree that in the US it has a lot to do with money, but I think we have to come up with other kinds of evidence and reasons why sexuality education is important for countries and for democracy itself. NGOs in particular have to rethink the whole issue of sexuality education and get out of this “push me, pull you” idea of HIV prevention versus sexual education.

JON O'BRIEN: Roger, in the UK, the teen pregnancy problem has motivated several new government commitments on sexuality education. What is the tension you see between sex education programs oriented around HIV/AIDS prevention and sex education programs that have a more comprehensive approach?

ROGER INGHAM: This is very hot topic at the moment because one of the aims of the new statutory school curriculum is



Roger Ingham

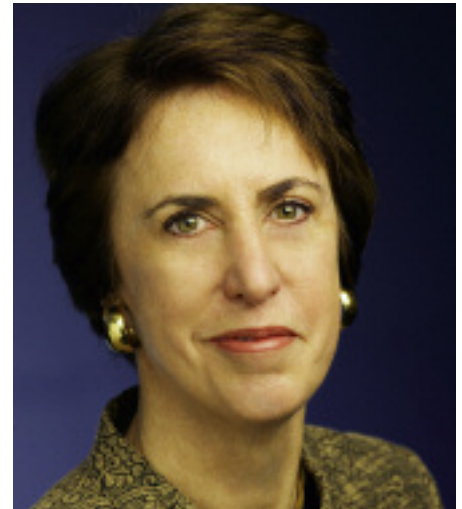
that it would start at the age of five.

This has, perhaps not surprisingly, caused an outcry among many people. Of course, they are ignoring the fact that sex and relationships education is actually about a lot more than just sex. What we would hope to do in the curriculum for five-year-olds is to talk about friendship, to talk about relationships, to talk about respect, to talk about bodies, to talk honestly about the names of body parts so that we don't mystify them, to talk about different types of relationships such as same-sex friendships, same-sex relationships and so on. So, it's not about sex at all. The opponents simply don't get the point.

If we develop a good set of values based on respect and responsibility among young people, then when they do become ready for sexual relationships they will have a different set of resources and competencies at their disposal.

Rather than the current tendency towards what I call the ‘injection model’—that is, when they get to puberty start injecting them with the right knowledge, attitudes and values—let's rethink it. Let's turn it on its head and ask what we want someone to be like eventually. Let's try and get those building blocks in place before the sex comes along and starts to interfere, so to speak.

SARAH BROWN: The conversation is not just about sex and body parts. It's about rela-



Sarah Brown



Doortje Braeken



William Smith

tionships. We hear that all the time from focus groups, particularly from young people themselves. What's on their mind is not just the mechanics. Their lives are not that segmented. They are living in a very complex web of family, media, relationships and school. Addressing relationships and values and so forth is absolutely where this needs to go.

The problem we face in the US is the argument about where this should be done or who should be doing it. Should we be using public tax dollars or have families, community centers, faith groups and so forth take up this work? People have different values.

People do not agree on some of those values—there is no consensus. People may

the long term view is critical.

The real goal is to cover all the basic facts and to help young people build for a long term future. That is where material about skills building and long-term goals and relationships comes in. It's also about how our behavior and our decisions affect the larger good, future generations or our communities. I think that everybody would agree on that. It is when we get down to the details that people start disagreeing. Everybody gets the big picture but they disagree on the details.

JON O'BRIEN: Some parents believe, for instance, that abstinence-until-marriage is an important value that they would want to inculcate in their children. Bill, why is

What we need to say is that there are certain things that are provided in kindergarten and there are certain things that are provided as young people get older. And that's the entirely appropriate way to do it.

At a policy level, we must provide the opportunity for parents to opt their children out of a comprehensive approach to sex education. Indeed, that is difficult to say because I understand that there may be a child or young person in need who then is not going to benefit from this information. This is why we need these other institutions to play primary roles here, such as community-based organizations where these young people may be active. Good, comprehensive, faith-based sex

When we allow parents the opportunity to opt their children out of a comprehensive approach to sex education, less than 1 percent of parents do so.

agree on what the body parts are but they might not agree on the values. And that's what is so challenging in this country.

When we don't do it in the public sector because people disagree and leave it to the private sector, we find that it isn't happening in the private sector. People say families and parents should do it and they simply are not.

