

WOMEN'S VU

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Human Sexuality

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"All of us are sexual beings all the time from conception until death. The ways in which we are sexual are infinite." — William H. Masters, M.D., sexologist.

When I present talks or workshops I often state to the audience that everything I will be discussing is based on the above assumption, and I invite the participants to discuss what is meant by these two sentences. Usually the responses include, among others, "We are always thinking about sex," "We can reproduce throughout our life," and "I don't agree with the statement."

These responses indicate that there are varying meanings to the terms "sexual" and "sexuality." Often both terms are equated with "having sex" — the act of intercourse. In our society "sex" for both men and women is often oriented toward the goal of "intercourse" without considering that one's sexuality includes much more than a physical act of mating.

Actually, sexuality includes all those areas that make up our maleness and femaleness. Biologic sexuality includes chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy; psychologic sexuality includes our gender assignment ("boy" or "girl"), one's sense of identity as boy or girl, the roles one plays both publicly and privately as determined by being male or female, and lastly one's sexual orientation or choice of another person for sexual intimacy.

In my practice as a sex counselor and as a professor I often hear the conflicts experienced in the various areas of one's sexuality. Typical comments or concerns voiced to me include:

"Don't people ever have relationships anymore? It seems that all I hear about is folks just going out and having sex" (college senior).

"My boyfriend always tells me I don't do anything right in bed" (woman, 30's, single).

"I'm so bashful about sex. Maybe if I'd been sexually active when I was younger I wouldn't be so shy" (man, 50's, married 20 years).

"I don't want to have children but everyone keeps pressuring me to have them" (woman, 30's, married).

"Now that we're retired we have the time to fool around as often as we want, but I just can't keep an erection" (man, 60's, married 40 years).

"I was so embarrassed to tell anyone he had raped me" (college sophomore).

"All these women keep coming on to me — they're doing what men are supposed to do. I don't know how to act anymore" (man, 30's, single).

"My husband and I just have different levels of sexual interest" (woman, 40's, married 20 years).

"She had the abortion but I just can't help feeling it was a sin" (man, 20, single).

"I want my daughter to know much more than I did but I'm so uncomfortable with the subject that I just avoid talking to her about it" (woman, 30's).

The themes of these concerns reveal that our sexual identity and our sexual conflicts develop through messages we get from parents and family, religion, media, advertisers, peers, and formal education. Rarely is one's sexuality "fixed," that is, most of us continue to grow and change sexually throughout our lives.



In my experience as a counselor working with adults from ages 18 to the late 70's, I have found the most common sexual "problem" to be a lack of correct information. Few of us enter adulthood having all the answers we need about sexuality. For many of us the topic was "off limits" as we grew up. Certainly many of us have been denied any formal sex education; worse yet, we felt/knew we could not talk with our parents about sexual topics because that would be an acknowledgment that we were sexually active.

Lack of correct information leads women and men to make assumptions about themselves and their partners. For instance, women commonly assume that men know everything about female sexuality and therefore will tutor the woman. Men sometimes assume that women expect a man to always be ready to have sex and therefore a man may find it difficult, if not impossible, to say "no" without feeling a loss of his manhood.

Where can an adult get correct information about sexuality? Over the last decade there have been numerous books written on the subject of sexuality. It can be difficult to walk into a bookstore and make a selection which is helpful, but the following suggested references have been used successfully by the persons I have worked with and are generally available:

Bernie Zilberfeld, *Male Sexuality* (Bantam, 1978), \$4.95.

Sheila Kitzinger, *Women's Experience of Sex*, (Putnam, 1984), \$8.95.

Usually I recommend that both males and females read both books.

In addition, there are opportunities for adult sex education experiences, such as the Sexual Attitude Reassessment programs (call 322-4752); women's, and occasionally men's, sexuality groups, parenting and sexuality courses sponsored by Planned Parenthood and religious organizations; and college courses. For individuals or couples experiencing concerns about their sexuality and who feel that counseling could be helpful, the Center for Sexual Health Care, located in the Vanderbilt Medical Center, is a resource (322-4752).

