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SEXUALITY IN THE MEDIA: PART 1

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INSIGHT AND INFORMATION
FOR MORE REALISTIC MEDIA COVERAGE

Mac Edwards

This issue of the *SIECUS Report—Sexuality in the Media, Part 1*—not only provides readers with a broad overview of how sexuality issues are currently portrayed in the media, but also gives them important tools to use in advocating for more realistic and thought-provoking portrayals in the future.

These articles make it clear that the media do not give sexuality issues the serious attention they deserve. So our readers must seize every opportunity to make the media aware of ways they can help communicate accurate information and reflect realistic situations.

PART OF OUR CULTURAL FABRIC

“Sexuality and the Mass Media: An Overview”—written by Dr. Jane D. Brown and Jeanne R. Steele of the University of North Carolina—is really much more than a quick look at sexuality issues in the broadcast and print media.

True, the authors cover all the major points: from television to movies...from radio call-ins to video tapes... from women’s magazines to popular music...from broadcast news to newspaper articles...to advertisements. But the authors don’t stop there. They make an important point: that the frequent portrayal of consequence-free sexual behavior in mass media does, very probably, affect Americans’ sexual beliefs and behaviors in an adverse way. Then they go a step further to suggest ways that health educators can help the media create a more realistic and more responsible picture of sexuality—one that will help people grow into healthy and responsible sexual beings. They specifically point to three vehicles: public information campaigns, media advocacy programs, and “edutainment.”

“The sexual health and happiness of future generations will be affected by whether we consider the media only as a backdrop or an important piece of the cultural fabric,” the authors conclude.

TOOLS TO COUNTERACT ADVERSITY

This issue of the *SIECUS Report* also gives readers two important tools to use in their work with the media.

First, Dr. Gina Ogden, a nationally known sexuality expert and author, has written “Nice Work If You Can Get It: Making the Most of Your Messages in the Media.” She tells readers what she has learned from her personal experi-

ences on talk shows, news programs, documentaries, specials, and call-ins talking not only about “on-air” time but also about important exercises and “to do’s” prior to broadcast.

“As a sexuality professional, you can use your expertise to counteract media stereotypes and coercions,” she explains. “To make the most of your messages on radio and television, you need to be clear about your goals and able to craft your messages as both interesting and newsworthy. Moreover, you need to know how these media function so you can work with them and not at cross purposes.”

Second, over 40 members of the National Coalition to Support Sexuality Education have signed an important new document to encourage media professionals to incorporate more realistic, medically accurate, and health-promoting ideas and images concerning sexuality into their work.

These recommendations call for portrayals that will provide opportunities for individuals to gain clearer insights into their own sexuality and to make more responsible decisions about their behavior.

This issue of the *SIECUS Report* also includes a thoughtful article on “Lesbians and Gays and the Broadcast Media” by Dr. Larry Gross of the University of Pennsylvania. He starts with a documentary called “The Homosexuals” in the late 1960s when gays were all but invisible on broadcast media and concludes with this year’s marathon “gay wedding” season where lesbians and gays were married on *Roseanne* and *Friends*. Yet, he points out, the camera conveniently cuts away when the happy couples prepared to kiss each other. “The mass media...are slowly becoming more inclusive and accepting of diversity,” he says, “even while they shield their timid advances under the cloak of parental advisories.”

Finally, *SIECUS* President Debra Haffner (with Megan Casselman) looks at the gender-stereotyped world of children’s catalogs in “Toy Story.” Using the catalogs which Debra received during the past Christmas season, the two uncover a world that, more often than not, tends to encourage stereotypes and, thus limit a young person’s perspectives and possibilities. It is up to us to make certain that this does not happen.

The media plays such an important part in the way that people learn about sexuality that the *SIECUS Report* will publish more articles on this topic in its next issue, *Sexuality in the Media, Part 2*.

SEXUALITY AND THE MASS MEDIA: AN OVERVIEW

By Jane D. Brown, Ph.D. and Jeanne R. Steele, M.S.

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Regardless of age or gender, all but the rarest of Americans are exposed to sexual images, allusions, and talk in the media on an almost daily basis. Sexually attractive models beckon from billboards, and talk shows showcase sexual anomalies. Television soap operas, prime-time series, movies, music lyrics and men's, women's, and teen magazines draw heavily on sexual themes.

TELEVISION

More Americans have television sets than phones, and the television is on about seven hours per day in the average home.¹ In addition, about a third of Americans' free time is spent watching television, more than the next ten most popular leisure activities combined.² African-Americans watch 50 percent more television than other groups³, and children and teenagers from low-income households watch more television than other children.⁴ Current content analyses suggest a remarkable consistency across programming—with sexuality far more explicit today than it was in the days of Ozzie and Harriet's twin beds.⁵

On prime-time television. The most recent comparative study of specific sexual behaviors during prime time on the major broadcast networks found an average of 10 instances of sexual behavior per hour⁶, a slight decrease in the overall rate since a similar study was conducted four years earlier.⁷ The drop, however, occurred primarily in the least explicit sexual category—physical suggestiveness—and was offset by a 50 percent increase in the rate of heterosexual intercourse, defined as talk about, implied, or actual physical portrayals of sexual intercourse.

When sexual behavior in promotions for upcoming shows was added, the rate per hour increased from about 10 to more than 15, painting a picture more in line with public perceptions and supporting the idea that networks frequently use "sex as bait" to increase their ratings.⁸

More alarming, given current rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unplanned pregnancy, analysis showed that few programs ever mentioned the negative consequences that may result from having sexual relations. In fact, references to pregnancy prevention and STD prevention both showed declines from the already low rates in the earlier study. Thus, a typical viewer would see about 25 instances of sexual behavior for every one instance of pre-

ventive behavior or comment. And, even then, the message may not be the most desirable—all the coded references to STDs or pregnancy prevention were in a joking context.

On the soaps. Traditionally steamier than prime-time programming, daytime soap operas have received substantial research attention because of their strong appeal for women and adolescents. A recent analysis of sexuality on the soaps found that top-rated soap operas averaged 6.6 sexual incidents per hour compared to about half that number 10 years earlier. Talk about safe sexual relations and contraception was still relatively rare—six references in 50 episodes, against a backdrop of 15 different story lines about pregnancy over a two-month period.

In addition, sexual intercourse between unmarried individuals remained the staple on the five shows studied.⁹ Nearly one in 10 of the characters involved in any sexual activity was involved in extramarital relationships. Although there was lots of talk about pregnancy, there were not many babies—only 22 appearances by toddlers aged four and under.¹⁰

On the daytime talk shows. Sexuality on the soaps looks almost tame compared to topics discussed on daytime talk shows. The new breed—including Ricki Lake, Sally Jessy Raphael, Jenny Jones, Montel Williams, and Geraldo Rivera—compete for guests willing to make public confessions about intimate sexual relations and feelings. "Catfights and rowdy showdowns" keep viewers tuned in, so producers shop for controversy and on-air confrontations.¹¹ Sometimes they get out of hand: Jonathan Schmitz was charged with murder in the death of Scott Amadure, a young man who declared his attraction to Schmitz during a taping of a *Jenny Jones* show on secret admirers.¹²

On cable and video. Adult programming that portrays explicit sexual behavior is cable television's fastest growing segment.¹³ With the advent of a fiber optic infrastructure, a projected 500 channels are expected to include even more such content. The video cassette player (VCR) also provides greater access to sexually explicit materials.

According to recent content analyses, sexual relations are more frequent and more explicit in movies than in any other medium. Virtually every R-rated film contains at least one nude scene, and some of those most popular with adolescents

contain as many as 15 instances of sexual intercourse in less than two hours.¹⁴ Despite the R rating that supposedly restricts viewing to people over 18 years of age unless accompanied by an adult, two-thirds of a sample of high school students in Michigan reported that they were allowed to rent or watch any movie they wanted, and the movies they most frequently viewed were R-rated.¹⁵

On music videos. Even before Elvis was prohibited from shaking his hips on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, popular music was synonymous with sexuality. Especially appealing to youth,¹⁶ popular music and now music videos contain frequent references to relationships, romance and sexual behavior—the very stuff young people are most interested in as they work on constructing a sense of who they are and what they value.¹⁷ Music videos, now available on at least five major cable networks, may be especially influential sources of sexual information for adolescents because they combine visuals of adolescents' favorite musicians with the music. Many of the visual elements are sexual.¹⁸ Rap music is particularly explicit about both sexuality and violence.¹⁹ Perry argues that the explicit "sexual speak" of African-American women rappers follows in the liberating tradition of the "blues," which gave voice to African-American women's sexual and cultural politics during the years of migration to northern states. This striving for empowerment may explain why some rap musicians have responded to concerns about unsafe sexual relations and have included alternative messages. Some rap music includes talk of "jimmy hats" or condoms. An album by the female rap group Salt 'n' Pepa is about the pleasures and responsibilities of sexual relationships.

RADIO

Frank discussions about sexuality—ranging from Dr. Ruth's on-air psychological counseling to the sexual banter of disc jockeys hired to capture the teen/youth adult audience as they drive to school or work—are common on radio. Content analyses are rare, however, given the diversity of local radio programming and the speed with which local radio personalities rise and fall in popularity.

MAGAZINES

Magazines are another important source of relationship and sexual information, especially for women and adolescent girls. In a recent survey, more than a quarter (26 percent) of women aged 30 to 49 reported that magazines are the source they most typically rely on (second only to health care professionals) for information about birth control.²⁰

In 1994, the 12 largest women's magazines (including *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Family Circle*, *Woman's Day*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*) had a combined cir-

ulation of more than 40 million, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations. Other magazines such as *Parents* (circulation 1.84 million) and *Soap Opera Digest* (1.46 million) also are read by a largely female audience.

Although publishers' statements reveal subtle differences in the market niche each is trying to attract, women's magazines until recently have focused on two broad topics: what a woman should do to get a man (*Cosmopolitan*) and what a woman should do once she has the man and his children (*Redbook*). Specifically, *Cosmopolitan* claims to deal with the emotional side of women's lives while *Redbook* is edited for "young working mothers with children...women who face the challenge of balancing family, home, and career."

Other magazines have attempted to include other aspects of women's lives: *Working Woman* and *Savvy* are targeted toward women who work outside the home. *Health* is for "active women who have made the pursuit of good health an integral part of their daily lives."²¹ But even in these magazines, the emphasis remains primarily on women's lives as they revolve around making themselves attractive enough to catch and keep a man.

Reproductive issues are infrequently covered. Despite their focus on women's lives, these magazines rarely cover reproductive issues such as abortion that might alienate some readers, and, thus, indirectly, advertisers who are looking for large or tightly segmented circulations. As the controversy surrounding abortion has escalated, the largest women's magazines have published only a few articles.²² *Glamour* and *Mademoiselle* have carried more articles (although still only about one a year) than the others. *Family Circle*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Woman's Day* carried five or fewer articles during the two decades from 1972–1991.

