



Compiled and edited by SIECUS

Sexuality and Man

“... a carefully written book on a subject of great interest. It is highly recommended for teachers involved in teaching sex education and for all others interested in knowing what research says about sexuality and man.”

The Science Teacher

Contents

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Preface

The Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) is a voluntary nonprofit organization dedicated to the establishment and exchange of information and education about human sexual attitudes and behavior, as set forth in the SIECUS statement of purpose:

“To establish man’s sexuality as a health entity; to identify the special characteristics that distinguish it from, yet relate it to, human reproduction; to dignify it by openness of approach, study, and scientific research designed to lead towards its understanding and its freedom from exploitation; to give leadership to professionals and to society, to the end that human beings may be aided towards responsible use of the sexual faculty and towards assimilation of sex into their individual life patterns as a creative and re-creative force.”

The SIECUS Board of Directors is comprised of fifty men and women who serve voluntarily for three years, but whose term may be extended by a second three years or by election to office. Each year the Board nominates and elects a new group to replace approximately one-third of the members who have completed their terms of office. The invitation is issued on the basis of the need of the organization for specific professional and

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personal competence in a given field; members serve as individuals, not as representatives of their organization or institution.

The eleven chapters, originally published individually as Study Guides, were written by Board members (with the exception of Chapter 8, whose co-author William Simon frequently collaborates with Board member John H. Gagnon). The aim of the Guides is to replace misconceptions with facts reflecting the current thinking of experts. Each has found its own audiences among professionals and parents involved in initiating, administering, or supporting school or community programs of sex education, as well as among individuals primarily interested in the personal development of an objective comprehension of different aspects of human sexuality.

The authors of the various chapters (*see* About the Authors, at the back of the book) are authorities in one or another of the many areas relating to human sexual behavior; all of the material has been subjected to review and acceptance by the entire SIECUS Board of Directors.

Harold I. Lief, M.D.

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SIECUS

Introduction

Sex is a word used by many people to mean many different things at different times. Dictionaries usually give three main definitions for it: (1) gender (males collectively as distinguished from the collectivity of females); (2) anything connected with sexual gratification or reproduction or the urge for these; (3) the character of being male or female. SIECUS believes that, at this epoch in man's evolution, these and related or new definitions need further consideration and refinement.

The first definition, relative to given gender, male or female, obviously is basic, primary, and should stand. It is a one-time description assigning an individual to the male or female collectivity on the basis of his anatomic and chromosomal configuration at birth; it does not relate to his behavior as male or female.

There is a question as to how far *sex* and *reproduction* can be equated, as they are in the second definition. If reproduction consists of a long process that, beginning with a single coital act, is followed by union of a sperm and an egg and continues for nine months to the birth of a new human being, then how much of that nine months' process could be classified as truly *sexual*? Only the coital act that initiates the process, surely, for

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the process itself is entirely *reproductive*. And how many men and women, at how many times in their lives, experience as such a recognizable "urge to reproduce"? Clearly the whole process of reproduction should be excluded from the meanings of the word sex, leaving sexual gratification, including the urge for it, as one of the accepted meanings. Human sex behavior relating to this meaning of the word will be erotic in nature, centered at the genital level.

It is the third definition that, with some clarification, might in the end be recognized as not belonging under the word sex. *Character* is not fixed or static because it relates closely to behavior *as* male or female. For this aspect of sex—the over-all behavioral aspect that, in the end, embraces the whole question of how we as individuals belong to one of the two collectivities—a more comprehensive definition can be found under the word "sexuality," as "the state or quality of being sexual." Note the use of the word *sexual*, which is behavior-oriented, in preference to the word *sexed*, which is gender-oriented.

In contrast to the language of the Esquimaux, which has fifteen words accurately describing fifteen different kinds of snow, English terminology relating to man in his many and varied aspects as a sexual being is, to say the least, poverty-stricken. But, by scrupulous examination of such terms as we have, it is possible at least to begin refining our use of them. Thus for the word "sex," definitions might come to be simply: gender, and anything connected with sexual gratification or the urge for it.

For the word "sexuality" however, the primary meaning might relate to the character and quality of the human individual as man or woman, with secondary meanings coming into use as the understanding of how human beings do, do not, should, should not, or might, behave as members of their sex is

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developed. In any case, as a beginning, the phrase "sex education" with its clearly gender- or genital-centered connotation should begin to be replaced by the more clearly behaviorally oriented term, "education for sexuality." This term does not limit us to giving information about reproduction and certainly does not bind or compel us to teach specifically about genital or erotic sex except in particular, appropriate situations. These terms, then, free us to contemplate the wholeness of man or woman and how the total educational processes of living and learning can be geared to the development of such wholeness, in meaningful fulfillment appropriate to the individual's needs and to those of his contemporary society.

The chapters in this volume were originally developed by SIECUS to consider the different aspects of human sexuality: aspects presenting problems; those needing to be better understood; those of which understanding is still in evolution, just as is man himself. Their contents should, therefore, not be taken as final words, much less as complete treatments, but as springboards for further study, thought, and philosophical speculation. Many more individuals than are represented in these pages must become involved in such considerations. We are all humans, males and females; each one of us has our own sexuality, our own way of being male or female characteristic to each and each alone. Whatever one's professional or personal obligations, the contents of this book can be useful in showing us where the sexual scene really is: What does it mean, what does it take, to be a mature, responsible man or woman of today, not of yesterday? Which of yesterday's standards remain relevant to today's world? Above all, what of the rapidly approaching tomorrow? What kinds of men and women will it need, and what will be the nature of their sexual (not sex) relationships in their various roles as friends, co-workers, dates, husbands and

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wives, parents? We cannot learn, or teach, how to fit *sex* into human life and relationships without an understanding of *sexuality* as a central life force.

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