In her book *Woman's Experience of Sex*, Sheila Kitzinger states that we can bring to our sexual experiences the same selectivity that we bring to other activities. In other words, we have choices — we don't have to be bound by our past. If a person chooses to break the bonds of sexual mythology that have kept him or her restricted to certain beliefs about self as a sexual being, there can be new opportunities for personal growth, enriched relationships, and increased fulfillment. ■

News briefs

More than 50% of your federal tax dollar goes to the Pentagon. This year, the average household in the United States will pay \$5,767 in federal taxes for 1986:

- \$3,103 will go for military spending.
- 115 will go for housing.
- 126 will go for education.
- 138 will go for food and nutrition.

— Sources: *Peace Links Connection, Jobs With Peace*, U.S. Budget Documents, Office of Management and Budget

In the February edition of *Ms.* magazine, the feature article was on addiction. In that issue, there were no alcohol or cigarette advertisements; they were withheld not by *Ms.* but by the advertisers!

— *off our backs*
February 1987

From the *New England Journal of Medicine*, December 5, 1986, comes this letter to the editor: "We investigated by questionnaire all Swiss board-certified female gynecologists . . . to assess the influence of the sex of the gynecologist on attitudes to hysterectomy . . . Female gynecologists performed about half as many hysterectomies as male gynecologists.

" . . . The importance of negative psychic reactions to hysterectomy is well-known. Women seem to perceive [!] this procedure as signaling a 'loss of womanhood and of attractiveness.' Female gynecologists may perhaps identify more easily with this position and thus be more restrictive in their indications.

"A second hypothesis is that the effect is produced by the particular selection of patients that seek help from a woman gynecologist."

— *off our backs*
February 1987

Although the number of women students, faculty, and administrators has increased over the last 15 years, women are still treated as "not quite first-class citizens in the academic community," according to a recent report issued by the Association of American Colleges" (AAC) Project on the Status and Education of Women. The report cites the following examples:

- The higher the academic rank, the fewer the women in those ranks.
- The more prestigious the school or department, the fewer the women there.
- At all ranks and in every field and type of institution, women still earn less than their male counterparts.
- Women are less likely to receive tenure than men — 47 percent of women faculty are

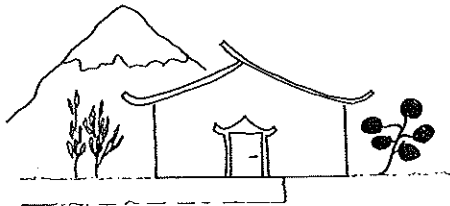
- tenured, compared to 69 percent of men.
- The rate of increase for tenured male faculty members has been greater than that for women. Between 1972 and 1981, the percentage of tenured male faculty increased by 17.7 percent, while the percentage of tenured female faculty increased by 13.4 percent.
- It is uncommon for women to be department chairs or academic deans.
- Women administrators are mostly concentrated in a few low-status areas that are traditionally seen as women's fields, such as nursing and home economics; in caretaking roles, such as student affairs and affirmative action; or in other support roles, such as admissions officer.
- The hiring and promotion of women faculty and administrators has lagged behind the enrollment of women students, who make up the majority of undergraduates and a growing share of graduate and professional students.

To promote a more equitable professional climate for women, the report recommends that institutions take several steps, including the following:

- Designate a particular person or office to be responsible for efforts to ensure an equitable professional climate, and give that person direct access to top administrators, preferably the president.
- Hire more women at all levels, including top administrative ranks, and promote more women into senior and tenured positions.
- Gather data by sex, race, and age to determine if men and women at all ranks are treated equitably.

(The Women's Center library has a copy of *The Campus Climate Revisited: Chilly for Women Faculty, Administrators, and Graduate Students* for more information.)