Advertisers exert a great deal of control over magazines—both over editorial content and whether they should/could exist at all—because advertising revenue accounts for at least half of the income of most magazines. According to its editor-in-chief, *Glamour* was able to include more articles about abortion than the other magazines because reader surveys showed that readers were pro-choice and, thus, advertisers were less concerned that such content would alienate readers.²³

Ms. magazine, the only women's magazine explicitly dedicated to feminism and the facts about women's sexuality, struggled for 20 years to attract enough advertising. Traditional advertisers, such as cosmetics companies, made such heavy demands on editorial content (e.g., no cover photos of women without makeup) that the magazine has given up advertising and today relies solely on a hefty subscription price (\$35 for six issues) for revenue.²⁴ Although now editorially freer, *Ms.* has dropped from a circulation of 500,000 to about 170,000 due to the price increase.²⁵

Sexuality in Teen Magazines. The teen magazine, *Sassy*, initially suffered from an advertiser boycott organized by the far right after early issues included such articles as “Losing Your Virginity and “Getting Turned On.” Despite the editors’ dedication to providing “responsible, direct information about [sexuality]” and the appreciative response of readers and parents, the magazine was forced to remove the “controversial” content to stay in business.²⁶

Today, advertisers appear less concerned about adult scruples as they compete to capture their piece of the growing (both in terms of size and spending power) youth market.²⁷ *YM*—originally titled *Calling All Girls* before metamorphosing to *Polly Pigtales*, *Young Miss*, and, finally, to *YM* (Young and Modern)—recently beckoned readers with a “special sealed section,” a play on the brown paper wrapper typically associated with pornography. Titled “Getting Intimate,” the section featured eight straight-talking pages about sexuality issues. One page was devoted to STDs—who gets them, how they are spread, what the symptoms are, and how they are treated. Another page relied on a mix of first-person accounts, professional advice, and “surprising sex stats” to help readers answer the question: “Sex: Ready or Not?” This combination of peer-talk and solid data about sexual issues in a girls’ magazine signals a positive trend.

ADVERTISING

Paradoxically, many of the same advertisers who have exerted pressure to keep responsible sexuality information out of the media often use sexual appeals to sell their products. A study of 4,294 network television commercials found that one of every 3.8 commercials includes some type of attractiveness-based message.²⁸

Although most advertisements do not directly model sexual intercourse, they help set the stage for sexual behavior by promoting the importance of beautiful bodies and products that enhance attractiveness to the opposite sex. Advertisers like Calvin Klein, Guess jeans, and Benetton have pushed the limits of sexual suggestiveness with their use of bared flesh, childlike models, and intertwined limbs.

The frequent portrayal of women as interested only in attracting men or as prizes to be won, may lead to the disempowerment of women in sexual relationships. If a woman does all she can to attract a man, can she say no when he wants the sexual relationship she supposedly has been offering? And if she does say no, should a man believe her?

NEWS MEDIA

Although rarely thought of as sexuality educators, the news media at the least help keep sexual behavior salient. The American public and policymakers frequently are faced with news stories about abandoned babies, abortion clinic violence, and controversies over condom availability programs.

Sometimes referred to as agenda setters, the media are in a unique position to get people thinking about specific issues.

The media sometimes are reluctant to cover issues that do not meet traditional criteria for news worthiness, including being relevant to middle-class Americans.²⁹ Because newspapers and news magazines compete for the same kinds of readers, they publish stories that have remained remarkably consistent in subject matter and point of view across the last three or four decades, despite more women in the newsroom.³⁰ According to another study, the same has been true for women’s magazines which, despite more women (although still few) in high editorial positions, continue to treat their women audiences in the same “stereotypical ways that men editors had in the 1960s.”³¹

HIV/AIDS provides an excellent example of the power of media to keep a sexually related topic off the agendas of both the public and policymakers. Because the disease initially was thought to affect only homosexuals and intravenous drug users, groups deemed to be outside the “mainstream” by many editors and reporters, very few stories on HIV/AIDS appeared until mid-1985, four years after the Centers for Disease Control had reported more than 350 deaths. *The New York Times*, an influential agenda setter for both other media and policymakers, was especially slow in covering the topic.³²

PREOCCUPATION WITH SEXUALITY

In sum, all forms of mass media, from prime-time television, to music, music videos, magazines, advertising and the news media include information about sexual behavior. The media provide a window on a world preoccupied with sexuality. In this media world, heterosexual activity is frequent, recreational, and, most often, engaged in by unmarried partners. These partners usually do not discuss their sexual relationship or use contraceptives, yet they rarely get pregnant. If a woman does get pregnant, she rarely considers abortion as an alternative, and even more rarely has one.³³

The financial and emotional problems associated with parentless or single-parent families sometimes are portrayed, but generally are resolved harmoniously and quickly. Thus, we might expect that exposure to such content at least contributes to the patterns of sexual behavior we see in society today: early and unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners, and high rates of unintended pregnancies.

RESEARCH ON THE ISSUE

Sensitivity to sexuality as a topic has restricted research. Only a handful of studies have attempted to link exposure with beliefs, attitudes, or subsequent behavior.

The few studies that do exist consistently point to a relationship between exposure and beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Ultimately, which comes first may not be the most important question. Of greater significance is the

cumulative effect of media saturated with the sounds, images, and politics of sexuality.

Traditional communication research and a growing body of interdisciplinary work by psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and cultural theorists point to a process of cultivation, agenda-setting, and social learning that affects every aspect of our lives.

“MAINSTREAMING” OF AMERICA

According to one perspective, television is the most powerful storyteller in American culture, one that continually repeats the myths and ideologies, the “facts” and patterns of relationships that define our world and “legitimize the social order.”³⁴

Television tells its stories through prime-time sitcoms and series, daytime soap operas and talk shows, news and sports, and a steady stream of commercials that fuel the entire television industry. And it does so throughout the lifespans of its viewers. According to the “cultivation hypothesis,” a steady dose of television, over time, acts like the pull of gravity toward an imagined center.

Called “mainstreaming,” this pull results in a shared set of conceptions and expectations about reality among diverse viewers. Tests of the hypothesis have found, for example, that “heavy” television viewers are more likely to believe the world is “mean and dangerous,” apparently because of frequent exposure to violence on television.³⁵

Researchers have found that college students who watch soaps are more likely than their nonviewing counterparts to overestimate the occurrence of divorce and single parenthood. Interestingly, given the paucity of such portrayals on the soaps, viewers also overestimated the number of abortions³⁶ and the incidence of STDs³⁷ in the real world.

Other studies have looked at the cultivation of gender-role stereotypes and have found evidence that television nurtures their continuing presence in American society.³⁸ Studies of adolescents also have found that heavy television viewing is predictive of negative attitudes toward remaining a virgin.³⁹ A variety of other factors also enter the picture—ethnicity, class, and gender affect both program preferences and the meanings that are drawn from media content. But, in general, our media culture sells sexuality without consequences.

SETTING AMERICA’S AGENDA

Other researchers see the mass media as agenda-setters that not only tell people what is important in the world around them, but also how to think about the events and people who inhabit that world.⁴⁰

Using words and images as their palette, news anchors, reporters, and photographers paint pictures of a world peopled by villains and victims, good guys and bad guys. Over

time, the many little dramas that make up the day’s news events take on a life of their own—the news media’s pictures of the world actually become the world in the minds of thousands of viewers and readers.

As professional storytellers, the news media not only control which stories get told, they also decide how they get told. Called “framing,” this aspect of newsmaking helps shape an individual’s understanding of events and may affect behavior.⁴¹ Highly charged issues such as abortion or teen pregnancy require careful treatment by newsmakers. Rather than framing them as juicy controversies—the stuff on which ratings are built—editors and reporters would do well to examine their motives and methods before fueling the deep rifts that divide society on these issues.

In a detailed account of how the abortion debate developed in Fargo, ND, in the 1980s, anthropologist Faye Ginsberg describes what happens when the media sacrifice socially responsible coverage for “good television”: “By picking up violent or near-violent action as ‘newsworthy,’ to the neglect of the less dramatic but more representative work, most coverage of the abortion issue unwittingly colludes with the radical behavior of a vocal minority—for whom visibility is a preeminent goal—even when condemning it.”⁴²

By framing issues in particular ways, the media contribute to the creation of moral panics⁴³ over perceived threats (for example, the teen pregnancy “epidemic”). As Blumer put it, a “social problem exists primarily in terms of how it is defined and conceived in society.”⁴⁴ By applying the “epidemic” label to teenage pregnancy, the media helped create an environment that justifies the use of stringent, authoritarian measures to fight a social disease somehow brought on by its “victims.” When coupled with the people’s “common knowledge” about epidemics and disease, the media framing of the issue makes it relatively easy to blame teenage mothers for failing to take reasonable precautions rather than looking for ways to improve the material conditions of teenage mothers or the effectiveness of health education programs.⁴⁵ Either way, the media can be, and often are, central to the process.

SOCIAL LEARNING

Few studies have directly considered the question of most fundamental concern: Does exposure to sexuality issues in the media cause those who see it to engage in sexual behavior earlier and in riskier ways? Two studies have found correlations between watching higher doses of “sexy” television and early initiation of sexual intercourse.⁴⁶ Although neither study was designed to sort out effectively which came first—the exposure to sexual content or the sexual behavior—both suggested that exposure to sexual content is related to early sexual intercourse among teens.

This is not much to go on, but both studies support the ideas of social learning theory that guide a great deal of research on how media affect behavior. Basically, the theory predicts that people will imitate behaviors of others when those models are rewarded or not punished for their behavior. Modeling will occur more regularly when the model is perceived as attractive and is similar to the imitator and the modeled behavior is salient, simple, prevalent, has functional value, and is possible.⁴⁷ Thus, the theory would predict that teens who spend more time watching television will imitate behavior that includes depictions of attractive characters having sexual intercourse who rarely suffer any negative consequences.

MEDIA VIOLENCE

More than 1,000 studies, using a variety of research techniques—including laboratory and field experiments, cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys, and meta-analyses—consistently have found small positive relationships between exposure to violent content in the visual media (primarily television and movies) and subsequent aggressive and anti-social behavior.⁴⁸ As some theorists have pointed out, although such an effect may seem small, media are one of the many factors that contribute to human behavior that could be modified most readily.⁴⁹

One of the most compelling of the naturalistic studies of television violence found that the homicide rates in three countries (the United States, Canada, and South Africa) increased dramatically 10 to 15 years after the introduction of television.⁵⁰ Although early television is not remembered as particularly violent, the earliest content analyses conducted in the mid-1960s in the United States reported the number of violent acts per hour at rates similar to current fare. (Remember all those cowboy shoot-'em-ups?)

Would analyses of the incidence of unplanned pregnancies and the introduction of television draw similar conclusions? It is not an unreasonable expectation. Further studies very likely will find patterns of effects similar to those established for violent content.

USING THE MEDIA

Health advocates have developed three basic strategies for using the mass media in the interest of healthy sexual behavior:

- **Public information campaigns** where media are used to generate specific effects in a large number of people within a specified period of time.⁵¹ Such campaigns are usually more successful when advertising space is purchased and heavy reliance is not placed on public service announcements (PSAs).
- **Media advocacy** where health advocates generate their own news. This calls for knowledge of how the media

work as well as using that knowledge to get issues on the media agenda. Public policies that affect access to and affordability of sexuality education, contraception, and abortion are logical targets of such advocacy.

- **“Edutainment”** where socially responsible messages are incorporated into entertainment media such as music, television dramas, soap operas, and magazine articles. The longer formats allow more time for developing complex messages such as how to negotiate condom use or how to choose an appropriate birth control method.⁵² The primary drawback to the education-entertainment strategy in the United States is that the media are unlikely to include portrayals they consider potentially controversial.⁵³

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In sum, existing research supports a qualified yes to the question: Do media affect sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors? At this point, researchers know more about what kinds of media portrayals of sexuality are available than about their effect on audiences.

Key communication theories (cultivation, agenda setting, and social learning) and years of research on other kinds of communication effects suggest, however, the increasingly frequent, unprotected, and consequence-free sexual behavior depicted in all forms of mass media do affect American's sexual beliefs and behaviors.