JON O'BRIEN: Can we define what a comprehensive sexuality education program would and would not include? How would you define a good program?

SARAH BROWN: Obviously people need to know all the basic facts about risk protection, biology and so forth. But we clearly need more about respectful relationships and long-term goals.

On my very short list of the things I like about some abstinence curricula is that they do talk about the long-term goal, that is, how your behavior in childhood and adolescence positions or derails you from patterns in adult life, family patterns, employment patterns and so forth. I don't particularly like the message, but I think

abstinence-only education not a valuable form of education?

WILLIAM SMITH: SIECUS has worked over the years to develop national guidelines for comprehensive sex education in kindergarten through 12th grade. They lay out, at times in excruciating detail, what needs to be taught, which is a bit too cumbersome to facilitate a policy discussion. This has been adopted and adapted in a number of countries.

When we get into trouble it is about the details: what young people get when and how that interacts with the notion of parents as the primary sexuality educators of their children.

We believe it is incredibly important as we move forward in advancing a comprehensive approach to sex education that is first and foremost age appropriate. If there are any weak points in advancing this argument, it is the opposition mantra that we're providing condom information to fifth graders which is so wholly untrue that we just need to call it a lie and a disingenuous red herring that is designed to scare people.

education exists. We can do more around that. We can do more around empowering parents as well.

We also know that when we allow parents the opportunity to opt their children out of a comprehensive approach to sex education, less than 1 percent of parents do so because they want help in this area. However, we need to be responsive to those one or two extreme parents who tend to hold families and communities hostage by not allowing sex education to go forward and give them the opportunity to opt out.

JON O'BRIEN: Roger, the UK is very multicultural and has great religious diversity. How are the differing parental values balanced with the necessity to provide young people with a good comprehensive sex education? How does it differ in private and public schools?

ROGER INGHAM: The reason that sex education was not statutory before now was to allow parents to withdraw their children because the government couldn't have parents withdrawing from a statutory

national curriculum. So they compromised and that's why voluntary withdrawal came in. What has happened in a lot of schools that I've worked with is that schools will purposely avoid covering certain topics in their curriculum so as to minimize the risk of parents withdrawing.

Therefore, even though a very small number do opt to withdraw, the impact of that small number is colossal. In fact, the announcement by the government that sexual relationship education was to be statutory was assumed by many of us to remove the right of parental withdrawal. However, it's now back on the agenda. There's still a battle to be fought and we may have to do what Bill just suggested.

But there are two or three issues I want to raise. First, what happens when a child disagrees with a parent? We have heard a lot about parents' rights, such as the parent's right to know about a child having an abortion or obtaining contraception. But the courts have come down consistently in saying that if the child is regarded as competent then their competent character overrides any supposed parental rights. That's enshrined in human rights laws in Europe and internationally.

In other words, if a parent wanted the child withdrawn from sex education but the child didn't want to, what would happen? While we don't know, I think most of us assume that the child would win. Then, what's the point of having the right to withdraw?

Second, by acknowledging the parental right to opt out, you are also acknowledging that the way sex and relationship education is taught is inevitably bound up with faith. I don't think we need to concede that. Talking about bodies, how they work and what you can and can't do with them is a separate issue from what your particular faith, culture or personal values would like you to do with them. That's a line we've got to draw much more centrally.

JON O'BRIEN: To be specific, Roger, do you notice a difference in the UK between what Muslim parents find acceptable and what Christian parents find acceptable?

ROGER INGHAM: It's very difficult to generalize. We have a very active Christian lobby group called the Christian Medical Fellowship which is made up of Protestants and Catholics who tend to support abstinence-only education. We also have a large number of strongly religious people who are doing fantastic work both within the Catholic faith, within Protestantism and in other faiths. So, it's very hard to generalize.

we explored their religion and how it relates to human rights, they were open to talking about other issues which they have never discussed before.

There is very good research about working with parents, not only seeing them as our enemies but as our allies. We see parents as a tool to get to young people and tell them how they should behave. We need to learn about how to involve parents and help parents be our



Teenagers attend a workshop about sexuality, love and reproduction in Colombia. The workshops were organized by Corporacion de Desarrollo de Magdalena Medio.