— *Higher Education & National Affairs*
November 3, 1986



Bad news for renters: The new 1987 tax law is expected to cause increases in real estate rental costs, making renting a less attractive alternative to owning a house or condominium.

— *Changing Times*
as reported in *The Moneypaper*, January 1987

Silence may improve your management skills: If you're vocal in areas where you have expertise and silent in areas where you're less knowledgeable you'll improve your reputation as a

manager with both superiors and subordinates.

— *Harvard Business Review*
as reported in *The Moneypaper*, January 1987

The National Museum of Women in the Arts is scheduled to open April 10 in a renovated downtown Washington, D.C., building. Five hundred works by 190 artists from 19 countries will be on display.

— *New Directions for Women*
March/April 1987

Sign of the times: A reader survey that arrived at the Women's Center recently from a magazine called *Woman of Power* did not ask, "Do you have any children? yes/no How many?" but "Do you parent any children," a more inclusive, and accurate, question, given the alternatives to the traditional nuclear family which are common today.

The 100th Congress of the United States has proposed legislation to advance pay equity, parental leave, Social Security equity and child care, as well as offer resolutions to add an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution and declare March, 1987 "National Women's History Month." Many of the bills were "try again" attempts, but with the shift of Senate control to the Democratic Party at least one Congressional aide observed a new "electricity" in the air.

Forty-three senators cosponsored the ERA resolution, though neither Sasser nor Gore were among them. The resolution states "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

Two pay equity bills were introduced to close the wage gap in male-female earnings. There were 48 bipartisan cosponsors of one of those House bills. The "Parental and Medical Leave Act of 1987" (S. 249) states "the need for a national policy on parental leave is clear . . . If we are to assure a strong, healthy future for coming generations of Americans, caring for your child can no longer mean losing your job." Other related bills have been introduced.

The "Social Security Equity Act of 1987" (S. 3) "provide(s) that the combined earnings of a husband and wife during the period of their marriage shall be divided equally and shared between them for benefit purposes, so as to recognize the economic contribution of each spouse to the marriage and ensure that each spouse will have Social Security protection in his or her own right." This would benefit women who overwhelmingly earn less than their husbands or who have been homemakers most of their lives.

— *Women's Times*
January 13, 1987

Comparison of National Maternity Leave Policies

Country	Duration	Job Security	Salary during leave
ASIA			
JAPAN	12 WKS	YES	60%
THAILAND	60 DAYS	YES	100%
AFRICA			
EGYPT	50 DAYS	YES	75%
NIGERIA	12 WKS	YES	50%
SOUTH AMERICA			
BRAZIL	12 WKS	YES	100%
CHILE	18 WKS	YES	100%
MIDDLE EAST			
IRAQ	10 WKS	YES	100%
ISRAEL	12 WKS	YES	75%
EUROPE			
FINLAND	258 DAYS	YES	45%
FRANCE	16 WKS	YES	90%
GERMANY	14 WKS	YES	100%
ITALY	5 MONTHS	YES	80%
EASTERN EUROPE			
BULGARIA	120 DAYS	YES	100%
POLAND	16-18 WKS	YES	100%
USSR	112 DAYS	YES	100%
NORTH AMERICA			
MEXICO	12 WKS	YES	100%
U.S.A.	0	NO	0

Figures for June 1984. Figures from survey by International Labour Office, Switzerland. Reprinted with permission from the August/September 1986 issue of *National Business Woman*.

— Graduate Woman
March/April 1987 ■

Women's Center programs

Call 322-4843 for information on the programs listed below.