Here are some conclusions to guide future investigations and research:

- **Television is not the only medium of concern.** Teenagers, especially, turn to other forms of media—particularly music, movies, and magazines—as they seek clues about who they want to be or should be in the larger culture. Women rely on women's magazines. These are important sources of sexual information for further research. New forms of communication, including the Internet, which is becoming an important source of sexuality information, also should be included in future inquiry.
- **There is no such thing as “the” media audience.** As media grow increasingly fragmented and specialized, so do their audiences. Previous research shows that audiences often select different media based on ethnicity, gender, age, and class. African-Americans are more likely to watch television shows, listen to music, and read magazines featuring African-Americans. Men will seldom read women's magazines. People with a college education are more likely to watch news and public affairs programs. People who do not work during the day are more likely to watch soap operas. Future research should focus on who is watching what, and why.

- **Media effects will not be uniform across audiences.** Researchers need to pay closer attention to developmental, lifestyle, and cultural issues. It is reasonable to expect that teens involved in sexual relationships will seek out sexual media content because it is relevant. Possible cultural differences in interpretation of sexual content were clear in a study of rock star Madonna's early controversial video "Papa Don't Preach."⁵⁴ White college students, particularly women, thought it was about a pregnant girl telling her father she is pregnant and wants to keep her unborn child. African-American males, in contrast, frequently retold the story as a girl asking her father's permission to be with her boyfriend. For them, the "baby" was a boyfriend. Learning about differences in interpretation will add to an understanding of the media's effects on sexuality.
- **Interdisciplinary research will be most valuable.** Increasingly, researchers are recognizing that media effects are best understood when studies are conducted from multiple perspectives. New breakthroughs might be forged by bringing multidisciplinary teams together to study how the media affect everyday life.
- **Media producers should be held accountable.** The economics of the media industry cannot be ignored. Advertisers, publishers, producers, and investors in the huge media conglomerates all have one thing in common. They do what they do to make money. Industry officials and academicians need to ask what can reasonably be expected of media owners and producers. What are the ethical implications of programming and business decisions? What form should social responsibility take?

The sexual health and happiness of future generations will be affected by whether we consider the media only as a backdrop or as an important piece of the cultural fabric.

This article is based on a paper originally commissioned by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and was presented last fall by Dr. Brown and Ms. Steele during a session on "Sex and Hollywood: Should There Be a Government Role?" The session was part of a series on "Sexuality and American Social Policy" sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. It was adapted for the SIECUS Report by the authors.) — Editor

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LESBIANS AND GAYS AND THE BROADCAST MEDIA

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The broadcast media play a major role in the process of social definition of lesbian and gay people. Yet they have rarely presented portrayals which counter or extend prevalent stereotypical images. The few exceptions have almost invariably been either of victims or villains.¹

Until the 1960s, gays and lesbians were rarely, if ever, mentioned in the news media and only hinted at in movies and television. The first network documentary focusing on gays was broadcast by CBS News in March 1967. The program explicitly excluded lesbians from its discussion of "The Homosexuals." The only gay men identified by name are white, middle class, and visibly respectable (one was fired the next day from his job). Others are shown strategically placed behind potted palms, or otherwise hidden from view, as their tormented psyches are bared.

As befits an objective reporter facing an aberration in the natural order, reporter Mike Wallace was anxious to know what causes homosexuality (thus, presumably, helping society to prevent it). For authoritative answers, Wallace turned to psychiatrists Irving Bieber and Charles Socarides, two leading proponents of the view—now officially discredited—that gays are mentally ill. Their statements are made with a confidence as assured as it was baseless. In addition to the psychiatrists, Wallace spoke to members of the clergy—a Catholic priest and a Protestant minister—who admit that homosexuals, while certainly sinners, are to be pitied and, if possible, saved. After nearly an hour-long program in which gay men were defined and framed almost entirely from the outside, it was concluded:

The dilemma of the homosexual: told by the medical profession he is sick, by the law that he's a criminal. Shunned by employers. Rejected by heterosexual society. Incapable of a fulfilling relationship with a woman or, for that matter, with a man. At the center of his life, he remains anonymous...a displaced person...an outsider.²

And that's the way it was, Tuesday, March 7, 1967. But it didn't stay that way. Lesbian and gay Americans were becoming increasingly visible in their demands for legal and social equality, and the Stonewall riots of June 1969 were the spark that ignited a movement across the country. The media were

among the early targets of gay activists, who demanded fair and unbiased coverage from news media, and the end to the harmful stereotypes of victims and villains favored by Hollywood.

It was early 1971 before network television's first sympathetic portrait of a gay man appeared in an *All in the Family* episode, "Judging Books by Covers," in which Archie Bunker discovered that a football player pal was gay.

The following year there was a more significant breakthrough with the ABC made-for-television movie *That Certain Summer*, in which two gay men actually were shown touching (on the shoulder) and where none of the gay characters died at the end of the story. Gay and lesbian characters soon began to make one-shot appearances on several network series.

In 1978, two television movies aired that were based on real life experiences: *Sergeant Matlovich vs. the U.S. Air Force* told the story of the Vietnam vet who said, "They gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one," and *A Question of Love* about a lesbian mother's child custody case. (The women never kiss, but one is shown tenderly drying her lover's hair.)

This slight increase in gay visibility was seen by the right as a sign of media capitulation to what came to be called "special interests." The syndicated columnist Nicholas Von Hoffman asked: "...Is network television about to kill off the bitchy, old-time outrageous fruit and replace him with a new type homo?"³ Among the horrors he foresaw were "*The Six Million Dollar Queer* and *The Bionic Fruit*."

Even though the religious right continued in the 1980s to attack the networks for what they considered overly favorable attention to gay people, the dramatic media did, in fact, still frequently portray gays in such a way as to reinforce prevailing stereotypes. As William Henry noted in an overview of television's treatment through the late 1980s:

...when TV does deal with gays it typically takes the point of view of straights struggling to understand. The central action is the progress of acceptance—not self-acceptance by the homosexual, but grief-stricken resignation to fate by his straight loved ones, who serve as surrogates for the audience. Homosexuality thus becomes not a fact of

"[The media]... rarely counter or extend prevalent stereotypical images"

life, but a moral issue on which everyone in earshot is expected to voice some vehement opinion. Just as black characters were long expected to talk almost exclusively about being black, and handicapped characters (when seen at all) were expected to talk chiefly about their disabilities, so homosexual characters have been defined almost entirely by their "problem."⁴

Gay male characters began to appear in continuing roles in series in the 1980s, but they were so subtle as to be readily misunderstood (as in the case of Sidney in *Love, Sidney*, whose homosexuality seemed to consist entirely of crying at Greta Garbo movies and having a photo of his dead lover on the mantelpiece) or confused about their sexuality, and they were never seen in an ongoing romantic gay relationship (as in the case of Steven Carrington of *Dynasty*, whose lovers had an unfortunate tendency to get killed). Although the lesbian character, Dr. Lynne Carlson, appeared for a few months in 1983 on the daytime soap *All My Children*, a regular lesbian character did not appear on prime-time television until Marilyn McGrath of the short-lived series *Heartbeat* in 1989.

GREATEST STORIES NEVER TOLD

AIDS has had the effect of finally ending the invisibility of gay people in the news media, but this is a mixed blessing. At present, AIDS stories appear daily on broadcast news programs—often with little or no new or important content. Such coverage often reinforces hostility toward gays among those so predisposed (there is abundant evidence of growing anti-gay violence in many parts of the country⁵) and to further the sense of distance from a strange and deviant "subculture."

It would be misleading to focus on news and documentary programming in understanding television's role in helping or hindering the fight against AIDS. For most Americans, television drama is a far more potent teacher.

AIDS has reinvigorated the two primary roles the media offer to members of minority groups: victim and villain. Victims, as in the family-centered dramas *An Early Frost* (NBC) and *Our Sons* (ABC), are objects of pity, and, when treated well by the authors, they end up tearfully reconciled with their families. Television dramatists have presented the plight of (white, middle-class) gay men with AIDS with particular concern for the agony of the families/friends who have to face the awful truth: the son (brother, boyfriend, husband) is, gasp, gay! In *An Early Frost*, a young, rich, white, handsome lawyer is forced out of the closet by AIDS. "We know he is gay because he tells his disbelieving parents so, but his lack of a gay sensibility, politics, and sense of community make him [more palatable to general audiences.]"⁶

There are some truly dramatic and important AIDS stories that are never seen enacted or even reflected glancingly in television drama, but they are not stories of villainous AIDS carriers or abandoned victims who may finally be accepted back into the arms of their families. The consistent feature of all dramatic programming (and most news, public affairs, and documentary programming as well) has been to focus on individual people suffering from AIDS and, if the angle of vision is widened at all, it will include (straight) family members and possibly a lover (as long as they barely touch) and perhaps one or two friends (more likely to be straight than gay or lesbian). What's wrong with this picture?

What's wrong is that it not only leaves out all of the important—and dramatic—achievements of the gay community, but that it falsely suggests that gay people with AIDS are alone and abandoned unless and until they are taken back into the bosom of their family. Even the best of television AIDS stories fall into this pattern.

An episode of *LA Law* (May 16, 1991) included a gay lawyer dying of AIDS who sues his health insurance company to obtain payment for an experimental drug which might prolong his life (he wins, with the assistance of the *LA Law* regular character Victor Sifuentes). The ailing lawyer is shown as a strong and principled person who is willing to fight for his rights, and for the rights of others in his situation. But viewers of the program would never know from this episode about the successful efforts of gay activist groups to get the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and drug companies to deal more equitably and openly with patients. These successes were not brought about by lone individuals, however courageous and eloquent, and thus the *LA Law* episode, for all its good intentions, continues the tradition of isolating the gay person as a lone victim.

The pattern of portraying people with AIDS outside the context of the gay community and the service organizations created in response to AIDS was dramatically reinforced in Hollywood's first major film centering on the epidemic, Jonathan Demme's *Philadelphia*. Once again there is a white gay man who lives an upper-middle-class life as a closeted lawyer—although he has a lover and he is out to his family—until he is stricken with AIDS, whereupon he is promptly fired from the big-time law firm where he had been a rising star. He shows up in the office of an African-American, homophobic, ambulance chasing lawyer and asks him to represent him in suing his old law firm. The lawyer refuses but later reconsiders, takes the case, and wins it while undergoing a conversion to tolerance and acceptance of at least one person.

The film was presented and largely received as a landmark of progress in Hollywood's approach to AIDS and gay people, but, in fact, it was mired in the same old message. Most dishonest is the erasure of the gay community's orga-

nized response to AIDS. In Philadelphia, a person in his position would have been able to avail himself of lesbian and gay legal services or of the AIDS Law Project. In other words, the dramatic premise of the film—the victimized person with AIDS ending up at the mercy of a homophobe who can then be converted to tolerance—requires the erasure of the accomplishments of the gay community, just as the fear of heterosexual audiences’ sensibilities requires the denial of the realities of gay life.

DONT KISS, DON’T TELL

The issue of lesbian and gay rights has emerged as the prime focus of the far right in their efforts to reverse what Senator Jesse Helms has characterized as “the wayward, warped sexual revolution which has ravaged this Nation for the past quarter of a century.”⁷ The media have been a continuing battleground in this cultural war. The power of the far right to slow down and even reverse any movement toward acknowledging and including lesbian and gay realities in the fictional worlds of the media may be illustrated in the cowardice repeatedly shown over the depiction of physical affection between two people of the same gender.

The role of the lesbian nurse Marilyn McGrath on the series *Heartbeat* demonstrated that behind the superficial feminism of the program beat a familiar patriarchal heart.⁸ Film scholars D. Hantzis and V. Lehr raise the question of whether portrayals are constructing “images of lesbians and gays that are nonthreatening to heterosexuals through the erasure of lesbian and gay sexuality.”⁹ Although *Heartbeat* often presented detailed accounts and images of the heterosexual characters’ romantic and sexual involvements, the lesbian character had a lover who was rarely shown. The two were never permitted to express desire or passion.

