

Believe it or not, sex and sexuality are not the same



LIA SALCICCIA

Spring is here, and it's about time for magazines to do feature articles on sex. Looking back to last spring, I recall *Details*, *Spin* and even the University's School of Journalism mag, *Flux*, bunny-hopping on the old "Sex in the '90s" bandwagon.

Too bad sex gets so much attention, while sexuality gets next to none. Three things that everyone should be aware of regarding sexuality in this day and age are: it's changing; it frightens us; and we don't talk about it much.

There's a difference between sex and sexuality. Sex is a bodily function, and sexuality is more like a state of being — a way of seeing. Both, obviously, are important aspects of being alive, but sexuality can keep someone feeling alive when there is no sex in their life.

Too many people don't know the difference between the two, and as a result we let dominant forces like advertising define sexuality in terms of products. We let movies put silly ideas into our heads regarding ideal romantic relationships and then wonder why we aren't having as much fun as the people in the movie.

So what? Not everybody is such a sheep as to let movies and magazines dictate rules governing the ideal man, woman, relationship and sexual encounter. Though that's true, when it comes to how we feel about AIDS, we let the media yank us all over the place. You can tell me that all the stuff written about AIDS hasn't affected your sexuality, but I wouldn't believe you.

If anything will change our sexuality it will be AIDS. As it strikes more heterosexuals, homosexuals become less vilified. Each new risk group and activity that we discover is susceptible to the syndrome, the more we cringe. Each new bit of information is one more bit of freedom taken away.

It's enough to kill sexuality off altogether, but sexuality may yet save us in the face of the AIDS

nightmare, and the way that it will survive and evolve.

For instance, people who define sex as sexual intercourse only will be forced to reevaluate the term. And, as dental dams, rubber gloves and condoms become standard procedure for those who want to have oral, hand and intercourse sex society will just have to find a way to eroticize those items.

Changes in sexuality are scary to fathom. Hell, sexuality itself is scary. That's why it's easier to talk about sex. That's why it's easier for television to portray sexuality in terms of Kelly Bundy bending over an ice chest amid a chorus of canned cheers.

The power of sexuality itself comes in as many forms as people do. It's highly individual, and that's another reason why it is kept under wraps. Not everyone likes to talk about personal stuff and those who do may not want to bring up anything that makes them sound like a pervert. But, perverted or not, sexuality is beautiful in its individualism — in the fact that it can be triggered by anything from the sight of Roseanne Arnold to the brush of a dandelion fluff against the cheek.

And, sexuality is what gets

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neglected when we are too caught up in the media's definition of sex. We end up with a warped view of how we as sexual creatures are to interact with each other. Imagine that you are on a mission from Mars in order to study sexual behavior on Earth, but instead of observing real humans, all you did was watch *Melrose Place*.

All the hype about sex can lead to a lack of awareness that seeps into our everyday conversations. Our culture encourages men to brag about sexual encounters, but wouldn't you drop dead from surprise if one said, "It felt so good. So-and-So massaged my face for a half an hour" or "I just love it when women sneeze"?

I sure wouldn't want to define your sexuality for you. And I'm not suggesting we all embark on a cheesy confess-fest about what sexuality means to our lives (but the Generation X hypesquad

sure would love it if we did.) However, we could all afford to be more open and more open-minded regarding issues of sex and sexuality. (We'd probably have better sex, too.)

Twentysomethings, as many of us are, belong to the first generation that doesn't have the excuse of not knowing better. Unlike those of our parents' era, we are quite aware of what is bad for us as we do it anyway. We have learned how to adapt toward political apathy, rising costs of living and a culture that discriminates against people in a million ways. Adapting toward a new, healthy, open and safe vision of sexuality may well be our saving grace.

And if it doesn't save us from the world, surely it will distract us from it.

Lia Salciccia is a columnist for the Emerald

LETTERS

Butt Shark!

Who I am is not important. But you can call me Butt Shark. Only people who saw the show or have heard about it will know what I'm talking about. After seeing Madonna on David Letterman's show on Thursday, March 31, I have developed a new level of respect for her. I dislike her even more now.

Scott Klemp
English

Worthless

At the end of winter term, one of my professors made a particularly disturbing remark. As she prepared to hand out student evaluation forms, she haughtily

announced to the class that since she had tenure, she had little reason to pay attention to student evaluations.

Of what value is a professor who is unwilling to learn from student feedback? This University is an educational community. Ideally, education should be a multilateral process, with both students and professors learning from in-class and out-of-class interactions.

The class I took from this professor had many positive aspects, but I cannot overlook the sentiment that inspired her to publicize her willful negligence of her students' appraisals of her work.

I will not embarrass her further by printing her name, but I hope she and other professors

who read this will critique their own attitudes toward student feedback.

Inspired and responsive professors are invaluable. A complacent and unresponsive professor is worthless to students, colleagues and the University in general.

Peter Schwartz
Economics

Upset

We, the undersigned graduate teaching fellows, are upset with a particular aspect of the GTF Federation's implementation of its new insurance program.

We were insufficiently notified of the arbitrary Jan. 30 deadline to waive this new policy for

those GTFs who are already covered by other comprehensive health insurance. We now find ourselves losing \$180 in income in lieu of coverage from the recently negotiated health care benefit. Despite many attempts to resolve this problem, the GTFF and its representative, Diane Rau, have been entirely inflexible about providing this rebate for GTFs who were unaware or did not understand the waiver procedure.

Every month we pay our fair share to the union, which is solely responsible for administering the insurance plan. The union has taken away our opportunity to receive the rebate. There is no mention of a deadline for the waiver form in the collective bargaining agreement.

Although a letter postmarked March 11 from the union stated that we will not be enrolled nor will we have coverage if we fail to complete, sign and return the application/enrollment form, the union still insisted verbally that we are automatically covered by this health plan. While it was still possible to enroll in the insurance plan retroactively to Jan. 1, we were not permitted to waive it at that time. The union may be covered legally by providing minimal notification; we don't believe its actions are proper. We find it difficult to understand why it will not admit its mistake and provide us with the rebate.

Li-Chen Chin
Chi-Jiung Cheng
Jill Cosart
and Nine Co-Signers

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