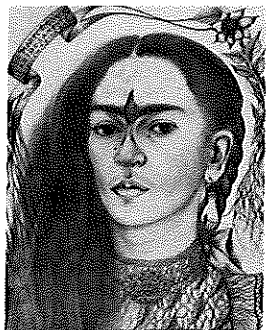
The Single Mothers Group will meet April 7 and 21, 6:45-8:15 p.m., at the Vanderbilt Child Care Center. Program themes for April are Women Who Love Too Much and self-esteem. At each meeting, time for sharing among group members is given priority. Anyone on or off campus who defines herself as a single mother is welcome. Group meetings are free; child care is provided on site for \$1.50 for one child, \$2.50 for two or more children. The group also gets together for walks — mothers and children — on Saturday afternoons.

The Dissertation Writers Support Group will meet Friday, April 10, 4:30 p.m., at the Women's Center. Light refreshments.

The Book Group will meet on Monday, April 13, 5:15 p.m., at the Women's Center. The book to be discussed is Lee Smith's *Family Linen*. Beth Matter will lead the discussion. If you have not read the book but would like to listen to the discussion, feel free to attend. Light refreshments.

Jan Bushing, newly elected representative to the Tennessee State Legislature from the 56th district, will be the speaker for the Dutch Treat Breakfast Club. She will be speaking about her experiences during this first session as an elected politician. Thursday, April 16, Divinity School Private Dining Room, 7:30 a.m. for breakfast, speech at 8:00 a.m., and questions and answers at 8:20 a.m. This meeting of the club is open to all faculty, staff and student women. Coffee is available free.

A Happy Hour Picnic at the Women's Center for all single women will be Thursday, April 23, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. in the garden area to the side of the Women's Center. This program is a follow-up, by request, to the single women's covered dish dinner in February. At the picnic, everyone will bring some food to share with others. In case of foul weather, we'll meet inside the Women's Center. No separate notice will be sent out for this program, so mark your calendar now.



In the library

Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo, by Hayden Herrera. Harper and Row: New York, NY 1983. Review by Suzanne Ewing, A&S4:

This biography of a little-known Mexican painter makes a fascinating story, and also introduces the work of an important artist who is often overshadowed by her more famous husband, muralist Diego Rivera. Kahlo is best known for her introspective self-portraits, and Herrera's choice of illustrations shows well Kahlo's growing understanding of and honesty about herself over her lifetime.

Kahlo is generally called a surrealist because of the strange nature of her imagery, but her life story shows that much of her work illustrates real events in her life. She was disabled in a bizarre streetcar accident as a teenager, and first began to paint while recovering in the hospital. The injury made her unable to bear children, and she later suffered several miscarriages and therapeutic abortions. Medical implements, blood, fetuses, the accident itself, and the corset she was forced to wear most of her life appear in her

work. Combined with these real-life events are revolutionary political themes and ancient Mexican traditional decoration inspired by the desert landscape. Like Rivera's, her art combined very personal subjects with emerging Mexican nationalism.

Kahlo was a popular figure in both the political and art worlds of the Americas in the 1930s and 1940s. She was known for her sharp wit; her fiercely protective but rocky relationship with her husband; and the colorful, flowing Indian clothing she wore. She was friendly with such notables as the sculptor Isamu Noguchi, Henry Ford, and Leon Trotsky, who was the object of a failed assassination attempt while a house guest in Kahlo and Rivera's home.

Although bedridden for much of her life as a result of her childhood accident, she continued to work almost to the last, using a specially made easel that allowed her to paint while reclining. After a life of much physical suffering, and mental anguish caused by Rivera's many love affairs, Frida Kahlo died in 1954. ■

Reader report: In March, we received four calls from women in the Medical Center saying that they received a flyer announcing a program late. Some investigation revealed that Medical Center mail runs slower, sometimes days slower, then mail to other campus locations. In response to that information, the Women's Center will be mailing Medical Center mail earlier than other mail to offset the delay. We appreciate those who called to let us know of the problem so that we can work to solve it.