The de-sexualization of Marilyn McGrath did not, however, deflect the wrath of the American Family Association (AFA), whose campaign against the program may have contributed to its cancellation after one season.

The AFA’s fury was aroused again in February 1991 when two female attorneys on NBC’s *LA Law* kissed on network television. Predictably, they geared up their letter-writing battalions to “brow-beat the networks and advertisers into censoring such acts by threatening them with product boycotts,”¹⁰ and, equally predictably, NBC began hedging its bets: “We were not attempting to create a lesbian character in that episode,” said NBC spokeswoman Sue Binford. “It was much more of an attempt to add texture to C.J.’s character. It was a minor part of the overall story line.”¹¹ The bisexual character, C.J., was given a lesbian former lover in one fall 1991 episode, but at the end of the spring season, she was embarking on an affair with a straight man. After the season ended, she, too, left the show.

In the early 1990s, three successful television series made history by introducing lesbian or gay characters with continuing, if secondary roles:

- *Roseanne* brought an openly gay boss, Leon Carp, and a bisexual friend, Nancy, into Roseanne’s close circle.
- *Northern Exposure* told the story of the founding of the fictional town of Cicely, Alaska (the setting of the series) by lesbian lovers Roslyn and Cicely. The series also introduced the secondary characters of Ron and Erick, a gay couple who owned a bed and breakfast inn.
- *Melrose Place*, the twentysomething ensemble show, featured a gay man, Matt Fielding, among the residents of a West Hollywood apartment complex. His sexual orientation was mentioned in the prepremiere publicity but was practically invisible in the show. He spent most of his time hanging out with his straight friends.
- *Friends*, the ratings leader of the 1994-95 and 1995-96 season (especially among twentysomething viewers), included as secondary characters the lesbian ex-wife of a central “friend” and her lover.

In 1994, ABC Television refused to air an episode of the number-one rated *Roseanne* because it included a kiss between Roseanne and a lesbian character. *Roseanne*’s staff was told by ABC officials that “a woman cannot kiss a woman. It is bad for the kids to see...”¹² The announcement set off a predictable storm of publicity and debate. ABC finally agreed to air the program and began to promote it heavily as the “lesbian kiss” episode. When it aired, it was carried by all but two ABC affiliates, attracted a record audience, and resulted in approximately 100 calls to the network, most of them positive.¹³

What did those 32 million viewers see? First, a parental advisory that the show “deals with mature sex themes and may not be appropriate for young viewers.” The show itself showed Roseanne proving how cool she was by insisting that she accompany Nancy and her new girlfriend to a gay bar. She dragged her sister Jackie along. The “climax” of the evening occurred when the new girlfriend came on to Roseanne and kissed her. The rest of the episode focused on Roseanne’s discomfort as she confronted the realization that she was not as cool as she thought she was. “But she doesn’t get angry. Instead she talks out the incident with her husband, in an honest conversation that allows them to vent both their blind fears and erotic curiosity about homosexuality even as they unapologetically reaffirm the strength of their heterosexual marriage.”¹⁴

The furor over Roseanne’s kiss had barely subsided when the airways were roiled by the threat of another

assault on traditional family values. Erick and Ron, the gay innkeepers on *Northern Exposure*, decided to get married—a religious ceremony, not a legal one—and the wedding occupied a large portion of an episode. The camera cut away from the two men just as they were pronounced “married” and returned only after they apparently had embraced, thus pointedly not showing the one visual image virtually every media wedding includes.

Television’s “season of the kiss” came to an end in May 1994 with the finale of *Melrose Place*. A visiting man (the best friend of main character Billy Campbell) fell for the gay character, Matt Fielding. A scene was shot in which the two kissed before retiring to separate beds. As the producer told the press, the scene was included to show a gay man who had a well-rounded life. Conservative critics protested and threatened a boycott. Once again, the industry blinked and tried to split the difference. When the episode aired, the two gay men were shown saying goodnight, shaking hands, giving each other a meaningful look and moving toward each other. Then the shot cut to Billy Campbell looking through the blinds of his apartment with a shocked expression. He hadn’t known his best friend was gay. The scene then cut back to the couple as they moved apart. After several disastrous attempts at a relationship—one boyfriend announced that he was HIV-positive and disappeared, the next framed Matt for murder—in 1995-96 Matt was given a boyfriend who moved in with him, but they have never been shown expressing physical affection for each other.

The fondness for weddings as a plotline for secondary gay characters continues to bemuse television script writers, and by February 1996, viewers witnessed episodes in which gay men (*Roseanne*) and lesbians (*Friends*) are married. Once again, the most predictable cliché of media weddings—the kiss—is avoided by cutting away at the climactic moment.

Daytime soap operas, in this as in other topics, have been more adventurous than prime-time television. In the summer of 1992, the daytime television serial *One Life to Live* ran the longest and most complex television narrative dealing with a lesbian or gay character. Billy Douglas was a high school student who had recently moved to Llanview (the fictional small town outside Philadelphia where the soap takes place) and had become a star athlete and class president. When Billy confided, first to his best friend and then to his minister, that he was gay, he set off a series of plot twists that differed from the usual soap opera complications in that they exposed homophobia and AIDS-phobia among the residents of Llanview and thus offered the characters—and the audience—an opportunity to address topics that media in the United States have generally preferred to ignore.

In the fall of 1995, *All My Children* initiated an even more complex gay theme, when a high school teacher (and former marine/athlete) came out to his history class, igniting

a volatile plot that, by early 1996, had the teacher fired by the school board, supported by demonstrating students, and shot at while appearing on a local television talk show. But, despite their willingness to explore such hot-button issues as openly gay teens, or teachers, in both soap operas, the gay characters are, once again, isolated individuals in an otherwise completely straight environment. They have no lesbian or gay friends, allies, or lovers, and, thus, they are isolated.

Another television format that has proved hospitable to lesbian and gay people is the daytime talk show pioneered by Phil Donahue in the late 1970s. By the early 1990s there were numerous talk shows running every day on broadcast and cable channels. One thing these shows have in common is that they all schedule lesbian and gay guests and themes with great frequency, especially during the crucial sweeps months. The hosts and, increasingly, the studio audiences, can be counted on to take a liberal view toward sexual minorities—they are especially fascinated with transgendered people of any sort—and to endorse a “live and let live” attitude toward homosexuality.

By the 1980s it is safe to say that most Americans were more likely to encounter an openly lesbian or gay person on daytime television talk shows than anywhere else in our public culture, and they provide probably the only context in which gay people can speak for themselves in the mainstream mass media. The talk shows have also reduced their reliance on “experts” brought out to “explain” lesbian and gay guests to the audience (or to themselves), and they are also less likely than in the past to feel the need to include an anti-gay voice for “balance” when scheduling lesbian or gay guests.

IT’S NOT ONLY ENTERTAINMENT

The rules of the traditional mass media game have a double impact on gays and lesbians. Not only do they show them as weak and silly, or evil and corrupt, but they exclude and deny the existence of normal, unexceptional (or exceptional) men and women. The stereotypic depiction of lesbians and gay men as abnormal, and the suppression of positive or even “unexceptional” portrayals serves to maintain and police the boundaries of the moral order. It encourages the majority to stay on their gender-defined reservation, and tries to keep the minority quietly hidden out of sight.

The battlefield of American popular culture is likely to remain active for the foreseeable future as the forces of conservatism continue their attempts to push gays and lesbians back to the mythical past of “traditional family values” and as the mainstream media, in their search for large and demographically lucrative audiences, inch cautiously toward a more accurate reflection of contemporary realities.

In this seesawing progress, the lesbian and gay community finds itself simultaneously sought out by marketers and scapegoated by opportunistic preachers.

Gay advocates and enemies agree on one thing: The media are more than mere entertainment. The mass media that tell most of the stories to most of the people most of the time¹⁵ are slowly becoming more inclusive and accepting of diversity, even while they shield their timid advances under the cloak of parental advisories.

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EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION HOTLINE: 800/584-9911

A group of reproductive health professionals have formed an Emergency Contraception Hotline—800/584-9911—to give people information about preventing pregnancy after unprotected sexual relations.

Operated by the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, the Emergency Hotline started taking calls in February to provide individuals with information about emergency contraception and the names and telephone numbers of local health care providers who can prescribe such contraception. In its first 10 days of operation, the Hotline averaged over 400 calls a day.

"With the Hotline, everyone can now obtain fast, free information and access to emergency contraception, saving countless hours of worry and a multitude of unplanned pregnancies," said Beverly Winikoff, M.D., chair of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project.

The Hotline is available 24 hours a day in both English and Spanish and is available toll-free nationwide. The directory of providers is also accessible on the World Wide Web at <http://opr.princeton.edu/ec/ec.html>.

For more information: Emergency Contraception Hotline, P.O. Box 33344, Washington, DC 20033.

NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT: MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MESSAGES IN THE MEDIA

By Gina Ogden, Ph.D.
Sexuality Therapist and Author
Cambridge, MA

As a professional in the field of human sexuality, there is an excellent chance you will have the opportunity—or the need—to appear as an expert on radio or television.

Although it is true that both sexologists¹ and psychologists,² have warned therapists and educators to steer clear of sensational media, it is also true that just saying no will not make the power of the media go away. As we near the millennium, this culture is shaped by talk radio with its millions of listeners, and even more so by television, with its many millions.³ Consider that in America today, there are more homes with television sets than running water.⁴ Americans watch an average of seven hours of television a day,⁵ and an estimated two-thirds report that television provides most of their daily information.⁶ Many of the messages about sexuality that radio and television inexorably transmit are erotophobic⁷ and homophobic,⁸ and perpetuate a double-standard, in which male locker-room attitudes prevail.⁹

As a sexuality professional, you can use your expertise to counteract media stereotypes and coercions. Whenever you report on research, promote a book, or comment on current lifestyles or events, you can communicate accurate, up-to-date, relevant, positive information on sexuality to the public. To make the most of your messages on radio and television, you need to be clear about your goals and able to craft your messages as both interesting and newsworthy.¹⁰ Moreover, you need to know how these media function so you can work with them and not at cross purposes.

To this end, the Task Force for Responsible Reporting of Sexual Issues in the Media was formed in September 1995. Comprised of media producers and members of major sexuality organizations, its mission is to provide information and solidarity so that sexuality professionals can gain the negotiating and presentation skills necessary to deal with the complex world of the media. The following Guidelines are compiled by the Task Force and are informed by the media manual of the American Psychological Association¹¹ and the media chapter of the *Christian Coalition Leadership Manual*.¹²

This is the first of a two-part series on working with the media. Dr. Ogden will focus on magazines and newspapers in the June-July issue of the SIECUS Report. — Editor

GUIDELINES FOR TELEVISION APPEARANCES

Here is a rundown of the kinds of television shows on which you're most likely to appear as a sexuality expert.

Panel Talk Shows. These last an hour—typically in seven segments with commercial breaks—and depend heavily on controversy to incite audience participation. They are ordinarily “taped live” for future broadcast, usually without editing. There are often many panelists, and sometimes more than one expert. Veterans of these shows warn that to get your message out, you may have to repeatedly interrupt both panelists and host.

Interview Shows. These include the morning magazine shows where you get four to eight minutes. The segments are usually shot live—that is, once the cameras roll, you're on the air. The host (or hosts—usually male and female) typically rivet their focus politely on you, though when the subject is sexuality, they can act uncomfortable, especially if they're winging it without having done their homework. Also, if the hosts' points of view differ, they can catch you in a rapid crossfire.