Muslims, too, are divided. There are conservative and liberal Muslims. From what I understand from people who understand these issues better than I do, it is much more about culture than it is about religion.

JON O'BRIEN: Doortje, from an international perspective, how do you see this question of parental objections to sex education?

DOORTJE BRAEKEN: At IPPF, we are very much committed to promoting the rights of young people to sex education. We just had a big meeting in Morocco with young people from a strong faith-based community. We talked with them about sexuality, sex education and sexual diversity. When

ally. Sometimes we make things a little too black and white. We often impose too much of what we want instead of asking parents and young people what they want.

JON O'BRIEN: That's a very interesting point. You're talking about what young people actually need and where they are with regard to sexuality education as opposed to those who are interested in young people's behavior. However, a lot of sex education programs concentrate on what sex educators want, rather than what young people need.

Take gender perspectives, for example. Do you think that young men have been well served by sexuality education programs that seek to modify male

behavior or imbue certain values with regard to gender and equality? Do you think that sexuality education has been sensitive to the male gender perspective?

DOORTJE BRAEKEN: There has been quite a lot of research that shows that young men don't recognize themselves at all in this kind of "hanging ovaries" education. They don't think this has anything to do with them.

There are now more initiatives to look at how we can support men and young men in their sexuality and sexual lives. It is very different from the family planning perspective. There is still a lot of debate over whether we are there for the women or for the men.

sexual experiences with a woman was to prove to their friends they're not gay. In looking at all of the different criteria of good and bad reasons to have sex, this would surely not be very high on the good reason list. However, it shows the extent of homophobic attitudes in certain sectors of the UK population. In this sense, men are very much a problem.

The history of sex education (and sex research, for that matter) tends to have emerged through family planning and concerns about reproduction. Women and contraception were therefore the key focus. But in the 1980s, when HIV came on the scene, then gay men and drug users became a focus of attention. In a sense, heterosexual men haven't really

managing things. It's an important but interesting challenge.

JON O'BRIEN: Sarah, one thing that is often asserted rather strongly is that various communities in the United States are being targeted, particularly African American and Latino communities, with sex education or with contraception. What do you make of the fact that many of the teen pregnancy prevention programs do concentrate on Latino or African American communities?

SARAH BROWN: Many of the programs that have been developed were indeed done in largely low income populations because the HIV/AIDS, STIs and adolescent pregnancy rates have been higher there. That's

We often impose too much of what we want instead of asking parents and young people what they want.

We are now looking at better ways to educate and involve young men. I don't think they want to know about the hanging ovaries of women. They are much more concerned about sexual urges and their own roles in relationships.

There has been some research in Europe looking at the behavior of boys and girls in schools. If you address the issue of respect and understanding a boy's behavior towards girls or towards other men, it has a direct effect on sexual behavior. We could use this in addressing condom use among young men.

JON O'BRIEN: Roger, picking up on that, do you think that young men are often treated as a problem with regards to sexuality education and teen pregnancies? Is that something contemporary or has it been around for a while?

ROGER INGHAM: It's a bit of both. There was some excellent research here in London looking at the whole issue of homophobia in inner-city school settings, and they found that one of the common reasons that men report having their first

had a place of their own. This will have to change.

It is possibly ironic that much of the really good work on gender relations that has challenged entrenched views on masculinity has been carried out in Central and South America, an area that is often associated with so-called machismo. The work is looking into what pressures men feel they are under in order to prove that they are men, and working on ways to challenge these pressures. They've done some fantastic work in showing the rest of the world the way to do it. Of course, there are still huge barriers to overcome.

From another perspective, I have spent seven or eight years working in Nepal, and I heard frequently from people that we must respect traditional cultures. Of course this is right. But when we thought about it, we realized that we heard this from men a lot more than we heard it from women. That made us examine what men have to lose if we start to try to open up things a little bit in some of these countries. It will be threatening to many people and to many of the entrenched ways of

a fact. In addition, there are enormous racial sensitivities on this issue.

I remember years ago I was running an infant mortality commission in Washington. We had some funding from the federal government to establish family planning clinics around the city because unintended and adolescent pregnancy is a major predictor of infant mortality.