Announcements et cetera

The National Women's Health Network has designed a form to help you get the best medical care by becoming an informed patient. The form asks specific questions which you fill in for and with your doctor. The four major sections are Your Medical History, The Examination in the Doctor's Office, Tests, and Prescriptions. According to the form, "Your doctor provides medical knowledge, but it's your body. You're responsible for getting and staying healthy." For a copy of the form, write National Women's Health Network, 224 Seventh Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

Vanderbilt Hospital with the American Red Cross sponsors a weekly blood drive in an effort to boost our community's blood supply. Vanderbilt personnel and visitors may donate blood each Thursday, 12:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. in the lobby of Langford Auditorium. If you prefer an appointment, call 322-2379. The Red Cross says, "With 500 pints needed daily in our area alone, your help is vital. Please give, and bring a friend."

YWCA offerings for April include For the Love of [journal] Writing, four Wednesdays starting April 8, \$45; Women's Health Issues, Pre-Menstrual Syndrome, Menopause, and Osteoporosis, three Tuesdays starting April 7, \$5 per session; Fix Your Car, six Thursdays starting April 16, \$35; and You and Real Estate, Tuesday, April 14, \$5. Coming up in May: Planning for Your Children's Future. For information, call 269-9922.

More on AIDS: Gay men have been dealing with AIDS for years. They have developed safer sex guidelines which they circulate within the gay community and among the non-gay population. Now the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) has developed a working draft of safer sex guidelines for women in response to community requests from New York, where GMHC began. The safer sex guidelines have been reviewed by Lois Wagner, Family Nurse Clinician at Occupational Health Services, who says they are medically accurate. The recommendations are explicit. For a free copy, call the Women's Center, 322-4843.

The third workshop in a series called "Women on Spiritual Quest" offered by Womanflight is on Saturday, April 18: The Re-Emergent Goddess. Participants will explore the significance of and interest in the divine as female. Fee: \$20. Scholarships available. Write P.O. Box 60131, Nashville, TN 37206, or call 255-1225 for more information.

St. Thomas Hospital has a Good Health School which offers a variety of short courses for small fees in several categories including: Emotional Wellness, Singles Series, Women's Issues, Parenting, and Medical Topics. To get on the mailing list, write Saint Thomas Good Health School, P.O. Box 380, Nashville, TN 37202, or call 386-2056.

It takes the cake

*Eloise K. Shick
Executive Secretary
Gallatin, Tennessee*

After a rather heated discussion about sharing the housework, my husband finally agreed to take more responsibility and initiative. Coming home one Saturday after finishing up a project at the office, I was greeted with my husband's proud announcement: "I made a cake, frosted it, washed the kitchen windows, cleaned all the cupboards, and scrubbed the kitchen floor. I even had time to do a load of laundry!"

I was about to applaud his efforts when he admitted sheepishly, "When I made the chocolate frosting, I forgot to turn off the mixer before I took the beaters out of the bowl. I had to do all the rest."

— SAVVY
March 1987 ■

★ **JUNIORS, SOPHOMORES, AND FRESHONES!** If you do not already receive this newsletter in your mailbox each month, fill out the form below and send it in. Beginning next fall, you will receive Women's VU, announcements of programs, and special mailings designed to keep you informed about issues and opportunities of interest to Vanderbilt women.

Until next fall, have a great summer!

★ **STAFF AND FACULTY MEMBERS:** The Women's Center is doing major surgery on our mailing list in preparation for a changeover in our computer system in late April. If this newsletter is addressed to a person who is no longer in your office, *please call the Women's Center (2-4843) or send the label back to us in campus mail (Box 1513-B)*, and let us know if we should delete or change the address. Thank you for your help.

Edited by Joan Anderson

TO RECEIVE YOUR OWN LABELED COPY OF WOMEN'S VU return the form below or call the Women's Center, 322-4843, to place your name on the mailing list.

Monthly newsletters, excluding July and August, are sent to all students free. Newsletters to faculty and staff at campus addresses are free. For non-student, off-campus addresses there is a \$3.00 fee for one year. Please make checks payable to Vanderbilt University Women's Center.

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