News Shows. These are pretty much straight reporting—live or taped—shot in a studio or on site. Or the news team may appear at your office, complete with sound truck and cables. The producer (who may also be the interviewer) may or may not know your work but is interested in picking out the most newsworthy elements—in sound-bite morsels.

Documentaries and Specials. These include network and public television features. Your part in their plan may be big or little. You may be interviewed in the studio, but it is more likely that a crew will arrive on location and spend many hours taping you, your colleagues, your office, your computer, whatever they think is interesting. It is a huge commitment of time, reports one colleague, who says that eight hours of taping yielded approximately six minutes (but that's six *quality* minutes) on an hour-long special.

Preparing to Go On Television

While some people are television naturals, others need many hours of practice until they appear natural. Professional media training can help, if you have the time, money, and inclination. Whether or not you opt for formal training, read Chapter 7 of the *Christian Coalition Leadership Manual*, which offers, among other information, detailed techniques for creating a sound bite and for doggedly pursuing your message in the face of opposition.

Be Clear About Your Goals and Expectations. Are you promoting a book? Are you commenting on research? Are you reaching for five minutes of fame? Are you moved to appear on television *simply because it's there?*

Decide On Your Message. Then rehearse until it is second nature. Most messages need 30 seconds or less, especially in interviews that will be edited. The latest talk-show statistics show that the average expert comment is 13 seconds long.¹³

Pick a few important points (most audiences remember only three) and know a colorful story about each of them. Human interest is what moves audiences.

Know your research and citations, but don't think you have to memorize every last fact. If you're asked something you don't know, say so, and offer to provide information to the studio as soon as possible.

Develop the Art of the Sound Bite. Boil your major points down to phrases that will fit on bumper stickers¹⁴—and make them as thought provoking as possible (“Women have earned the right to say no to abuse, but not the right to say yes to pleasure”). This is the kind of phrase that will get an interviewer's attention. Elaborate as time permits.

A simple sound-bite device is to repeat the heart of the question before you give your answer. This will keep your remarks tightly in context. It will also lend them clarity and therefore authority. For instance:

Q: Can you comment on why men have a stronger sex drive?

A: My research on women's and men's sexual desire shows that (sound bite). Let me give you an example of what my sample reports about desire differences (sound bite).

Once you have piqued the imagination of the interviewer, he or she may ask you to continue talking, but on a taped news show, only your sound bites will be aired.

Provide Written Materials or Fact Sheets. Make them succinct. These will help shape the show. You will get a better interview on the air if the producer has an idea of what you know, what you talk about, and what you think is important.

Decide How (and If) You Will Answer Personal Questions. Your sexual values and behaviors may never

become an issue on-camera, but it is important to think through any possible questions that might arise so you will not be caught in a defensive (or indefensible) position. If your personal lifestyle is part of your message, decide exactly how you will present it to make the impact you want.

Dress to Reflect Who You Are. Ask yourself how you want people to perceive you—professional, knowledgeable, therapeutic—and appear accordingly. Wear some color but not patterns that will distract the viewer (television lights are not like those in your living room—they can cause white to act like a reflector and red to bleed). Be conservative about jewelry—make sure earrings don't jangle and beads won't clank against a clip-on microphone. Let your hairstyle and makeup project health and vitality.

Redirect Performance Anxiety into Positive Energy.

Pounding heart, shaking hands, dry mouth, shortness of breath, memory lapses—if these lurch out of control on camera, you're in trouble. Conventional wisdom says “relax.” But that may be impossible. Besides, to come across as alive and upbeat on the air requires a great deal of energy—you don't want to be so calm you put your interviewer and audience to sleep. Every performer experiences some degree of anxiety—the trick is to make it work for you so that you feel vital, confident, and in command of your material.

First, it is important to recognize a couple of not generally acknowledged facts: (1) Anxiety is energy, and you can use it to energize yourself; (2) the signs of anxiety are essentially the same as the signs of excitement. So, instead of trying to get rid of your free-flowing anxiety, reframe it as the enthusiasm you need for a dynamic television presence. Many seasoned performers use both breathing and visualization techniques:

Practice breathing into your shaking hands and pounding heart to connect them to the rest of your body.

Practice visualizing a situation about which you feel genuinely excited and delighted, such as welcoming honored guests to a party. You will radiate positive warmth that will spill over into living rooms around the country.

Use Professional Ethics. Respect confidentiality. Speak for yourself and not for all sexologists. State opinions as opinions and not as facts. Don't trash those who disagree. Be aware that you and the show may have different standards and priorities about going public with information about sexuality. Ask the producer to reassure you that the show will not intentionally surprise or embarrass you or the guests.

Don't Do Therapy On the Air. And never bring your clients to appear on the air with you. If a guest or caller indicates a need for therapy, give information about the

American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT). One researcher simply thanks callers for raising an important point, states that she is not a therapist and never gives advice. She then proceeds to comment on the social ramifications of the issue raised.

During the Preinterview

From the moment that a producer calls to find out if you are available for a show, you have a three-fold task: (1) to sell yourself to the producer—present your message with energy and enthusiasm, just as if you are on the air; (2) to determine the show's format and focus and exactly what the show expects from you; and 3) to be clear about what you expect from appearing on the show.

Asking questions and negotiating details establishes you as a professional, even though you may not get all that you request. Even if a producer promises something, understand that each show is different, and that last-minute changes are a regular occurrence on the media.

Promote Yourself. If it is appropriate, ask that a photo of your book jacket be shown at least once, and that you be chyroned as the author. (A chyron is the written label flashed on the screen as you appear.)

Promote Information About Sexuality. Give the producer the general numbers for the major sexological organizations and ask that appropriate information be chyroned: SIECUS—212/819-9770; AASECT and SSSS (The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality)—319/895-8407.

Determine Expenses. Although most shows do not pay experts, some cover air and/or ground transportation, hotel, and meals. Get agreements in writing, if possible.

Tailor Your Questions to Different Formats. Many of the details you need to clear with the producer depend on the show's format:

Questions to ask the producer for panel talk shows:

- Who is the primary viewing audience?
- When will the show air?
- Are you the only expert on the show?
- Who are the hosts, the panelists, the audience members? What are their perspectives? Which organizations do they represent? Why were they chosen? What controversy is expected?
- When will you see the script? Ask for it in advance—sometimes a producer will fax it to you.
- Will you be able to meet with each of the participants before the show?

- Will you have at least three minutes to present information on the air before taking questions from the audience?
- Will you sit on the panel with the hosts, or in the audience?
- Will you be introduced early in the show and called upon several times, including in the final segment?
- Will you be miked throughout the show?

Questions to ask the producer for interview shows:

- Who is the primary viewing audience?
- How do the hosts feel about your subject?
- What time slot will you have? How many segments? If you're scheduled in the first half-hour and the hosts like you, you may stay on for the next segment. If you're slated for the last 10 minutes, you could get bumped.
- Will there be call-ins from the audience? If so, how will they be screened so you won't have to deal with harassing calls on the air?
- Is there a list of appropriate local therapists or organizations available for distressed callers?

Questions to ask the producer for news shows:

- Who is the primary viewing audience?
- What other subjects will be covered in that time slot? You don't want to follow news that will make your research seem insensitive or inappropriate.
- Would written summaries of your work help?
- Will your remarks be taped and edited? If so, do your best to speak in sound bites to increase your chances of being remembered and reduce your chances of being quoted out of context.

Questions to ask the producer for documentaries and specials:

- Who is the primary viewing audience?
- What is the show's objective and the producer's position on your subject? Knowing this gives you a better chance of shaping your message to fit the parameters, and of having your message aired.
- What should the audience learn from you?
- Will you see a preview of the show before it airs?
- Will the producer sign a Non-Use contract—to edit out materials that you or your colleagues find compromising?

At the Show

Arrive A Half Hour Before Airtime. (Some shows may ask you to come earlier.) Announce yourself at the front desk. When the producer or intern comes to get you, give her a blank videotape so a staff member can tape the show for you. She will then take you to the greenroom (the waiting room for guests and experts) where there will probably be doughnuts or sandwiches and coffee. Bring decaffeinated teabags if you don't want to pump caffeine into your bloodstream.

Use Your Greenroom Time Wisely. While you are waiting:

Stay focused on your all-important message.

Apply your makeup unless the show has a makeup artist. Even if you don't normally wear makeup, lightly powder your face just before you go on—otherwise, the lights could make you glisten. Some shows provide a hairdresser and makeup artist. Some do makeup but not hair. Many shows have a dressing room with hairdryers and lights that approximate television lights so that you can do yourself. Other shows hand you a key and send you down the hall to the public bathroom. During the preinterview, ask about the facilities.

Make a point of meeting the other guests and making alliances with them, especially if you are the expert on a panel show.

Ask the intern or producer to settle your expenses and check your chyron for accuracy.

You may be asked to sign a release (usually that you allow your performance to be used and that you will not sue the show). Read it carefully before signing.

Stay Focused In the Studio and On the Set. Once the producer or intern leads you into the studio:

Remain totally silent if another segment is in progress and take care not to trip on the cables all over the floor.

Have a tissue handy. The set can be colder than the greenroom, and your nose might run.

Trust the crew. They will lead you to the set, attach a mike to you, and voice-test it.

As soon as you are seated and miked, act as if you are on the air. If you suck your teeth or make an off-the-cuff remark, that is the exact moment the camera will zoom in to cameo you for posterity.

Focus on your message. Build energy. Visualize. Breathe—out as well as in (holding your breath magnifies anxiety).

On the Air

Be Aware of How You Come Across On-Camera. Sit up straight, focus on the person interviewing you and let the cameras find you—though if you know exactly where your front-face camera is, and can see that the red light is on, it is very effective to look directly at the lens to make your most significant point.

Don't try to sneak a glimpse of yourself on the monitor across the studio. You will come across as shifty-eyed.

If you are being interviewed by remote and have an audio "bug" in one ear, don't repeatedly dart your eyes to that side when the interviewer speaks to you.

Speak Authoritatively. Deliver your major points when the host first introduces you. Then, don't hesitate to interject when you have something meaningful to say. If you aren't

asked directly, lead up to your comments with phrases like: "Another important issue (point, fact) relating to (this topic) is..." or "I have something more I'd like to add."

If There Is Controversy...Smile. Controversy is what makes television ratings go up. Be pleasant and firm. Do not scream, yell or stamp. Make your points again and again, whenever you have the opportunity.

Suppose things get ugly—the show does something unethical such as humiliating a guest or audience member? You can use an ugly situation to make a dramatic point: "For you women out there watching, this is what abuse looks like. If this kind of thing happens to you, talk with your friends about it, talk with people you trust..."¹⁵

You can also get up and walk out at any time. First, speak up on the air to express your disapproval. Then, if you decide you should no longer dignify the show with your presence, explain in a clear, succinct statement why you are leaving, unhook your mike and leave. You might want to rehearse some scenarios. It takes a great deal of confidence to reframe abusive messages or walk out of a show in mid-stream. Things move so fast when the camera is on that the tendency is to stay there and argue, or silently seethe.

GUIDELINES FOR RADIO APPEARANCES

Many of the television guidelines apply to radio, everything from ethics to performance anxiety, to handling call-ins. As in television, you will want to prepare conversational material with interesting stories to back up statistics. And you will immediately want to establish a friendly relationship with host and callers, listen carefully, address them by name, and thank them. But there are differences: It is less likely that you have a preinterview in which you have to sell yourself. And, of course, you don't have to worry about how you look.