I vividly remember meeting with a group in a low-income area of the city about how and where we might set up a program. And the response was this: "We need primary care. We don't need family planning care. It can be part of it but how dare you suggest that is a priority? We have schools that have no education at all on many subjects. We have no clinics. And the notion that we're going to have teen pregnancy prevention education or services when we don't have the broader picture is intolerable."

There is also a very ugly history in the US of drug development, gynecological procedures and obstetrical surgeries on low income and minority women.

One other issue that makes this area so difficult is that when you have a

country where the health-care system is so uneven, where there's such enormous educational and other disparities, the notion that we'll give you special funding for contraceptive services, family planning or sex education is often very poorly received because the larger issues that are not offered.

JON O'BRIEN: One of the ways in the United States that sex education is promoted is around trying to prevent teen pregnancy or STIs. As a result, Bill, does some of the messaging and work on sexuality education lead to a negative framing of sexuality?

WILLIAM SMITH: Absolutely. The conceptual frame for why we do sex education in this country has been and likely in the near future will continue to be based on disaster prevention. And because it's disaster prevention it usually breaks down into a plumbing lesson.

We need to move in a different direction. However, we have this issue in the US because we have a unique system of federalism and there needs to be accountability for tax dollars being distributed at the federal level.

I often tell people that we don't have a national law on sex education because we can't. Our system prohibits that from happening. Therefore, the way that we have to get sex education funded at the national level tends to be through a public health framework because that's how the system works. It is this unique federal structure that incapacitates us, in many ways, from having a more positive proactive framework.

Take, for example, Mexico. Mexico has an entirely different system of government where most of the power tends to reside with the federal authorities in Mexico City. Not only is there a national sex education law, there is also a national textbook that every school age children receives. The textbook contains excellent comprehensive information about sexual health and relationships and couches it within the entire notion of citizenship.

We can't do that here in the US. Until we figure out some other way of paying for and delivering sex education, we are stuck with the public health framework.

SARAH BROWN: The problem is that using the public health framework suggests that this is a health discussion rather than a relationship discussion which has health elements. Going through the public health commissioner, we're going to start talking

federalism in this country looks like. Barring a constitutional amendment or a revolution, this is what we're dealing with. This is the system that we have.

There are obviously profound challenges with that, but there are also tremendous opportunities. It enables citizens to step forward. For example, in Pittsburgh, citizens stood up, voted and worked with their school board to vote out abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and put



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As young adults spend more time online than in the classroom, the new frontier of sexuality education is on the Web.

about pathogens, pregnancy and so forth. Right from the get go it sets a framework that makes it harder to take the broader view.

JON O'BRIEN: Sarah and Bill, do you think it's a good thing that we don't have a national sex education program in the US because it leaves decision-making at the local level? Or do you think that the Mexican model would be a better starting point for trying to create a framework in which we can ensure that young people are getting the information that they need?

WILLIAM SMITH: I teach graduate students at the University of New Mexico in the Public Health School and I spend an inordinate amount of time talking about what

comprehensive sex education programs into place. If we had a national law during the last eight years of the abysmal Bush administration, we clearly would have gone in the absolute wrong direction.

The top-down system in Mexico also has its own weaknesses. For instance, the bishop in Guadalajara can decide that he does not want those textbooks in the schools. And then we find out that the bishop has had some authority to do this.

Both of these systems have their pluses and minuses. What is most important moving forward is that we recognize that the American model of government is unique in that it presents particular challenges and opportunities to us as we move toward a more comprehensive sex education model.

SARAH BROWN: Well, it's not going to happen so I don't think we should spend much time on whether it's good, bad or otherwise. However, there is another angle that does address this: online activity amongst young people.

By middle school, young people spend more time online than they do in school, to say nothing of those few hours every year of health education or sex education. The sex education community has been very slow to understand that young people are actually much more inclined to seek information, discuss, learn and communicate online than they ever are with Mrs. Smith in their classroom.

Instead, we have the adults arguing about Chapter 4 and whether it says this word or that word while the kids are on their cell phones, tweeting, texting, downloading pornography and sending pictures. There is a profound divide and a missed opportunity.

