

Let's Talk About Sex

Pre-college philosophy as a model for inclusive, comprehensive, and non-discriminatory sex education

Conference Theme: Innovation and collaboration: Making Classrooms More Philosophical

Grade Level: K-12

Proposal Topic: Philosophy in specific disciplines

Format: Paper/Presentation

Abstract

I remember having sex ed in fifth grade. The whole grade was split into boys and girls to learn about our respective bodies including puberty. I felt humiliated having to stay with the "girls." Throughout my brief sex education it was always implied that sex was between a man and a woman. As a queer and genderqueer person, my identity and my life was never represented. -- Undergraduate Student, Philosophy and Sexuality, Fall 2016

No one ever said anything about premarital sex. Which in today's society seems like it is a given, something that is going to happen. Movies, advertising, and our bodies told us one thing, sex ed told us another. -- Undergraduate Student, Philosophy and Sexuality, Fall 2017

My undergraduate students want to go back in time. They report feeling betrayed, erased, and neglected by the sex education they received — if they received any at all. They want a chance to talk with their younger selves, to affirm their identities and desires, and to give them the information they need to make safe choices, both physically and emotionally.

They are further upset to learn that there are no set sex education requirements or curricula in the United States. Curricula, when curricula exists at all, is often broadly determined by the state and more specifically determined by school district. Among other shortcomings, current sex education programs too often fail to recognize the agency of young people, exclude and ostracise LGBTQIA and genderqueer students, and fail to engage with vital concepts such as consent. However, pre-college philosophy can help us build an approach to sex education that is inclusive, comprehensive, and non-discriminatory.

Given all this, we have been compelled to develop programming to help younger generations have more positive experiences with sex education. To this end, I have been working with students to create a new kind of sexual education curriculum, one that borrows pedagogy from philosophy for children instructors, working to center student voices, and focusing on shared stories and open ended questions.

In this talk I would like to give some background on the our project, report on our successes and challenges, share some of the activities we have developed and resources we have found, and

talk about our trial runs pilot testing our work with children, and also our hopes to bring the programming to the wider community.

During discussion I will be open to feedback, and will be eager to discuss the interest, ideas about, and potential concerns others have with using methods developed in P4K teaching as tools for engaging young learners in conversations about gender, relationships, consent, sex, and sexuality.

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Marisol is an assistant professor of philosophy at Metropolitan State University. Her research and teaching is dedicated to rethinking the discipline of philosophy, in both pedagogy and content. She has developed courses on gender studies and sexuality, race and racism, and most recently a course titled: Philosophy and Blackness. Last year she presented papers nationally and internationally, including "Philosophy has been whitewashed: AP Philosophy is an opportunity for national change" at the APA's 2018 Pacific meeting. She fervently hopes the discipline of philosophy can grow and change.