Radio interviews range from two to 30 minutes, and sometimes more, depending on the format. You need to decide if your message is appropriate for a news show or a public radio and university audience—and if you are willing to mix it up on talk radio and drive-time shows with deejays. Here are some of the kinds of shows you might be on:

News Shows. These are usually quick spots. Prepare pithy, newsworthy sound bites.

Public Radio and University Stations. Here, you will have ample time to outline your ideas in more than sound-bite fashion. Prepare for the host to be familiar with your work and for callers to ask intelligent questions.

Talk Radio. The call-ins define these programs, and audience opinions are likely to be more important to the host than

yours are. The host may have read only the jacket of your book, and may never ask direct questions about your work.

Be prepared to initiate information and remain pleasant and upbeat without compromising yourself or your message. If there are sexist jokes, gently but firmly point out other ways to see things.

These shows routinely screen out obscene calls, so you can feel safe about answering callers' questions—which can range from homosexuality to orgasm to abuse. Validate callers' desires for solutions to their problems, and suggest they seek help from AASECT, their local Women's Center, AIDS Action Center, or whatever is relevant.

Note that many talk-radio stations are controlled by the far right. If you are harassed on the air, reframe the conversation or leave, as described at the end of the "Guidelines for Television Appearances."

STUDIO INTERVIEWS

Arrive about 20 minutes before airtime and announce yourself at the front desk. A producer or intern will take you to the greenroom or directly into the studio. Give the producer an audiotape so the staff can record the show for you.

Ask for a glass of water. Sip some before you start speaking so your voice doesn't sound as if you just woke up.

In the studio, you will be seated at your own microphone. Keep it about two inches from your mouth and be aware that it magnifies every sound. Dangling jewelry or rustling papers can make listeners think you are talking through hurricane-force winds.

Keep your eye on the host or producer for hand signals, like: "Five seconds to air time" or "Stop talking now" (forefinger drawn across the throat).

Use commercial breaks to chat with the host about the points you would like to make next.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Many radio interviews are conducted by phone in your home or office. Make yourself a "phoner" spot where you won't be disturbed, and where you can comfortably take notes. Have a glass of water nearby along with a tape recorder if you plan to record the interview. If you expect to spend a lot of time on phone interviews, invest in a headset. It frees your hands and saves your neck from developing a permanent crick.

The producer will call you several minutes before you are scheduled, and keep you on hold until you are introduced. If the interview is working well, the producer may ask if you can keep going for another seven minutes—or another two hours. You can always say no. But if it is okay, pour yourself another glass of water and go for it.

Whether you are on the air with wake-up rock music, daytime chatters, or the late-night crowd, always bear in mind that there are people out there listening. For many of

them, talk radio is the major source of information about sexual attitudes and behaviors. Keep your messages respectful, clear, and engaging. You never know how far they may fly or where they may take root.

This article was written in collaboration with the Task Force for Responsible Reporting of Sexual Issues in the Media: Carol Autori, Ph.D., Bob Berkowitz, Ph.D., Eli Coleman, Ph.D., John H. Gagnon, Ph.D., Vickie M. Mays, Ph.D., June Machover Reinisch, Ph.D., Howard H. Ruppel, Jr., Ph.D., Pepper Schwartz, Ph.D., and Judith H. Seifer, Ph.D. — Editor

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TOY STORY: A LOOK INTO THE GENDER-STEREOTYPED WORLD OF CHILDREN'S CATALOGS

Debra W. Haffner, M.P.H., SIECUS President
with Megan Casselman

As many of you know, I am the proud mother of a two-year-old son and a ten-year-old daughter. In our home, we strive to raise our children with a strong sense of their gender identity while at the same time not limiting them with stereotypes about what is masculine or feminine.

This Christmas, our home was deluged with toy catalogs. As I flipped through them, I was struck by the outdated images of boys and girls. Pink pages featured toys for girls; blue pages, toys for boys. In most, girls played with dolls while boys constructed buildings or drove trucks and cars. I was both amused and amazed that such images are at the center of marketing strategies.

It was at this point that I decided to conduct a simple analysis of toy catalogs. I enlisted the help of Megan Casselman, a friend who works with pre-school children. First, we selected catalogs from nine toy companies.* Then we used the photographs in each catalog to tabulate the total number of children, their demographic composition, the pairing of playmates, and the types of toys they were enjoying.

Catalogs included children from many racial/ethnic backgrounds. A total of 566 children—275 boys and 291 girls—were in the catalogs, with an average of 63 children per catalog. They were from a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds. In fact, such diversity was evident in 7 to 26 percent of all photos. As far as we could ascertain from the photos, a total of 10 percent were African-American, 6 percent were Asian-American, and 2 percent were of Hispanic heritage. No catalogs showed a boy or girl with a noticeable physical disability. One catalog (*Sensational Beginnings*) had one picture of a child with Downs Syndrome.

We were pleasantly surprised to find a large number of pictures where girls and boys played together. When more than one child was in a picture, 15 percent were of girls playing with other girls; 15 percent were of boys playing with other boys; and 69 percent were of boys and girls playing together. Boys and girls were most often shown playing together with toys not classified by gender stereotypes (balls, puppets, outdoor play equipment, mazes, and trampolines). Pairs of girls usually played with dolls, dress-up clothes, and

art projects; pairs of boys with cars, trains, building equipment, and traditional dress-up clothes. Children of differing ethnic backgrounds rarely played together. In fact, only 18 percent of all pictures of children playing together were of children from different ethnic backgrounds.

All catalogs reinforced gender stereotypes. Girls and boys were shown playing with very different toys. Dolls, household items, and shopping toys were almost exclusively for girls while cars, trucks, and trains were almost exclusively for boys. No girls played with erector sets. The only toy which was used equally by boys and girls were toy musical instruments. Two of the catalogs (*Childcraft* and *Lilly's Kids*) actually color coded their pages: pink for girls and primary colors for boys.

Girls were overwhelmingly shown with dolls and household toys. In fact, 95 percent of the pictures of dolls showed a girl. A boy played with a doll in only one catalog (*Hearth Song*). Girls were shown in 65 percent of the photos of household items such as irons, vacuums, and shopping carts. Boys were shown in 35 percent. Girls were also predominant in photographs showing children playing with art-related toys.

They were in 81 percent of the pictures while boys were in 46 percent.

Both boys and girls were shown in "dress-up" clothes, although the type of clothing was very much based on gender stereotypes. Boys wore cowboy suits, safari outfits, pirate costumes, and firefighter/police uniforms while girls dressed up as glamorous women, princesses, and nurses. Girls were, however, given a little more flexibility than boys. They wore less traditional clothes—doctor and firefighter uniforms—in 22 percent of the "dress-up" photos while boys were never shown in anything but traditional male outfits.

Eighty-one percent of the sports pictures depicted boys. In fact, only boys were shown playing basketball, hockey, soccer, baseball, and boxing. When shown (35 percent of the photos), girls jumped rope or exercised on a gym mat or pull-up bar. The only sports featuring boys and girls were tennis, swimming, and jumping on a trampoline.

Boys dominated in many of the categories where both genders were represented. They were in 62 percent of the

*"Play helps
children prepare
for their
future adult
roles."*

photos marketing academic toys; girls were in 51 percent. They were in 72 percent of the photos of outdoor equipment (swings, jungle gyms, and bouncers); girls were in 57 percent. They were in 65 percent of the photos of building sets and blocks; girls were in 53 percent.

Of interest, adults, by and large, did not appear in the toy catalogs with their children. There were only three photos of adults playing with children. The *Childcraft* catalog did include a photo of a mother and son using a cooking kit and a photo of a father and daughter working on an art project.

CONCLUSION

Play helps prepare children for their future adult roles. In today's (and, one hopes, tomorrow's) world both men and women will not only nurture their children but will also shop, cook, and take care of their homes. Both men and women drive cars, design buildings, excel at sports, and succeed in careers not limited by gender. Everyone has a part

in helping make certain that today's parents prepare their children for that world and not the gender-stereotyped world of the toy catalogs. *Caveat emptor!*

*LIST OF SURVEYED CATALOGS

Adventures for Children

Childcraft

Constructive Playthings

Hand in Hand

Hearth Song

Lilly's Kids

Toys To Grow On

Troll Learn & Play

Sensational Beginnings

Megan Casselman works with pre-school children and is a specialist in communication disorders.

TEENS KNOW MORE ABOUT STDs THAN ADULTS, GALLUP STUDY SHOWS

American teenagers know more than adults about some aspects of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), but neither group demonstrates much knowledge about them, according to a recent Gallup Organization study commissioned by the American Social Health Association (ASHA).

Teenagers are more likely than adults to know that STDs are widely prevalent, that some STDs other than HIV are incurable and that some STDs have no symptoms, the study revealed. However, fewer teens than adults were able to name an STD other than HIV.

Other findings of the study were:

- 43 percent of adults and 30 percent of teens know someone who has had an STD.

- Schools are increasingly important as primary educators about STDs. Two-thirds of teens first learned about STDs in school, as compared with 36 percent of adults.
- Over half of adults and over one-third of teens said their health care providers spend "no time at all" discussing STDs with them.

Conducted by the Gallup Organization in the spring of 1995, the survey included about 1,000 adults and 500 teenagers in the United States. For the study, researchers used a standardized questionnaire administered in phone interviews. The survey design has a sampling error of plus or minus three percent.

For more information: ASHA, Dept. NSL, P.O. Box 13827, RTP, NC 27709.

MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MORE REALISTIC, ACCURATE IMAGES CONCERNING SEXUALITY

The National Coalition to Support Sexuality Education recommends that the media use their influence to convey more realistic, medically accurate, and health-promoting ideas and images concerning sexuality.

It has long been recognized that the media help shape the attitude of the public—particularly young people—on a myriad of topics. The media play a major role in educating Americans about sexuality, gender roles, and sexual behaviors.

Sexual images and references may be commonplace in the media, but sexuality is much broader than the media typically portray. Human sexuality encompasses the sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of individuals. It deals with one's roles, identity, personality; with individual thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and relationships—as well as one's body. Sexual health encompasses sexual development and reproductive health, as well as such characteristics as the ability to develop and maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships, to appreciate one's own body, to interact with both genders in respectful and appropriate ways, and to express affection, love, and intimacy in ways consistent with one's own values.

Becoming a sexually healthy adult is a key developmental task of adolescence. The media can enhance adolescent sexual health by communicating accurate information and portraying realistic situations. The media provide opportunities for adolescents to gain clearer insights into their own sexuality and to make more responsible decisions about their behavior.

We, the undersigned members of the National Coalition to Support Sexuality Education, strongly encourage writers, producers, film makers, programming executives, performers and program hosts, reporters, advertising professionals, Internet access providers, and others to incorporate the following into their work whenever possible:

SEXUALLY HEALTHY BEHAVIOR

- When possible and appropriate, include the portrayal of effective communication about sexuality and relationships between children and their parents or other trusted adults.
- Present the choice of abstinence from sexual intercourse from the point of view of characters knowledgeable and comfortable with their sexuality, but clear about their

decision to postpone this sexual behavior for reasons of health, emotional maturity, or personal ethics. Portray young people refusing unwanted sexual advances in order to maintain their decision about abstinence.

- Show typical sexual interactions between people as verbally and physically respectful, non-exploitive and promoting gender equity.
- Suggest intimate behaviors other than intercourse to inform the public about the possibility of alternative, pleasurable, consensual, and responsible sexual activity.
- Recognize and show that the healthier sexual encounters are anticipated events, not spur-of-the-moment responses to the heat of passion. Model communication about upcoming sexual encounters, including expressions of partners' wishes and boundaries.
- When describing, alluding to, or portraying sexual intercourse, include steps that should be taken for prevention, such as using contraceptives and condoms to prevent unwanted pregnancy and information about the full spectrum of sexually transmitted diseases.
- When an unprotected sexual encounter results in negative consequences, realistically portray or refer to the possible, specific, short- and long-term repercussions of the individual's decision-making process.