In the future, we have to acknowledge that when we're in a community that is able to do balanced and strong family life, sex and relationship education, then we should do that. When we don't have that opportunity we need to use online technology. It may not be as good as having a teacher in front of you, but many young people tell us that they'd much rather deal with some of these issues online. On the internet, you have privacy. Many young people find that some of the classroom-based exercises can be lacking because they may have personal issues they don't want to disclose or can't be raised.

While we have this fractured federal system where we cannot get anything done on a uniform basis, we have an opportunity now. We have a tool available now.

If I were in charge of sex education, I would say this: Work on this hard. Don't exclude community-based work because many communities are willing to do this.

However, never declare defeat when people of all income levels now have cell phones.

JON O'BRIEN: For closing remarks, are there any thoughts you'd like to leave us with on comprehensive sexuality education?

WILLIAM SMITH: I'm feeling more optimistic about movements on this in our country than I have in the last decade. The statement from the Obama administration at the recent UN Commission on Population and Development could not have been

good decisions about preventing pregnancy, about avoiding STIS and HIV. That is a refreshing difference to what we have been given over the last eight years.

DOORTJE BRAEKEN: I am happy that the whole issue of sex education has become a much bigger part of people's agendas. People are rethinking the curriculum and having these debates.

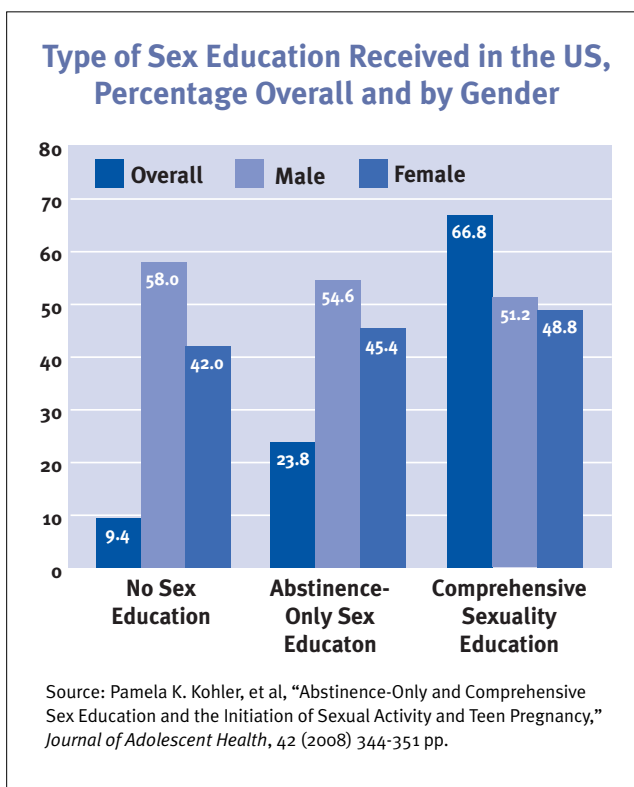
We may not always agree. IPPF wants to concentrate on a social studies approach. We are looking at sex education in the gender sense and also at issues such as sexual pleasure that have not been addressed. Nonetheless, these debates really help, and we all do not have to agree on every issue.

IPPF is not an educational organization. We are a service delivery organization. Our donors are extremely interested in our work around sexuality education. They really understand that HIV prevention alone does not work. They understand the need to better link education and services and are willing to spend money on that at an international level. I, too, am quite optimistic that we have started talking about these things again.

ROGER INGHAM: I'd like to be more positive about it all. I'd like to start to disentangle some of the overused discourses so that we get away from only talking

about the negative, such as harm avoidance, and move toward enabling and supporting young people. Even the word pleasure should be used on occasion, but very carefully and delicately so as not to frighten too many people too soon.

We have got to keep going and make links between all of the bigger issues. We need to point out that many of the older people who make policy decisions may have their own personal and/or historical hang-ups about sex and sex education and they've got to loosen up a little bit and support the next generation. ■



clearer in its support of moving toward a comprehensive approach for sex education in our international development efforts.

Billions of dollars have been squandered in our international development efforts on HIV by promoting abstinence and marriage promotion as the panacea to preventing HIV in countries where the epidemic is really out of control.

However, there is good news here at home. In the coming year, I think we will see that the Obama administration is serious about supporting evidence-based initiatives that help young people make