SENSITIVITY TO DIVERSITY

- Eliminate stereotypes and prejudices about sexuality and sexual behaviors; for example, eliminate the notion that only "beautiful people" have sexual relationships, that sexual interaction always leads to intercourse, or that all adolescents have intercourse.
- Provide diverse and positive representations of the scope of people who express their sexuality in caring, consensual, and responsible ways; for example, when possible and appropriate, include disabled adults, older adults, adolescents, gay men, and lesbians.
- Provide more and positive views of a diverse range of body types and sizes.

ACCURATE INFORMATION

- Lift barriers to contraceptive and condom product advertising.
- Promote responsible sexual adolescent behavior by using articulate characters that teens can identify with in order to highlight success stories where teens take appropriate actions, make healthy decisions, and follow through with them—such as exercising self-control, and making plans and setting goals for their lives.
- Provide ways for young people to obtain additional information about sexuality and related issues, such as by listing addresses and telephone numbers of public health organizations and support groups in such places as public service announcements; trailers at the end of sitcoms, daytime television programs, music videos, and news programs; mailing inserts in magazines and age-appropriate comic books; computer e-mail or subject-related bulletin boards; and toll-free phone numbers before, during, or after subject-related programming.

Signed by:

AIDS Action Council
Advocates for Youth
American Association of Sex Educators,
Counselors, and Therapists
American Counseling Association
American Jewish Congress—
Commission for Women's Equality
American Medical Association—
Department of Adolescent Health
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American School Health Association
American Social Health Association
Association for the Advancement of Health Education

Association for Sex Education and Training
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
AVSC, International
Catholics for a Free Choice
Federation of Behavioral, Psychological,
and Cognitive Sciences
Gay and Lesbian Medical Association
Girls, Incorporated
Hetrick-Martin Institute
Human Rights Campaign
National Abortion Federation
National Abortion and Reproductive Rights
Action League
National Asian Women's Health Organization
National Association of School Psychologists
National Council of the Churches of Christ
National Education Association—
Health Information Network
National Lesbian and Gay Health Association
National Minority AIDS Council
National Native American AIDS Prevention Center
National Resource Center for Youth Services
National Women's Law Center
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Sexuality Information and Education Council
of the United States
Society for the Scientific Study of Sex
The Alan Guttmacher Institute
Unitarian Universalist Association
University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education
Zero Population Growth, Incorporated

April 1996

SIECUS NEEDS YOUR HELP TO DEVELOP NEW "HARD-TO-TEACH TOPICS" MANUAL

SIECUS has convened a task force to help develop a new manual on lesson plans for hard-to-teach topics in sexuality education. The task force will address subjects that are often omitted from educational curricula, including: sexual behavior; sexual identity and orientation; condom use; safer sex; abstinence; pregnancy options; sexuality and society; and diversity. If you have any exercises, handouts, overheads, or other materials on these topics, SIECUS is eager to review them for possible inclusion. Send materials to SIECUS, 130 West 42nd Street, Suite 350, New York, NY 10036 or via e-mail (SIECUS@SIECUS.org) to the attention of Leslie Kantor.

**Relearning Touch:
Healing Techniques
for Couples**

45 minutes, 1995

Independent Video Services
401 East 10th Avenue
Suite 160
Eugene, OR 97401
800/678-3455

Relearning Touch is a video designed to help couples whose lives have been affected by sexual abuse. It presents a series of exercises for survivors of sexual abuse and their partners to foster emotional intimacy, and eventually, promote healthy sexual intimacy.

These exercises were developed by Wendy Maltz, M.S.W., a therapist and author, who appears in the video along with three couples who have used the exercises to improve their relationships and sexual intimacy. To a large extent, it is the brave and extraordinarily honest comments of these couples that make this video compelling and powerful.

The video presents the series of exercises through dramatizations in which a heterosexual couple model the procedures. These demonstrations should help viewers demystify and become more comfortable with the techniques. Ms. Maltz advises that couples exploring the *Relearning Touch* exercises take a "sexual vacation" during this time so that they can escape any negative patterns of sexual intimacy.

The exercises progress from playful routines like hand clapping to more sensual exercises like body massage. In each, the survivor of abuse is instructed to initiate the exercise so that he or she has a sense of control. At first, the exercises appear simplistic. And, in fact, all of the couples interviewed voice skepticism about the exercises at one time or another.

It soon becomes clear, however, that there is far more to the exercises than is initially apparent. Indeed, they help couples explore issues of communication, power dynamics, and control as well as feelings of respect and love. For one woman who is an incest survivor, the simple hand-clapping

exercise allows her to discover that touch can be "playful" and "fun" and need not always lead to sexual intimacy. In another exercise, a couple swings a pen back and forth, with the abuse survivor guiding the direction. For one woman, the way her husband "grabs the pen" stirs up feelings that her husband "always needs to take over." In other cases, the exercises help partners get in touch with nurturing and loving feelings. In one case, a woman reflects upon an exercise in which she and her husband were instructed to face one another, place a hand on each other's heart, and think about the things they loved about one another. The woman recalls looking at her husband's hand and realizing that it was a very familiar hand, not a frightening one. She says, "I thought this is a good hand, this is a gentle hand. This is a hand of friendship."

In many ways *Relearning Touch* is an inspiring video because of the hope it engenders. The stories are often profoundly moving. In one case, a woman who is an incest survivor recalls that she began the exercises feeling that "sex was extremely painful." Upon completing the programs, she says she feels desire for her husband for the first time. "It is a strange feeling," she says. "It is a wonderful feeling."

This review was a collaborative effort of SIECUS staff members, including Carolyn Patierno, Cecily Criminale, Evan Harris, Ruth Mayer, and Monica Rodriguez.

Growing Up Gay and Lesbian

57 minutes, 1993

Homophobia in the Workplace

58 minutes, 1993

Motivational Media
8430 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, Ca 90069
800/848-2702
\$24.95 each

I must admit I am a biased reviewer. Brian McNaught is a dear friend and a colleague. Given this fact, I want to react to the videos

through the eyes of the thousands of participants who watch Brian in person and in his videos.

In *Growing Up Gay and Lesbian*, Brian talks about what it is like to grow up gay in a hostile society. He says, "The horror of being gay is growing up with a secret you're afraid to share with anyone for fear they won't love you anymore." Through personal anecdotes, he helps viewers develop empathy. One of the best segments involves guided imagery in which participants envision growing up heterosexual in a world completely homosexual. Brian also delivers a brief version of his own story from denial, to recognition (including a suicide attempt), to becoming the proud openly gay spokesperson he is today.

In *Homophobia in the Workplace*, Brian articulates why homophobia is a workplace issue. Employees often wonder why they should be educated about "what people do in bed." Without fail, however, after listening to Brian, corporate employees understand about the loss of teamwork and loss of productivity that occur when gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees expend tremendous amounts of energy hiding who they are at work. Without creating angry backlash or hostility, Brian lets the audience know the toll that listening to anti-gay jokes and comments takes on gay employees and their parents, sisters, brothers, friends, and allies. He ends this tape by identifying what gay people do want from their workplace—safety, freedom to be out of the closet, equal benefits, evaluations based on performance not on their sexual orientation, education about the issues for colleagues, and the right to fully participate in company functions including bringing a same-sex date or partner to social events.

My friend Brian McNaught is truly blessed with the gift of being a bridge builder. His caring, nonaccusatory style allows the viewer to relax, listen, and learn. The videos, both produced by a local PBS station (KBDI-TV) in Denver, are most ideal for adult audiences either in training workshops, on college campuses, or for viewing by parents and other individuals in their own homes. In each video, Brian is

essentially giving an hour-long lecture to a group of predominately white adults of differing ages. Because it's typically challenging for participants to sit and watch a video for 60 minutes, one might want only to show selected segments in an educational setting. I've used the guided imagery from *Growing Up Gay and Lesbian* on many occasions. I could also imagine using segments of *Homophobia in the Workplace* during a staff retreat, noon-hour discussion, or extended staff meeting.

Some viewers might be initially put off by the PBS-style opening of Brian's lectures in which he enters the room to an applauding audience—slightly reminiscent of a talk-show or infomercial host. But within minutes, Brian's sincerity and charisma warm up the viewing atmosphere. Biases aside, I highly recommend these videotapes.

These videos were reviewed by Pamela Wilson, M.S.W., who is a sexuality education consultant. She is the author of When Sex Is the Subject: Attitudes and Answers for Young Children (Network Publications, 1991).

Swimsuit Issue Sports Illustrated

January 29, 1996
Volume 84, Number 4
Time, Inc.
Time & Life Building
Rockefeller Center
New York, NY 10020-1393
\$4.95

The 1996 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue has made history. It is the first ever to have an African-American model on the cover. For many people of color—and for other proponents for more equitable and realistic representation of American diversity—this is an important landmark in the achievement of such representation in mainstream media.

Unfortunately, the photo essay in this issue is far less than equitable or realistic. In fact, the portrayal of all women is unrepresentative and unhealthy. The pur-

ported rationale for this annual edition is to feature the latest in swimsuit fashion. Yet few of the women are ever seen in water or swimming, none of them appear athletic, and no male "swimmers" are ever seen. The fact is that this magazine serves its readership not as a source of information about athletic wear, but rather as a cloaked source of soft-core images of women as sexual objects. This particular issue does more than just maintain this standard; it presents some rather disturbing and racist portrayals of African-American women.

Of the nine models used in the issue, two are African-American. Although they represent more than 22 percent of the total models used, they appear in only five of the 30 photographs. The fact that they are seen in so few photographs is less problematic when compared to how they are portrayed.

The two African-American models in this issue are always photographed wearing suits with animal motifs or other "exotic" costumes (such as bare breasts painted in a traditional African pattern). The fact that there are no photographs of African-Americans in anything but these fashions is disturbing. It seems the photographers and editors did not see, or did not choose to portray, these women in any other light but primitive or animalistic femininity, beauty, and sexuality.

The representation of these women in these costumes pays quiet homage to stereotypes of people of color, particularly African-Americans, as wildly uncontrollable, with animalistic instincts and appetites, especially in regard to their sexuality. The inclusion of such ancient stereotypes serves only to perpetuate and normalize this view.

Although the trend in the photographs is to show most of the other models in solid colors or gentle floral prints, there are actually a few South American and European-American models who are also photographed in animal prints. The difference is that their suits show animals considered more docile and predictable (such as penguins, zebras, and butterflies) while

those of the African-Americans are generally seen as wild, aggressive, and dangerous (such as lions, tigers, and leopards). This subtle difference repeats the assumption that the women are somehow different in their beauty and sexuality: African-American women are wild and dangerous while women of European descent are gentle and predictable.

It is also apparent in the photo essay that images of dominance and superiority are celebrated and quietly promoted. The most obvious example of this is the second photograph of the collection, which shows a tall blonde European-American woman in the doorway of a traditional Ndebele (South African) home, looming lighter and larger than the two elderly African women at her side. The two African women are seated and wearing traditional dress, which include very heavy-looking neck braces and ankle decorations. This composition says much more about the relatively elevated social status of the European-American woman over the African women than it does about the bathing suit she wears. Other subtle messages of power and sophistication are repeated as other European-American women are shown in settings with yachts, futuristic metallic bathing suits and modern glass windows, while the women of color are found again in animal prints, near traditional huts, or against dry tree trunks.

Indeed, the cover of this year's *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue is historic. Never in over 30 years of the swimsuit issue had there been a woman of color on the cover. While many mainstream publications struggle or fall short in accurate representation of American diversity, *Sports Illustrated* has certainly made a stride forward with this cover. It is, however, unfortunate that the value of this landmark is undermined by the messages of racism and unfair stereotypes included throughout the photo essay.

This review was written by Phalana Tiller, who is the SIECUS outreach coordinator working on the agency's program to reach underserved communities as well as communities of color.

A SIECUS Annotated Bibliography

The media have a powerful influence on all aspects of society. With this power comes a major responsibility to present the complexities of human sexuality at all stages of the life cycle in a way that is accurate, sensitive to diversity, and free of exploitation, gratuitous sexual violence, and dehumanizing sexual portrayals.

There are many valuable resources available on the role of mass communication in society. This bibliography is a selected list of those that focus on issues related to human sexuality. These resources are in most libraries or bookstores and are also available directly from the publisher. Although none of these materials are distributed by SIECUS, they are part of the Mary S. Calderone Library. The library is open by appointment to SIECUS members. Copies of this bibliography are available for \$2.00 each from SIECUS, 130 West 42nd Street, Suite 350, New York, NY 10036-7802.

This bibliography was compiled by Evan Harris, SIECUS librarian.

BOOKS**HIV/AIDS****A Leap in the Dark**

*Allan Klusacek and
Ken Morrison, editors*

This collection of essays investigates both the representation of AIDS in the media and the impact of AIDS on contemporary culture. The section on media includes chapters on network television and media health campaigns. A section on the effect of AIDS on the popular arts looks at both fiction and theater. 1992; 320pp.; \$10.95; Vehicule Press, P.O.B. 125, Place du Parc Station, Montreal, Quebec H2X2T7.

**Covering the Plague:
AIDS and the American Media**

James Kinsella

This analysis of the mass media's reporting on AIDS looks at a number of sources, including both the mainstream and alternative press. The book is critical of the way the media has dealt with AIDS, and offers a close look at political and social pressures that have defined media coverage of the disease. The book includes a time line of major events related to AIDS, which constitutes a medical, political, and media history of AIDS through 1989. 1989; 299pp.; \$14.95; Rutgers University Press, 109 Church Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901; 800/446-9323.

**Policing Desire:
Pornography, AIDS,
and the Media**

Simon Watney

This book is a personal, political, and social examination of AIDS coverage on television and the popular press in Britain. The book gives a perspective on the impact of HIV/AIDS globally, and offers insights for readers on both sides of the Atlantic. The author examines images and representations of people with AIDS. 1989; 180pp.; \$14.95; University of Minnesota Press, 2037 University Avenue Southeast, Minneapolis, MN 55414; 800/388-3863.

**Taking Liberties:
AIDS and Cultural Politics**

*Erica Carter and
Simon Watney, Editors*

Developed at a conference of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London in March 1988, this collection of essays addresses the impact of AIDS on contemporary culture. Among the chapter titles are "Lessons From the Past: Feminism, Sexual Politics and the Challenge of AIDS," "Paradox and Paralysis: An Overview of the American Response to AIDS," and "AIDS in the Public Sphere: How a Broadcasting System in Crisis Dealt with An Epidemic." 1989; 236pp.; \$14.95; Serpent's Tail, 4 Blackstock Mews, London N4.

YOUTH**Adolescents and the Media**

Victor Strasburger

This book presents research findings on the media's influence on adolescent health. Among the issues which it addresses are media violence, drug and alcohol use, nutrition, and sexuality. The chapter on adolescent sexuality and the media is a thorough investigation. It includes, among other things, discussions on at-risk behavior, adjustment, and body image. 1995; 144pp.; \$16.95; Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320-2218; 805/499-9774.

**Mass Media Sex
and Adolescent Values:
An Annotated Bibliography
and Directory of Organizations**

A. Odasuo Alali, Editor

This detailed, broad-ranging resource includes bibliographic information and annotations on journal and newspaper articles, books and reports. The entries, which are divided into four categories, include: "Sex Role Portrayals," "Sexual Curricula and Media Use," "Adolescent's Attitudes and Values," and "Contraception, Pregnancy, and Health Issues." 1991; 138pp.; \$21.95; McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611 Jefferson, NC 28640; 910/246-4460.

Media, Sex and the Adolescent

*Bradley S. Greenberg,
Jane D. Brown, and
Nancy L. Buerkel-Rothfuss*

This book reviews the research on sexual content in the media and its relationship to adolescents. The research focuses on television and movies, and includes large-scale surveys, one-on-one interviews, and media content analysis. Among the issues are adolescents' exposure to, interpretation of, and response to sexual content in the media. 1993; 366pp.; \$28.50; Hampton Press Inc., 23 Broadway, Cresskill, NJ 07626; 201/894-1686.

GAY MEN AND LESBIANS**The Celluloid Closet**

Vito Russo

The portrayal of gay and lesbian characters in the movies is examined in this book. The author discusses numerous films and traces the history of gay and lesbian characters in the movies from the earliest films up to those of the late 1970s. The book includes movie stills and other photographs. 1981; 276pp.; \$7.95; Harper & Row Publishers, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022; 800/328-3443.

Gay People, Sex, and the Media

*Michelle A. Wolf and
Alfred P. Kielwasser*

Simultaneously issued as a special issue of the *Journal of Homosexuality* (volume 21, 1/2), this collection of articles and essays by researchers explores sexual identity as it is portrayed by the mass communications media. It includes chapters on AIDS and the media, sexual minorities and communications law, and research on adolescents and television. A bibliography entitled "Gays, Lesbians, and the Media" offers information on magazine articles from both the mainstream and alternative press. 1991; 284pp.; \$14.95; Harrington Park Press, 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580; 800/342-9678.

**Out In Culture:
Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays
on Popular Culture**

*Corey K. Creekmur and
Alexander Doty, Editors*

This book of essays explores film, television, popular music, and fashion from diverse gay and lesbian viewpoints. The issue of being "out," in which mass media play a large role, is a theme of the collection. The book includes a bibliography. 1995; 535pp.; \$22.95; Duke University Press, Box 90660, Durham, NC 27708-0660; 919/687-3650.

**Outwrite:
Lesbianism and Popular Culture**

Gabriele Griffin, Editor

This is a book of essays on popular music, cinema, and genre fiction including the thriller, the romance, and science fiction. An extensive bibliography of lesbian fiction and critical works concludes the collection. 1993; 204pp.; \$17.95; Inbook, 140 Commerce Street, East Haven, CT 06512; 203/467-4257.

GENDER ROLES**Male Myths and Icons:
Masculinity in Popular Culture**

Roger Horrocks

Through an analysis of male images in popular music, westerns, horror films, and pornography, this study investigates gender roles and how they are defined in and by the media. 1995; 203pp.; \$17.95; St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010; 212/982-3900.

**Men, Masculinity,
and the Media**

Steve Craig, Editor

This collection of research on men and the media includes studies on their relationships on television and in movies, analysis of gender roles in mass communication, and studies of masculinity in such

specific venues as sports. The editor also includes discussions on news media and advertising. 1992; 271pp.; \$10.95; Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320-2218; 805/499-9774.

**Staying Tuned:
Contemporary Soap Opera
Criticism**

Suzanne Frentz, Editor

This volume includes research analysis on daytime soap operas. A number of chapters focus on the role of sexuality, including an investigation of the differences between male and female soap viewers and the depiction of sexual behaviors, safer sexual practices, and the treatment of AIDS. 1992; 136pp.; \$26.95; Bowling Green State University Press, Bowling Green, OH 43403; 419/372-7865.

**Virgin or Vamp:
How the Press Covers Sex Crimes**

Helen Benedict

Through an analysis of four crime cases, this resource examines the way the print media reports on sex crimes. The author explores rape myths, gender roles, the representation of women by the press, and the impact of the press on attitudes toward women. 1992; 309pp.; \$11.95; Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016; 800/334-4249.

**Where the Girls Are:
Growing Up Female
With the Mass Media**

Susan J. Douglas

This book examines the way girls and women are presented in television programs, popular music, and advertising. The author looks at messages the mass media make about femininity, including an analysis of girl groups and their music, female characters on television, beach-blanket movies, and popular music icons such as Madonna. 1994; \$15.95; 349pp.; Random House, 400 Hahn Road, Westminster, MD 21157; 800/726-0600.

**FACT SHEETS,
REPORTS, ARTICLES,
AND NEWSLETTERS**

**Girls Re-cast
TV Action Kit**

Girls, Inc.

Girls, Inc., has introduced a new program to help girls examine television and how it impacts on their lives. This kit includes detailed information on the activities in which the organization is involved. It also includes data from *Re-Casting TV: Girls Views*, a national survey from Girls, Inc., and Louis Harris Associates, Inc. 1995; packet; free single copies; Girls, Inc., 30 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016; 212/689-3700.

**Her Point of View:
A Woman's Broadcasting
Committee Report
on Women in Television**

Women's Broadcasting Committee

This booklet includes the results of a study on women's jobs in the television industry in Britain. In addition it offers insights relevant to readers outside Britain on the role of women in the broadcast industry. 1993; booklet; free single copy; BECTU 111 Wardour Street, London W1V4AY; 071/437-8506.

**Media Effects
On Adolescent Sexuality**

Advocates for Youth

This fact sheet provides statistics on a variety of issues, including teens' television viewing, sexual content on television, and the impact of media exposure on adolescent sexuality and social development. 1995; fact sheet; free single copy; Advocates for Youth, 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005; 202/347-5700.

Media Report To Women

*Communication Research
Associates, Inc.*

This newsletter covers women in the media, and includes reports on their portrayal by the media as well as their role as journalists. Quarterly newsletter; \$30 annual subscription; Communication Research Associates, Inc., 10606 Mantz Road, Silver Spring, MD 20903; 301/445-3230.

Sex and the Mass Media

*Jane D. Brown and
Jeanne R. Steele*

First presented at a program entitled "Sexuality and American Social Policy," sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute, this paper examines sexuality in mass communication. 1995; report; free single copy; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2400 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025; 800/656-4533.

**Talking With TV:
A Guide to Starting
Dialogue With Youth**

Advocates for Youth

Designed for parents, this booklet offers suggestions on how to communicate with young people about the content of television. It encourages parents to take an active role in viewing habits of their children. 1994; booklet; free single copy; Advocates for Youth, 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005; 202/347-5700.

**The Birds, The Bees and
Broadcasting: What the Media
Teach Kids About Sex**

Media and Values

This issue of *Media and Values*, the quarterly publication of the Center for Media

Literacy, reviews research on youth and mass media. 1994; journal issue; \$2.00; Center for Media Literacy, 1962 South Shenandoah Street, Los Angeles, CA 90034; 800/226-9494.

ORGANIZATIONS

Center for Media Literacy

1962 South Shenandoah Street
Los Angeles, CA 90034
800/226-9494

**Media Project
Advocates for Youth**

3733 Motor Avenue
Suite 204
Los Angeles, CA 90034
310/559-5700

**Fairness and Accuracy
In Reporting
(FAIR)**

Women's Desk
130 West 25th Street
10th Floor
New York, NY 10001
212/633-6700

**Gay and Lesbian Advocates
and Defenders
(GLAD)**

Park Square Advocates, Inc.
2 Park Square
Boston, MA 02116
617/822-0127

**Sexuality Information
and Education Council
of the United States
(SIECUS)**

130 West 42nd Street
Suite 350
New York, NY 10036-7802
212/819-9770